

Smart-shaming, Language Anxiety, and Self-Efficacy Among Criminology Students in a Private University

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Abstract

This study examined the levels and relationships of smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-efficacy in English-language learning among criminology students in a private university in Laguna, Philippines. It was anchored in Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory, which explain the interaction of social experiences, emotional responses, and cognitive beliefs in shaping classroom participation. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed. The respondents were 138 criminology students from different year levels selected through stratified random sampling with proportional allocation. Data were gathered using a validated and pilot-tested 30-item questionnaire administered through a four-point Likert scale. Weighted mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of the variables, while Pearson's r moment correlation coefficient was used to examine their relationships. The findings revealed a low level of smart-shaming, with an overall weighted mean of 2.12, indicating that peer ridicule and negative labeling occurred minimally. However, the respondents demonstrated high language anxiety, with an overall weighted mean of 2.65, particularly in speaking situations and performance evaluation. They also exhibited high self-efficacy, with an overall weighted mean of 2.92, especially in task completion and persistence. The relationships between smart-shaming and language anxiety, smart-shaming and self-efficacy, and language anxiety and self-efficacy were very weak or negligible and statistically non-significant. Thus, the null hypotheses were not rejected. The study concluded that students could experience considerable English-language anxiety while maintaining confidence and persistence in completing academic tasks. Educators were encouraged to sustain supportive classrooms, use gradual and low-stakes speaking activities, and provide structured communication exercises such as role-playing, mock interviews, and case presentations. The study supports SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being by addressing anxiety and psychosocial well-being and SDG 4: Quality Education by promoting inclusive and supportive learning environments. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening educational practices, student well-being, communication development, and institutionally responsive support programs.

Keywords: Criminology Students, English-Language Learning, Language Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Smart-Shaming, Speaking Anxiety

1. Introduction

English-language participation in higher education is influenced by students' linguistic competence and the social and psychological conditions surrounding classroom communication. Students are expected to participate in discussions, complete academic tasks, deliver oral reports, respond to evaluation, and interact with peers in English. These activities may expose them to peer judgment, communication anxiety, and doubts about their capabilities. Smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-efficacy are therefore important in understanding how criminology students participate in English classes. This study examines the levels and relationships of these variables among criminology students in a private university without assuming causal or mediating effects.

1.1 Smart-Shaming, Language Anxiety, and Self-Efficacy in English Classes

Students' academic participation in English classes depends not only on their language competence but also on affective and social factors that shape their willingness to communicate (Krashen, 1982; Dörnyei, 2005; Horwitz et al., 1986). Classroom discussions, oral reports, evaluative tasks, and peer interactions make emotions and social experiences important components of language learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Pradestina & Agustin, 2020). Smart-shaming refers to peer behaviors involving ridicule, teasing, labeling, and other negative reactions toward students who demonstrate academic competence (Lubid, 2024; Untalan et al., 2024; Quierrez et al., 2024). In English classes, it may occur when students are mocked for speaking English, using complex vocabulary, participating confidently, or appearing academically active. Students may also be called "bida-bida" or "too smart," potentially discouraging them from

communicating and participating (Lubid, 2024; Secapuri et al., 2023; Untalan et al., 2024). In Philippine classrooms, visible English competence may attract peer judgment, making positive participation a possible source of embarrassment and emotional distress (Villegas et al., 2023; Quierrez et al., 2024). Language anxiety is a situation-specific response associated with communication and evaluation. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and performance anxiety as its major components, while Özdemir (2025) and Libratar et al. (2025) emphasized speaking anxiety in higher education. It may be expressed through nervousness, hesitation, fear of committing errors, concern about mispronunciation, tension during oral reporting, and anxiety when responding to questions (Horwitz et al., 1986; Özdemir, 2025; Kho et al., 2025). Students may also experience pressure related to grades and teacher or peer evaluation, with mistakes sometimes resulting in diminished confidence (Horwitz et al., 1986; Libratar et al., 2025; Shen et al., 2024). Higher anxiety has consequently been associated with lower confidence and reduced classroom participation (Kho et al., 2025; Ulhusna, 2024). Self-efficacy concerns students' beliefs in their capability to complete required actions and academic tasks successfully. Bandura (1997) connected these beliefs with engagement, persistence, resilience, and task completion (Xu et al., 2024; Xu & Xu, 2025). In English learning, self-efficacy is reflected in students' confidence in contributing ideas, participating in discussions, making oral presentations, answering questions, and explaining concepts clearly (Bandura, 1997; Xu et al., 2024). It also involves understanding instructions, completing tasks, managing difficult activities, persisting through challenges, and attempting tasks again after setbacks (Bandura, 1997; Xu & Xu, 2025; Shen et al., 2024). Together, these variables demonstrate how social experiences, emotional reactions, and cognitive beliefs may shape classroom communication (Bandura, 1997; Horwitz et al., 1986).

