

Communicative anxiety in the second and third language

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ABSTRACT

The present paper reports a study on communicative anxiety of two groups of adult users. The paper aims at exploring the communicative anxiety of multilingual speakers and at analysing the communicative anxiety in second and third languages. This study includes 532 participants who were divided in two groups according their L1. One group of participants ($N = 346$) had Spanish as their L1 and the other group had Basque ($N = 186$). Quantitative and qualitative instruments were used to collect the data. Participants completed a background questionnaire and a questionnaire about communicative anxiety. In addition, focus group discussions and interviews were also held with the objective of getting deeper insights from the data. The results indicate that there are significant differences between the two groups of participants (Spanish L1 and Basque L1 speakers) in communicative anxiety and that anxiety is different when the second and third languages are compared.

KEYWORDS

Language anxiety; first; second language; third language; multilingualism; proficiency

Introduction

This article reports a study on communicative anxiety of two groups of adult multilingual users in the context of the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain. In this bilingual context, the exposure to the third language (L3), English, is generally limited to academic or professional fields. Therefore, it is common for Basque speakers to apologise about their English when speaking with native or non-native speakers, showing lack of confidence, modesty or anxiety (Santos, Cenoz & Gorter, 2015). However, this lack of confidence, modesty or anxiety is not only geared to the L3 but also to second languages which in this context are Basque (the minority language) or Spanish (the majority language).

It is generally accepted that second language (L2) anxiety exists, but it is necessary to go further than two languages because there is no evidence to believe that anxiety in a second language (L2) is the same as in a third (L3) or a fourth (L4). Multilingual competence is complex and in this study the whole linguistic repertoire of multilingual speaker

is taken into account so as to explore the different degrees of anxiety in different languages.

Multilingualism in the Basque Autonomous Community

The Basque Autonomous Community has a total population of over 1.2 million and two official languages, Basque and Spanish. English is usually introduced as the L3 at school; therefore, the development of competence in Basque, Spanish and English is an aim in education. Language policy plans have been developed in different sectors such as public administration and education and the use of Basque as the medium of instruction has been promoted. However, Basque remains being a minority language and Spanish continues being the dominant language, especially in social domains such as commerce or other workplaces in private sectors (Van der Worp, Cenoz, & Gorter, 2016). Nowadays, there are no Basque monolinguals except very young children

According to the Fifth Sociolinguistic Survey (Basque Government, 2013) conducted in 2011, 32% of the population older than 16 years is bilingual in Basque and Spanish, 17.4% can understand Basque but does not speak it and 50.6% does not speak Basque. As Basque is the main language of instruction in the Basque Autonomous Community, it is common for Spanish L1 students to learn all academic content through the medium of Basque and nowadays 54.8% of the Basque-Spanish bilinguals have Spanish as the L1 (Basque Government, 2016). Some Basque-Spanish bilinguals are more fluent in Basque than in Spanish (27%) while others are equally fluent in both languages (30%) and 43% are more fluent in Spanish. Spanish is used extensively in the Basque Autonomous Community and the use of Basque is influenced by Basque language proficiency, first language (L1), sociolinguistic area, social networks and attitudes towards Basque.

As we have already mentioned, English is a foreign language in the Basque Autonomous Community and it is usually introduced as a L3 at schools. Nowadays, the ability to speak English is becoming more and more important for Basque citizens due to the effect of globalisation and the role of English has become stronger in education. However its use is quite limited in daily communication. There are few opportunities to use English outside the classroom and watching television in the original version in English is not widespread. Therefore, the competence level in the Basque Autonomous Community is quite low compared to other European countries.

Studies on anxiety

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been defined as 'a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process' (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 28). Therefore, it has been classified as a situation-specific anxiety that becomes particularly heightened in the foreign language class (Horwitz et al., 1986). However, the context where communicative anxiety is experienced may be inside a classroom or during social interactions outside the classroom. Anxiety has often been linked to oral production; giving rise to a subtype referred to as communicative apprehension (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Many studies have shown the debilitating effects of anxiety on the acquisition of a second or foreign language affecting communicative performance

and learning processes (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). In the last decades, there has been a debate whether anxiety is a cause or a consequence of poor language performance. On one hand, Horwitz (2001) and MacIntyre (1995) claimed that anxiety is the cause of poor performance arguing that 'anxiety is a well-known source of interference in all kinds of learning and wonder why the case of language learning should be different' (Horwitz, 2001, p. 118). On the other hand, Sparks and Ganschow (1991, 1993, 1995, 2007) considered in their linguistic coding differences hypothesis the importance of native skills on successful foreign language learning. That is, foreign language learning is related to the skills that one has in the native language; therefore, poor performance in the foreign language is expected to be a consequence of poor native language skills, which may be linked to anxiety. In other words, FLA is likely to be a consequence of the students' level of native language skills.

FLA is a complex multidimensional construct that can influence the process of language learning. Language anxiety is not an isolated factor; it is related to many variables. Some research studies have looked into the relationship between anxiety and multilingualism. Multilinguals are supposed to have an advantage in the acquisition of a new language due to the development of a number of competences and a compilation of experiences as language learners. For instance, Le Pichon Vorstman, De Swart, Ceginskas, and Van Den Bergh (2009) found advantages of multilinguals when learning a new language in a study with 54 multilingual preschoolers in the US. The study highlighted the relevance of language learning experience on increasing metacommunicative and metacognitive awareness and willingness to communicate. Sanz (2000) found similar results in the context of Catalonia, emphasising the idea that bilingual students have an advantage over monolinguals in the acquisition of additional languages. Singleton and Aronin (2007) highlighted the advantages of knowing more languages. They indicated that multi-linguals have more extensive range of resources available and larger linguistic repertoires compared to monolinguals. It has been also found that multilinguals develop higher levels of metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok, 2006; Jessner, 2006), metapragmatic awareness (Kemp, 2007; Safont Jordá, 2006) and better learning strategies (Kemp, 2007). Several studies carried out in the Basque Autonomous Community have analysed the effect of bilingualism on the acquisition of English as L3 and their results indicate that bilinguals have advantages over monolinguals when learning a third language (see Cenoz, 2009 for a review).

According to Dewaele (2007, p. 393), 'most studies on FLA have considered a single foreign language of learners, very few have considered FLA in both the native language and multiple foreign languages'. It is certainly necessary to conduct more research studies taking into account the whole linguistic repertoire of the speakers.

Some research studies have associated multilingualism with lower levels of anxiety (Dewaele, 2007, 2010; Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham, 2008; Thompson & Lee, 2013; Thompson & Khawaja, 2016). This trend was also confirmed by Santos, Cenoz and Gorter (2015) in a study conducted in the Basque Autonomous Community with 352 university students and young professionals. They found that participants with an advanced level of multilingualism experienced less communicative anxiety than those with an intermediate level.

Studies on language anxiety frequently reported higher levels of anxiety in speaking languages learnt later in life. Dewaele (2007) conducted a study with 106 adult language

learners. Students were distributed according to their L1 and languages they knew. He found that communicative anxiety levels increased gradually from the L1 onwards, that is, levels of language anxiety are higher in languages learnt later in life. Dewaele explained that one possible reason is that commonly, proficiency levels are higher in languages acquired earlier in life and its use is more frequent. Dewaele et al. (2008) also reported the relevance of frequency of using a language in relation to levels of communicative anxiety. Their results also indicated that higher levels of anxiety were found for languages learnt later in life.

However, Dewaele (2002) found higher levels of communicative anxiety in the L2 (French) rather than in the third one (English) in a group of 100 Flemish students. He reported that social and individual contexts determine levels of communicative anxiety. The social status of the language, inequality of the status of the interlocutors, native speakers' reactions to errors and unpleasant experiences with native speakers are some of the reasons why participants experienced more anxiety in the L2 French.

Proficiency and self-perceived competence in a language are variables that have been associated with levels of language anxiety. In general terms, higher levels of proficiency and self-perceived competence have been associated with lower levels of anxiety. Dewaele and Ip (2013) in a study conducted with 73 secondary students in Hong Kong found relations among self-perceived proficiency, L2 tolerance of ambiguity and foreign language classroom anxiety. Participants with higher levels of tolerance of ambiguity and lower levels of anxiety reported higher levels of proficiency in the foreign language. Liu (2006) used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986) in a study of 547 Chinese undergraduate non-English majors in China. Lower levels of anxiety were found in more proficient students. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) also found that students with a higher level of proficiency in the foreign language experience lower levels of foreign language classroom anxiety and higher levels of foreign language enjoyment.

However, some other research studies have found opposite trends. Marcos-Llinás and Juan Garau (2009) in a study with 134 university students learning Spanish in the US found that advanced students experienced more anxiety than beginners. It is essential to take into account the specific context of the research because advanced learners were taking Spanish as their major or minor and felt more pressure than beginners who only were taking Spanish as a requirement for other studies. Therefore, anxiety seems to increase when students are more aware of the need to learn the foreign language.