1.2 Empirical Evidence on Smart-Shaming, Language Anxiety, and Self-Efficacy

Research identifies smart-shaming as both a sociocultural and psychological concern. Lubid (2024) found that expressions such as “edi wow” may be used sarcastically to ridicule academically motivated students and discourage visible intellectual engagement. Untalan et al. (2024) similarly described smart-shaming as a social practice that labels high-performing students as “bida-bida.” Its reported psychosocial consequences include diminished confidence, social isolation, academic pressure, and reduced motivation. Quierrez et al. (2024) emphasized its effects on college students, while Secapuri et al. (2023) associated the practice with anti-intellectual attitudes expressed through culturally embedded humor. Villegas et al. (2023) further identified English-language competence as a possible trigger when students perceive proficient speakers as displaying superiority. Related studies show that ridicule, negative labeling, and fear of peer judgment can undermine students' confidence, participation, and emotional well-being (Lubid, 2024; Quierrez et al., 2024; Villegas et al., 2023). Humor may conceal these behaviors and lead students to avoid speaking or minimize their academic participation to protect themselves from embarrassment (Secapuri et al., 2023; Untalan et al., 2024). Secapuri et al. (2023), Lubid (2024), and Untalan et al. (2024) found that academically active secondary students were subjected to teasing, ridicule, and negative labeling, even when these behaviors were presented as jokes. Language anxiety has long been examined in relation to second-language acquisition and communication. Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualized foreign-language classroom anxiety through communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) explained that anxiety may interfere with the encoding and retrieval of knowledge, while Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) viewed language-learning experiences as involving both anxiety and enjoyment. The Affective Filter Hypothesis of S. D. Krashen (1982) likewise supports the view that heightened anxiety can obstruct language acquisition by interfering with the processing of linguistic input. Studies such as Pradestina and Agustin (2020) have also shown that anxiety reduces student involvement in classroom conversations. More recent evidence indicates that fear of negative evaluation and low confidence remain prominent sources of anxiety in higher education. Özdemir (2025) identified these sources together with strategies that students use to cope with language anxiety. Kho et al. (2025) found that language anxiety was negatively related to willingness to communicate, with self-efficacy serving an important role in the relationship. These findings support the continuing relevance of language anxiety to classroom engagement and communication. Self-efficacy was introduced as a central component of Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura (1997), referring to an individual's belief in the ability to accomplish a specific task. It supports motivation, sustained effort, and achievement when learners encounter difficult activities (Pajares, 2002). In language learning, Libratar et al. (2025) reported that greater self-efficacy was associated with lower speaking anxiety among English majors. Ulhusna's (2024) systematic review similarly identified a consistent negative relationship between self-efficacy and language anxiety. Shen et al. (2024) connected self-efficacy with metacognitive strategies and writing anxiety, showing that students with stronger self-beliefs use more effective strategies and encounter fewer barriers to accomplishing their goals. Xu et al. (2024) demonstrated its contribution to engagement through self-regulated learning, while Xu and Xu (2025) associated it positively with psychological resilience among language learners. Empirical findings therefore indicate an inverse relationship between language anxiety and self-efficacy, in which heightened anxiety corresponds with lower confidence, willingness to communicate, and engagement (Kho et al., 2025; Libratar et al., 2025; Ulhusna, 2024).