Focus on multilingualism

In the last years, there is a trend to explore multilingualism from a multilingual focus (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013, 2015) or through a multilingual lens (Cummins & Persad, 2014). This holistic view of multilingualism implies that the whole linguistic repertoire of multi-lingual speakers or emergent multilinguals is taken into consideration rather than looking at one language at the time.

The study of anxiety from a multilingual perspective that takes into account the whole linguistic repertoire has some advantages. It considers the multilingual speaker as such and not as a deficient speaker of the native speaker who gets anxious because of his/her limitations. By focusing on multilingualism, the unitary concept of FLA is questioned

because there can be different degrees and types of anxiety in the languages of the multi-lingual speaker's repertoire.

The study

The aim of this study was to explore the communicative anxiety of multilingual speakers and to analyse the communicative anxiety in L2 and L3. The study considers the whole linguistic repertoire of the participants (Basque, Spanish and English) to analyse whether the same speakers have different degrees of anxiety in different languages in their repertoire. As we have already mentioned, some research studies have reported associations between proficiency and anxiety but fewer studies have focused on the effect of multilingualism on anxiety or the comparison of anxiety in second language or third language taking into account different first languages.

The research questions are the following:

RQ1. Do Basque L1 and Spanish L1 speakers have the same level of anxiety in the L2?

RQ2. Do Basque L1 and Spanish L1 speakers have the same level of anxiety in the L3?

RQ3. Do Spanish L1 speakers experience more communicative anxiety in Basque (L2) or English (L3)?

RQ4. Do Basque speakers experience more communicative anxiety in Spanish (L2) or English (L3)?

Method

Participants

This study includes 532 participants who were divided in 2 groups according their L1. One group of participants ($N = 346$) had Spanish as their L1 and the other group had Basque ($N = 186$). Both Basque and Spanish are official languages in the Basque Autonomous Community. Most participants had Spanish as their L1 but only some of them ($N = 51$) had Spanish as the language of instruction in primary and secondary education. Twenty-three per cent of the sample ($N = 119$) had both Basque and Spanish as the languages of instruction and most students ($N = 362$) had Basque as the language of instruction. All participants had studied Basque, Spanish and English as school subjects.

The participants consisted of second- and third-year university students ($N = 397$) from the field of social sciences, specifically from education and business administration at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) in Bilbao and San Sebastian, and young professionals ($N = 135$) who recently finished their studies and were working in companies and educational institutions of the Basque Autonomous Community. Participants in this study were 218 female (41%) and 314 male (59%) with a mean age of 22.5 years (standard deviation, $SD = 5.13$). The average age at which these participants reported to have started learning English was 6.37 ($SD = 3.00$).

Participants were asked to rate their proficiency in Basque, Spanish and English on a scale from 1 to 10 for listening, speaking, reading and writing (see also Dewaele et al., 2008; Thompson & Lee, 2013). The average scores can be seen in Table 1.

[Table 1 near here]

Total scores of self-reported proficiency in the three languages according to the participants' L1 were also obtained. Spanish L1 speakers reported a higher proficiency in Spanish, their L1, followed by their L2 Basque and their L3 English.

Basque L1 speakers also reported a higher proficiency in Basque, their L1, followed by their L2 Spanish and their L3 English. The results can be also seen in Table 2.

Self-ratings of proficiency in the three languages indicated that participants perceived their proficiency in Basque and Spanish as higher than in English. The independent *t*-test analysis indicated that the differences between the L1 Basque and L1 Spanish groups were significant for two of the three languages: Basque ($t(530) = -12.53, p = .00$) and Spanish ($t(530) = 8.95, p = .00$).

Instruments

In the present study, quantitative (background and anxiety questionnaires) and qualitative (focus group discussions and interviews) techniques were used in order to collect the data. Details of the instruments can be found below.

Background questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed with the aim of obtaining demographic and linguistic data about the participants. It included self-ratings of proficiency in Basque, Spanish and English. The questionnaire was written in Basque and Spanish so that participants could choose between the two options.

Anxiety questionnaire: This questionnaire was an adaptation of the FLCAS by Horwitz et al. (1986) taking into account the questionnaire used by Rubio Alcalá (2004) for a Spanish context. The FLCAS questionnaire by Horwitz et al. (1986) is one of the most widely used scales to assess FLA in the fields of second language acquisition, psychology and education. Participants in this study were not students of English as a foreign language; therefore, items related to classroom anxiety were excluded from the questionnaire.

The anxiety questionnaire consisted of 22 closed items, 11 items related to the L3 of the participants, English, and 11 items related to their L2 Basque or Spanish. Participants were asked to rate statements on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree' to (7) 'strongly agree'. When coding the scores of four items of the questionnaire were reversed so that higher scores meant in all cases higher levels of anxiety. Internal consistency for

[Table 2 near here]

this scale was measured and a Cronbach's α of .86 was obtained. This score matches the requirements to make the questionnaire valid (DeVellis, 1991). The anxiety questionnaire was also in Basque and Spanish, so participants could choose the version which they preferred. *Focus group discussions and interviews:* Apart from the quantitative data, qualitative data were also collected with the aim of obtaining deeper insights in participants' beliefs and feelings when using their second and third languages. Five interviews and six focus group discussions were carried out with young professionals and university students. Both the interviews and focus group discussions were just over one hour long. The issues discussed included the reasons why people feel nervous about speaking in Basque, Spanish and English, the influence of the context on the development of anxiety, the impact of anxiety on the communication and the strategies to face anxiety. The focus group discussions and interviews were carried out in Spanish.

Procedure

Participants signed a consent form to allow to the use of the data for the purposes of the research study. The data were analysed with the SPSS program version 22. The qualitative data were codified and analysed with the program Atlas.ti, so as to identify the main patterns regarding anxiety. In the results section below, both approaches have been combined. Qualitative data have been used to confirm and strengthen the quantitative findings (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Results

Anxiety in L2

The first research question aims at analysing the level of anxiety in the L2 whether this L2 is, Basque or Spanish. An independent samples t -test was conducted to determine if there were differences in the level of anxiety in the L2 of two different groups, those who have Basque as their L1 and those who have Spanish as their L1. 'Anxiety' was considered as the dependent variable, while the independent variable considered in this study was the L1 of the participants. The means, SDs, t -values and significance level of all the items of the questionnaire and the totals can be seen in Table 3.

[Table 3 near here]

There were significant differences between the two groups of participants in the total score, $t(393) = 4.19, p = .00$, indicating that participants with Spanish L1 were more anxious in their L2 ($M = 40.68, SD = 12.63$) than participants with Basque L1 ($M = 35.19, SD = 12.62$). This result is confirmed by the existence of significant differences in 9 of the 11 items. These results suggest that Spanish L1 speakers experienced more anxiety in Basque than Basque L1 speakers in Spanish.

The qualitative data analyses were used to obtain a more detailed description of the differences in anxiety in the L2 of Basque L1 and Spanish L1 speakers. The following examples indicate that Spanish L1 speakers experienced more anxiety in Basque than Basque L1 speakers in Spanish.

- (1) (L1 SPANISH): 'Yo creo que una persona puede tener mucha más ansiedad con el euskera, simplemente porque la gente aquí sabe euskera y lo domina más. Aquí la

gente te reprocha si no sabes euskera' (S7). (I think that the anxiety experienced with Basque is much higher, simply because here people know and master Basque better. Here people criticize you if you do not know Basque).

- (2) (L1 SPANISH): 'Yo cuando me expreso en euskera, sé que no tengo un euskera muy bueno. No hago bien el acento y me cuesta mucho cuando tengo que hablar con otra persona en euskera, porque siento que me está juzgando. Tengo esa inseguridad, entonces estoy todo el rato buscando la palabra adecuada' (S11). (When I express myself in Basque, I am aware that my Basque is not very good. My accent is not good and I find it hard when I have to speak with somebody in Basque because I feel judged. I have this insecurity and I am all the time trying to find the right word).
- (3) (L1 SPANISH): 'El euskera es un idioma que siempre desde pequeña lo he tenido. Lo que me provoca ansiedad es el hecho de que yo sé euskera pero sé que la persona con la que voy a hablar sabe más que yo, entonces el hecho de que como vergüenza de que te corrija, o no lo digas bien o que de repente en vez de pronunciar la tz pronuncies una ts cosas así' (S4). (Basque is a language that I have used since I was a child. What makes me feel anxious is the fact that I know Basque but I know that the other person knows more Basque than me, therefore I feel embarrassed of corrections or having the wrong pronunciation 'tz' for 'ts' for example).

The quantitative analysis revealed that Spanish L1 speaker's anxiety in the L2 was higher than Basque L1 speakers. This is confirmed by the qualitative data in most cases but some of the L1 Basque speakers also experienced anxiety in Spanish:

- (1) (L1 BASQUE): 'No tengo ansiedad hacia el castellano, viviendo en Donosti sin saber castellano no llegas muy lejos tampoco' (S15). (I do not have anxiety in Spanish, living in Donosti without knowing Spanish you do not go far).
- (2) (L1 BASQUE): 'Mi caso es bastante raro, porque vivo en Donosti pero no hablo castellano para nada. Me expreso muchísimo mejor en euskera que en castellano. A la hora

de comunicarme en castellano sí que siento ansiedad, por ejemplo fui a Almería y me ponía super nerviosa, no podía' (S16). (My case is quite strange because I live in Donosti but I do not speak Spanish at all. I speak much better Basque than Spanish. When I speak Spanish I feel anxious. For example when I was in Almeria, I was very nervous, I could not speak).