1.3 Smart-Shaming and English Communication in Philippine Higher Education

Globally, language-learning research has established that anxiety can interfere with cognition, communication, and classroom participation. However, smart-shaming introduces a socially and culturally situated concern that is particularly relevant to Philippine education. Filipino humor, sarcasm, peer labeling, and anti-intellectual attitudes may discourage

students from displaying academic competence, particularly when they speak English confidently or use advanced vocabulary (Lubid, 2024; Quierrez et al., 2024; Villegas et al., 2023). Local research describes smart-shaming as a subtle form of social control that may cause students to suppress participation to avoid ridicule (Secapuri et al., 2023; Untalan et al., 2024). It can influence not only language use but also students' motivation, confidence, social relationships, and emotional well-being. These conditions are significant in peer-driven classrooms where oral participation is regularly required. Much of the available research on smart-shaming has involved secondary students, while higher education research on language anxiety and self-efficacy has often concentrated on English majors. Libratar et al. (2025), for example, focused on learners whose academic specialization and language-learning objectives may differ from those of criminology students. The experiences of English majors or senior high school students may therefore not fully represent criminology students who must also participate in classroom discussions, oral reporting, and evaluative communication activities.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Relationships Among Smart-Shaming, Language Anxiety, and Self-Efficacy

The study is grounded in theories explaining how social experiences, emotions, and cognitive beliefs influence language-learning behavior. Students experience academic demands alongside interpersonal dynamics that may affect their psychological well-being, confidence, and classroom participation (Pradestina & Agustin, 2020; Xu et al., 2024). Smart-shaming is treated as a social-environmental factor involving remarks or behaviors that ridicule perceived intelligence, competence, or academic performance (Lubid, 2024; Untalan et al., 2024; Villegas et al., 2023). Although the construct remains emergent, it is associated with peer ridicule, negative evaluation, and anti-intellectualism, which may weaken students' self-esteem and engagement (Secapuri et al., 2023; Quierrez et al., 2024). Language anxiety is grounded in the Foreign Language Anxiety Theory developed by Elaine K. Horwitz, Michael B. Horwitz, and Joann Cope (1986). The theory explains language anxiety as a situation-specific response involving communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Because language learning requires students to express themselves in a language in which they may lack confidence, smart-shaming may intensify self-consciousness and fear of making mistakes during discussions, oral presentations, and other evaluative activities. The study is also anchored in Albert Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which proposes that individuals' beliefs in their capabilities influence motivation, persistence, and performance. Self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological or emotional states. Negative peer feedback and public embarrassment may weaken students' beliefs in their English competence, while stronger self-efficacy may support continued engagement despite difficulties. The broader conceptual framework follows Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), in which social experiences, emotional responses, and personal beliefs interact in shaping behavior. Smart-shaming represents the social-environmental dimension, language anxiety represents the affective response, and self-efficacy represents the cognitive belief system. The framework examines three pairwise relationships: smart-shaming and language anxiety, smart-shaming and self-efficacy, and language anxiety and self-efficacy. It does not assume causal or mediating relationships but determines the direction and strength of the associations among the variables.

1.5 Research Gap and Rationale Among Criminology Students in a Private University

Existing evidence shows that negative peer interactions can increase fear of evaluation and language anxiety (Quierrez et al., 2024; Özdemir, 2025). Anxiety may also alter students' confidence and self-assessment, resulting in lower self-efficacy (Libratar et al., 2025; Shen et al., 2024). Although these relationships have been examined separately, limited research integrates smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-efficacy within one framework. Research is particularly limited among criminology students in private higher education institutions. The study addresses this gap by determining the levels of smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-efficacy among criminology students in a private university. It assesses peer-related smart-shaming, speaking anxiety, performance-evaluation worry, confidence in spoken English, and confidence in completing English-related academic tasks. It further determines whether significant relationships exist between smart-shaming and language anxiety, smart-shaming and self-efficacy, and language anxiety and self-efficacy. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed, with criminology students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using a validated Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson's r moment correlation coefficient (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study measures associations and does not establish causation. Consistent with this design, the study tests three null hypotheses. H_{01} states that there is no significant relationship between smart-shaming and language anxiety among criminology students. H_{02} states that there is no significant relationship between smart-shaming and self-efficacy among criminology students. H_{03} states that there is no significant relationship between language anxiety and self-efficacy among criminology students.

1.6 Alignment of the Study with SDG 3 and SDG 4

The study is aligned with SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being because it examines language anxiety, emotional distress, diminished confidence, and the psychosocial consequences of negative peer behavior. Understanding these experiences may support educational practices that protect students' psychological well-being and reduce classroom conditions associated with fear, embarrassment, and social isolation. It is also aligned with SDG 4: Quality Education because meaningful learning requires inclusive and supportive classrooms in which students can participate without ridicule or excessive fear of negative evaluation. By examining the relationships among smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-

efficacy, the study may inform strategies that promote active participation, effective English communication, learner confidence, and equitable access to constructive classroom experiences.