The focus group discussions and interviews confirm the same trend observed in the quantitative data. The level of anxiety is higher when Basque is the L2 than when Spanish is the L2.

Anxiety in L3

The second research question addresses the issue of the differences in anxiety level in the L3, English, of L1 Basque and L1 Spanish speakers.

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to determine if there were differences in the level of anxiety in the L3 of two different groups, those who have Basque as their L1 and those who have Spanish as their L1. 'Anxiety' was considered as the dependent variable, while the independent variable considered in this study was 'L1 of the participants'. Participants were classified as Basque L1 versus Spanish L1. The means, SDs, *t*-values and significance level of all the items of the questionnaire and the totals can be seen in Table 4. There were no significant differences in the scores of anxiety when the two groups of participants (Basque L1 vs. Spanish L1) were compared, $t(530) = 0.83$, $p = .40$. Regarding the specific items, the only significant differences were in items 6 and 10 showing that Spanish L1 speakers reported higher levels of anxiety than Basque L1 speakers. There were no significant differences in the other nine items. Except for the two items, the results indicate there are no differences in anxiety in the L3 between Basque L1 and Spanish L1 participants.

[Table 4 near here]

The qualitative data analyses confirmed the above information, both L1 Spanish and L1 Basque speakers experience anxiety in the L3. In the focus group discussion, participants reflected on the topic. Some relevant quotes are as follows:

- (1) (L1 SPANISH): 'Yo sí que tengo ansiedad hacia el inglés. Yo me bloqueo total. Mi cabeza se bloquea. Hace un bloqueo absoluto que no me sale nada, no soy capaz de decir nada' (S4). (I do have anxiety in English. I get stuck. My brain gets blocked and nothing comes, I am not able to say anything).
- (2) (L1 BASQUE): 'El otro día comienzo a hablar en inglés y ostras me sentía otra vez super limitada de esto que no te sale fluido y que empiezas a hacer una frase y que los verbos no das una y dices jo otra vez atrás' (S17). (The other day I started to speak English and gosh I felt extremely limited again, not fluent you try to make a sentence and you cannot come up with the correct form of the verb and you think, aw going backwards again).

Spanish L1 speakers' anxiety in Basque (L2) or English (L3)

The third research question concerns the differences in anxiety of Spanish L1 speakers in their L2 (Basque) and their L3 (English).

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the anxiety of Spanish L1 speakers towards their L2 (Basque) and their L3 (English). The means, SDs, *t*-values and significance level of all the items of the questionnaire and the totals can be seen in Table 5.

[Table 5 near here]

There was a significant difference in the total score for the L2 and L3 conditions $t(243) = 9.97, p = .00$, indicating that Spanish L1 speakers experienced more communicative anxiety in their L3 (English) ($M = 48.78, SD = 8.90$) than in their L2 (Basque) ($M = 40.68, SD = 12.63$). The differences were also significant in 8 of the 11 items and marginally significant in item 11. These results also confirm that the level of anxiety is higher in the case of English (L3) than in the case of Basque (L2).

The qualitative data show that Spanish L1 speakers experienced more communicative anxiety in their L3 (English) than in their L2 (Basque) when they were asked to compare anxiety in the two languages. It can be illustrated by the following quotes from the focus group discussions and interviews.

- (1) 'Siento mayor ansiedad hacia el inglés más que con el euskera. A mí me genera mucha más ansiedad hablar en inglés, yo creo que porque pienso si el euskera, la persona aquí no sabe euskera sabe castellano, entonces me puede hablar en castellano,

tengo ese recurso' (S1). (I feel more anxious in English than in Basque. I experience much more anxiety when speaking in English, because I think that here if somebody does not know Basque, s/he knows Spanish, so s/he can speak with me in Spanish, I have this resource).

- (2) 'Aquí tampoco hay oportunidades de utilizar el inglés, si no es que vayas a una academia de inglés o cojas y te vayas al extranjero no hay mucha práctica realmente. No es como con el euskera que entras a un sitio y te hablan en euskera, pero aquí no te habla nadie inglés por lo que no respondes inglés' (S12). (Here there are no opportunities to use English, unless you go to a language school or abroad, there are not many opportunities to practice the language. It is not like Basque, you go to a place and they talk to you in Basque but here nobody speaks in English, therefore you do not answer in English).

Basque L1 speakers' anxiety in Spanish (L2) or English (L3)

The fourth research question concerns the comparison of Basque L1 speakers' anxiety in their L2 and their L3. Again paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the anxiety of Basque L1 speakers towards their L2 (Spanish) and their L3 (English). The means, SDs, *t*- values and significance level of all the items of the questionnaire and the totals can be seen in Table 6.

There was a significant difference in the total score for the L2 and L3 conditions, $t(150) = 11.21, p = .00$, indicating that Basque L1 speakers experienced more communicative anxiety in their L3 (English) ($M = 47.76, SD = 9.47$) than in their L2 (Spanish) ($M = 35.19, SD = 12.62$).

The differences were significant in all the items confirming that the level of anxiety is higher in the case of English (L3) than in the case of Spanish (L2).

The qualitative data analyses show that participants experience more anxiety in English than in Spanish. In the focus group discussion, participants reflected on the topic as we can see in the following example:

Aquí no hay un dominio del inglés como puede haber en otros sitios. Yo creo que tampoco se trabaja tanto como en otros países y otros lugares y entonces a la hora de hablar la gente no lo controla tanto y es cuando aflora esa ansiedad (S4). (Here, there is not a good command of English in comparison with other places. I think that less work is done than in other countries and places and then people do not master the language to the same extent and anxiety arises).

[Table 6 near here]

[Figure 1 near here]

In sum, the results indicate that there are significant differences between anxiety in the L2 and the L3 both in the Spanish L1 and Basque L1 groups and also between anxiety in the L2 when the Spanish L1 and Basque L1 groups are compared to each other. Figure 1 shows the scores that have been reported in Tables 5 and 6.

Discussion

This study explores the anxiety of multilingual speakers, taking into account their whole linguistic repertoire (Basque, Spanish and English). The first research question looks at the anxiety experienced by Basque L1 and Spanish L1 speakers in their L2. The results show that Spanish L1 speakers experience more anxiety in Basque than Basque L1 speakers in Spanish. The differences in anxiety in the L2 seem to be linked to the minority status of Basque. Even if Basque is widely used at school, there are fewer opportunities for Spanish L1 speakers to use Basque outside school than for Basque L1 speakers to use Spanish. The competence level of the interlocutors may be one of the main causes why Spanish L1 speakers feel anxious when they speak Basque with Basque L1 speakers. In our study, Spanish L1 speakers perceived their competence level in Basque lower than Basque L1 speakers in Spanish. As we have seen in the focus group discussions and interviews, Basque L2 speakers may feel judged by Basque L1 speakers and they may feel afraid of making errors or not being fluent enough in Basque because they do not perceive themselves to be at the same level as native Basque L1 speakers. On the whole, our quantitative analyses indicate that anxiety levels in Spanish as an L2 by Basque L1 speakers is not as high and this could be related to the extensive use of Spanish in society. Our qualitative data show some isolated cases where anxiety in Spanish is experienced but this is only the case for some people who hardly use Spanish in daily life.

The second research question focuses on levels of communicative anxiety in the L3, English, in relation to participants' L1. The results show that there were no differences

between Basque L1 and Spanish L1 participants' levels of anxiety. This result may be related to the fact that both groups have had the similar exposure to the L3 English because they come from similar academic backgrounds.

The third research question analyses Spanish L1 speakers' communicative anxiety in their second (Basque) and third languages (English). The results show that Spanish L1 speakers experienced more communicative anxiety in their L3 (English) than in their L2 (Basque). Along the same lines, the fourth research question aims at analysing the communicative anxiety experienced by Basque L1 speakers in their second language (Spanish) and third language (English). The results also show that Basque L1 speakers experienced more communicative anxiety in their L3 (English) than in their L2.

Both, Spanish L1 and Basque L1 speakers experience more communicative anxiety in the L3 (English) than in the L2 (Basque or Spanish). These results go in the same direction as Dewaele (2007) and Dewaele et al. (2008) where higher levels of anxiety were reported in languages learnt later in life. Our participants reported that they had started learning English at the age of 6.37 and by that age they were already exposed to their L2.

The limited exposure to English outside school in the Basque Autonomous Community can also result in lower proficiency and increased anxiety. Self-perceived competence in English was lower in English than in the L2 for both Basque L1 and Spanish L1 participants and this could further explain the higher levels of anxiety (see also Dewaele & Ip, 2013; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Liu, 2006). The comments made by the participants in the focus group discussions and interviews indicate that the reference to the 'native speaker' is still strong and that participants are not confident about their proficiency in English.