1.7 Educational, Psychosocial, and Institutional Sustainability of the Study

The study contributes to educational sustainability by identifying social and psychological conditions that may affect students' continued participation, communication, persistence, and successful completion of English-related tasks. Its findings may assist educators in establishing learning environments that discourage smart-shaming, reduce speaking anxiety, and strengthen students' confidence in classroom communication. Its psychosocial sustainability contribution lies in promoting awareness of how ridicule, peer labeling, evaluative pressure, and emotional responses may influence students' well-being and academic behavior. Students may gain a clearer understanding of how social relationships and emotional states relate to communication and confidence, while educators may become better equipped to foster respectful and psychologically supportive interactions. The study also supports institutional sustainability by providing school administrators and curriculum developers with evidence that may guide policies, instructional approaches, student-support measures, and communication-development initiatives. These applications can help institutions maintain inclusive learning environments that encourage participation, safeguard student well-being, and strengthen the academic and communication capabilities of criminology students.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to investigate the relationships among smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-efficacy in language learning. The quantitative approach involved collecting measurable data that could be subjected to statistical analysis (Creswell, 2014; Williams, 2007). The descriptive component determined the respondents' experiences of smart-shaming and their levels of language anxiety and self-efficacy, while the correlational component examined the relationships among the three variables without manipulating the study environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at a private university in Laguna, Philippines. The institution served as the setting for examining smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-efficacy among criminology students from different year levels.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 138 criminology students enrolled at the private university. They included 85 first-year students, 11 second-year students, 17 third-year students, and 25 fourth-year students.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The respondents were selected through stratified random sampling with proportional allocation. This procedure ensured that criminology students from all four year levels were represented in the sample.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a 30-item survey questionnaire to determine the respondents' experiences of smart-shaming and their levels of language anxiety and self-efficacy. The instrument underwent face and content validation by experts in language education, research, and statistics. It was also pilot-tested among 20 criminology students from a private college. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the instrument's internal consistency. The smart-shaming indicators obtained a coefficient of .962, indicating excellent internal consistency. Language anxiety obtained .946, also indicating excellent internal consistency, while self-efficacy in language learning obtained .895, indicating good internal consistency. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale in which 1 corresponded to "Strongly Disagree," 2 to "Disagree," 3 to "Agree," and 4 to "Strongly Agree." The absence of a neutral midpoint encouraged respondents to express either agreement or disagreement and minimized central tendency bias or "play-safe" responses (Edwards, 1957; Siegle, 2010).

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the respondents were informed about the rationale, purpose, risks, and benefits of the study. The validated questionnaire was then administered to the selected criminology students to obtain data on smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-efficacy in language learning.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The study employed descriptive and inferential statistics. Weighted mean and standard deviation were used to describe the respondents' smart-shaming experiences, language anxiety in terms of speaking anxiety and performance and evaluation worry, and self-efficacy in terms of confidence in speaking and task completion and persistence. Pearson's *r* Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationships between smart-shaming and language anxiety, smart-

shaming and language self-efficacy, and language anxiety and language self-efficacy. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to assess the normality of the data distribution. The generated p-values were greater than the alpha level of 0.05 and were therefore non-significant, indicating that the data were normally distributed. Visual inspection of the scatterplots showed that the variables had linear relationships, with the data points reasonably distributed around the regression lines. Boxplots and standardized scores were also examined for extreme outliers. No cases exceeded the ± 3.29 threshold, indicating the absence of extreme outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). These results supported the use of Pearson’s correlation.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The respondents were informed of the study’s purpose, rationale, possible risks, and benefits before participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Levels of Smart-Shaming, Language Anxiety, and Self-Efficacy