The findings presented here are interesting but they also have some limitations because they are based on multilingual speakers' self-reported perceptions on anxiety. Perhaps, it could be interesting to use other complementary ways of investigating anxiety in future research. The study of the possible influence of other individual variables such as gender or the effect of the type of task and time pressure on communicative performance could also be the focus of further research.

In spite of these limitations, this study is unique in several ways. Most research studies on communicative anxiety have only focused on a second language even if it is technically not a second language but a third, a fourth or a fifth language without considering the multilingual speaker's whole linguistic repertoire. This study shows the need to adopt a multilingual focus that takes into account the different languages in the multilingual speaker's repertoire and the context in which these languages are used (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013, 2015). The results indicate that anxiety needs to be studied as related to the different languages in the whole linguistic repertoire. This study shows that the differences in the level of anxiety can be associated with language proficiency and language use in the social context. An approach that takes the whole linguistic repertoire and the social context into account can provide more insights into the study of anxiety than an approach that focuses on a single second or foreign language.

Disclosure statement

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Competence in Basque, Spanish and English (whole sample).

	Basque		Spanish		English	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Listening (max = 10)	8.92	1.65	9.66	0.81	6.59	1.69
Speaking (max = 10)	8.08	2.10	9.36	1.15	5.68	1.81
Reading (max = 10)	8.74	1.77	9.50	0.99	6.84	1.66
Writing (max = 10)	8.15	2.00	9.15	1.27	5.96	1.80

Table 2. Total competence in Basque, Spanish and English according to L1.

	Basque		Spanish		English	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
L1 Spanish	31.72	7.48	38.87	2.24	25.23	6.30
L1 Basque	37.95	3.97	35.45	4.94	24.80	6.28

Items	Spanish (L1) (n = 346)		Basque (L1) (n = 186)			
	M	SD	M	SD	T	S
1. I feel uncomfortable speaking Spanish/Basque (L2)	3.10	1.78	2.70	1.82	2.41	0.01
2. I feel nervous when I have to answer in Spanish/ Basque (L2)	3.24	1.88	2.61	1.75	3.77	0.00
3. I feel comfortable when I speak in Spanish / Basque (L2) with my friends	2.96	1.59	2.77	1.72	1.24	0.21
4. Sometimes I get nervous thinking that others will laugh when I speak Spanish/ Basque (L2)	3.43	1.83	2.77	1.80	3.94	0.00
5. I worry about making mistakes speaking in Spanish/Basque (L2)	4.34	1.59	3.59	1.87	4.92	0.00
6. Although I have a good Spanish/Basque (L2) level I get nervous	3.87	1.65	2.99	1.68	5.76	0.00
7. I feel nervous if I have to speak in Spanish/ Basque (L2) without preparation	3.53	1.84	2.76	1.87	4.52	0.00
8. I feel nervous when I have to speak in Spanish/Basque (L2) in front of others	3.16	1.98	3.14	1.88	0.10	0.91
9. I feel overwhelmed when I am not able to express what I think in Spanish/ Basque (L2)	4.29	1.65	3.53	1.89	4.83	0.00
10. When I get nervous it looks as if I know less Spanish/ Basque (L2)	4.62	1.65	3.54	1.81	6.88	0.00
11. I feel more comfortable speaking Spanish/ Basque (L2) with native speakers	4.12	1.66	2.79	1.71	7.67	0.00
Total score	40.68	12.63	35.19	12.62	4.19	0.00

Table 4. Anxiety in the L3.

Items	Spanish (L1) (n = 346)		Basque (L1) (n = 186)			
	M	SD	M	SD	T	S
1. I feel uncomfortable speaking English	4.01	1.67	4.16	1.80	-0.90	0.36
2. I feel nervous when I have to answer in English	4.32	1.65	4.41	1.62	-0.62	0.53
3. I feel comfortable when I speak in English with my friends	4.09	1.55	4.04	1.67	0.37	0.70
4. Sometimes I get nervous thinking that others will laugh when I speak English	3.79	1.73	3.91	1.72	-0.81	0.41
5. I worry about making mistakes speaking in English	4.43	1.49	4.26	1.53	1.28	0.20
6. Although I have a good English level I get nervous	4.00	1.58	3.58	1.64	2.90	0.00
7. I feel nervous if I have to speak in English without preparation	4.49	1.62	4.35	1.76	0.85	0.39
8. I feel nervous when I have to speak in English in front of others	4.72	1.58	4.62	1.67	0.71	0.47
9. I feel overwhelmed when I am not able to express what I think in English	4.91	1.35	4.80	1.47	0.88	0.37
10. When I get nervous it looks as if I know less English	5.07	1.27	4.84	1.40	1.91	0.05
11. I feel more comfortable speaking English with native speakers	4.24	1.53	4.31	1.56	-0.51	0.60
Total score	48.07	10.12	47.27	11.15	0.83	0.40