3.1.1 Smart-Shaming Experienced by Criminology Students

The respondents experienced a low level of smart-shaming, with an average weighted mean of 2.12 and a standard deviation of 0.729. The highest-rated experience was embarrassment when classmates praised them for speaking English, with a weighted mean of 2.27, while the lowest was receiving negative reactions for using advanced English vocabulary, with a weighted mean of 2.00. All indicators were rated low, showing that ridicule, criticism, negative peer reactions, laughter, mocking, and labels such as “bida-bida” occurred only minimally. The limited variation in the scores also indicated relatively consistent perceptions of smart-shaming across classroom situations. The findings suggest that the respondents’ learning environment was generally supportive or neutral and did not strongly discourage English participation. This contrasts with the studies of Lubid (2024), Quierrez et al. (2024), and Untalan et al. (2024), which identified smart-shaming as a behavior that reduces participation, confidence, and emotional well-being. Similarly, Secapuri et al. (2023) highlighted that ridicule disguised as humor can discourage students from expressing their knowledge. The difference may be related to classroom norms, peer relationships, and the disciplinary culture of criminology students. Nevertheless, subtle humor-based forms may remain present, consistent with Lubid (2024) and Untalan et al. (2024), who observed that peer ridicule may be embedded in ordinary classroom interactions without being recognized as harmful.

3.1.2 Speaking Anxiety in English Classes

The respondents demonstrated a high level of speaking anxiety, with an average weighted mean of 2.77 and a standard deviation of 0.738. Nervousness when speaking English in class received the highest weighted mean of 2.84, followed by tension when called to answer in English at 2.80. Fear of making mistakes and concern about mispronunciation both obtained 2.77. Anxiety during oral reporting received the lowest mean of 2.64 but remained within the high category. These results show that both prepared and spontaneous speaking activities caused discomfort, although immediate classroom responses generated greater anxiety. The findings indicate that speaking anxiety was associated with communication immediacy, linguistic spontaneity, and perceived judgment. In line with Horwitz et al. (1986), this pattern reflects communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. Students appeared particularly anxious when they had limited time to prepare or monitor their responses. The high anxiety level does not necessarily indicate an inability to communicate in English but reflects emotional and psychological barriers that may reduce active classroom participation.

3.1.3 Performance and Evaluation Worry

The respondents had a high level of performance and evaluation worry, with an average weighted mean of 2.53 and a standard deviation of 0.739. Worry about grades in English tasks obtained the highest mean of 2.68, followed by reduced confidence after making mistakes at 2.61. Anxiety about evaluation by teachers or classmates obtained 2.51. Pressure to perform English tasks received 2.49, while stress in completing English assignments obtained the lowest mean of 2.37. The respondents therefore experienced greater concern about the quality and evaluation of their performance than about completing the tasks themselves. The results indicate that the respondents’ anxiety was mainly outcome-oriented rather than caused by the difficulty or workload of English tasks. Students appeared capable of completing assignments but remained concerned about grades, accuracy, mistakes, and external judgment. This aligns with Özdemir (2025), who emphasized that evaluation-related anxiety often develops from fear of negative assessment rather than actual task difficulty. Classroom practices that emphasize grades, correctness, and public evaluation may therefore intensify psychological pressure and reduce students’ confidence in using English.

3.1.4 Overall Language Anxiety

The respondents demonstrated a high overall level of language anxiety, with a weighted mean of 2.65 and a standard deviation of 0.697. Speaking anxiety obtained a higher mean of 2.77 than performance and evaluation worry, which obtained 2.53. The difference of 0.24 indicates that speaking situations produced slightly stronger emotional responses, although both domains remained within the high category. The results show that language anxiety affected both the communication process and concerns about performance outcomes. In line with the findings of Kho et al. (2025), Libratar

et al. (2025), Ulhusna (2024), the high level of language anxiety may be associated with external pressure, fear of judgment, and academic expectations rather than the inherent difficulty of English. Visible participation, graded performance, and easily noticed errors may increase students' sensitivity to peer and teacher evaluation. From a social cognitive perspective, these conditions may affect emotional regulation and willingness to communicate even when students possess the necessary language abilities.

3.1.5 Confidence in Speaking English

The respondents had a high level of self-efficacy in confidence in speaking, with an average weighted mean of 2.74 and a standard deviation of 0.547. Confidence in joining English class discussions obtained the highest mean of 2.80, followed by confidence in sharing ideas at 2.77. Confidence in oral presentations obtained 2.73, while belief in answering questions correctly received 2.72. The negatively worded statement concerning difficulty in improving English-speaking skills obtained 2.67, indicating that some respondents remained uncertain about developing greater proficiency despite their confidence in performing current speaking tasks. These findings support Ulhusna (2024), who emphasized the importance of self-efficacy in language learners' confidence and engagement. The respondents appeared more confident in interactive and participatory activities than in complex or individually evaluated speaking tasks. This pattern reflects Bandura's (1997) concept of domain-specific self-efficacy, in which confidence varies according to the nature and difficulty of a task. The results also indicate that confidence and anxiety can coexist because students may believe they are capable of speaking English while still experiencing emotional discomfort during communication.