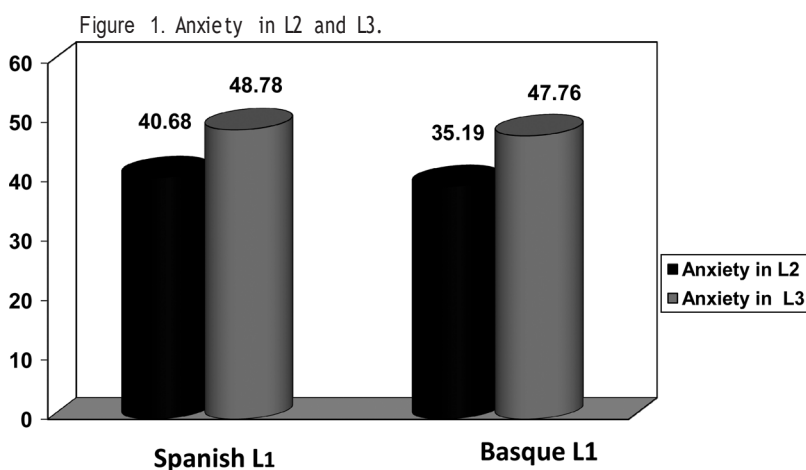
Table 5. Spanish L1 speakers' anxiety in L2/L3 (n = 346)

Items	Basque L2		English L3		T	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. I feel uncomfortable speaking ...	3.10	1.78	4.01	1.67	7.20	0.00
2. I feel nervous when I have to answer in ...	3.24	1.88	4.32	1.65	8.44	0.00
3. I feel comfortable when I speak in ... with my friends	2.96	1.59	4.09	1.55	9.81	0.00
4. Sometimes I get nervous thinking that others will laugh when I speak ...	3.43	1.83	3.79	1.73	3.06	0.00
5. I worry about making mistakes speaking in ...	4.34	1.59	4.43	1.49	0.95	0.34
6. Although I have a good ... level I get nervous	3.87	1.65	4.00	1.58	1.22	0.22
7. I feel nervous if I have to speak in ... without preparation	3.53	1.84	4.49	1.62	7.88	0.00
8. I feel nervous when I have to speak in ... in front of others	3.16	1.98	4.72	1.58	13.36	0.00
9. I feel overwhelmed when I am not able to express what I think in ...	4.29	1.65	4.91	1.35	6.35	0.00
10. When I get nervous it looks as if I know less ...	4.62	1.65	5.07	1.27	4.91	0.00
11. I feel more comfortable speaking ... with native speakers	4.12	1.66	4.34	1.54	1.67	0.09
Total score	40.68	12.63	48.78	8.90	9.97	0.00

Table 6. Basque L1 speakers' anxiety in L2/L3 (n = 186).

Items	Spanish (L2)		English (L3)		T	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. I feel uncomfortable speaking ...	2.70	1.82	4.16	1.80	8.31	0.00
2. I feel nervous when I have to answer in ...	2.61	1.75	4.41	1.62	11.27	0.00
3. I feel comfortable when I speak in ... with my friends	2.77	1.72	4.04	1.67	7.91	0.00

4. Sometimes I get nervous thinking that others will laugh when I speak ...	2.77	1.80	3.91	1.72	7.72	0.00
5. I worry about making mistakes speaking in ...	3.59	1.87	4.26	1.53	4.64	0.00
6. Although I have a good ... level I get nervous	2.99	1.68	3.58	1.64	3.84	0.00
7. I feel nervous if I have to speak in... without preparation	2.76	1.87	4.35	1.76	9.48	0.00
8. I feel nervous when I have to speak in... in front of others	3.14	1.88	4.62	1.67	9.08	0.00
9. I feel overwhelmed when I am not able to express what I think in ...	3.53	1.89	4.80	1.47	8.04	0.00
10. When I get nervous it looks as if I know less ...	3.54	1.81	4.84	1.40	8.80	0.00
11. I feel more comfortable speaking ... with native speakers	2.79	1.71	4.26	1.48	8.08	0.00
Total score	35.19	12.62	47.76	9.47	11.21	0.00



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