3.1.6 Task Completion and Persistence in English Learning

The respondents demonstrated a high level of task completion and persistence, with an average weighted mean of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 0.572. Persistence in learning English despite challenges obtained the highest mean of 3.14, followed by the ability to understand and follow English instructions at 3.13. Finishing tasks even when they required considerable time received 3.10, trying again after an unsuccessful attempt obtained 3.09, and completing challenging English tasks received 3.06. These findings show that the respondents sustained effort and completed their tasks despite difficulty. The findings are consistent with Xu, Li, and Yang (2024), who found that self-efficacy influences learning engagement and persistence. Xu and Xu (2025) likewise highlighted its contribution to psychological resilience, while Shen et al. (2024) connected self-efficacy with the management of academic demands and continued effort. The respondents' persistence may also reflect the structured and disciplined nature of criminology education, which emphasizes accountability, endurance, and task completion. Their high persistence does not indicate an absence of anxiety or difficulty but shows that they continued working despite these challenges.

3.1.7 Overall Self-Efficacy in Language Learning

The respondents had a high overall level of self-efficacy in language learning, with a weighted mean of 2.92 and a standard deviation of 0.495. Task completion and persistence received a higher mean of 3.10 than confidence in speaking, which obtained 2.74. This indicates that the respondents relied more strongly on sustained effort and perseverance than on ease or confidence in oral communication. These findings support Ulhusna (2024), who identified self-efficacy as an important factor in language-learning participation and performance. Xu, Li, and Yang (2024) similarly found that stronger self-efficacy promotes participation and sustained effort. The high level of self-efficacy, despite high language anxiety, reinforces Bandura's (1997) position that self-efficacy is not simply the absence of anxiety but a distinct cognitive belief shaped by mastery experience. Students may therefore experience communication anxiety while maintaining confidence in their ability to complete tasks and succeed academically.

3.2 Relationships Among Smart-Shaming, Language Anxiety, and Self-Efficacy

3.2.1 Relationship Between Smart-Shaming and Language Anxiety

Smart-shaming had a very weak positive correlation with speaking anxiety, with $r = 0.106$ and $p = .089$. It also had a very weak positive correlation with performance and evaluation worry, with $r = 0.193$ and $p = .132$. Based on the correlation classification of (Evans, 1996), both relationships had very weak effect sizes. Since the p -values were greater than the .05 significance level, neither relationship was statistically significant. Smart-shaming therefore accounted for only a minimal proportion of the variation in language anxiety. The non-significant relationships may be associated with the respondents' low level of smart-shaming. Ulhusna (2024) emphasized that language anxiety is influenced by several internal and external factors rather than a single social experience, while Özdemir (2025) explained that its intensity may vary according to coping strategies and classroom conditions. The findings contrast with Quierrez et al. (2024) and Untalan et al. (2024), who reported significant psychosocial effects from peer ridicule. Lubid (2024) and Secapuri et al. (2023) also observed that humor-based criticism and anti-intellectual labeling may discourage participation. Although the relationships were not statistically significant, their positive direction suggests that subtle peer behavior may still have a minimal influence on language anxiety.

3.2.2 Relationship Between Smart-Shaming and Self-Efficacy

Smart-shaming had a very weak negative correlation with confidence in speaking, with $r = -0.076$ and $p = .415$, and with task completion and persistence, with $r = -0.144$ and $p = .120$. Based on the correlation classification of (Evans, 1996), both coefficients represented negligible to very weak relationships. Since both p -values exceeded .05, smart-shaming had no statistically significant relationship with either dimension of self-efficacy. The findings suggest that peer ridicule had limited direct influence on the respondents' confidence and persistence. This supports Bandura (1997), who explained that self-efficacy is strongly shaped by mastery experiences and cognitive processes. It is also consistent with Ulhusna (2024), who emphasized that self-efficacy develops through combined cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences. Shen et al. (2024) and Xu, Li, and Yang (2024) associated self-efficacy with self-regulated learning and engagement, while Xu and Xu (2025) connected it to psychological resilience. These factors may explain why the respondents maintained high self-efficacy despite smart-shaming experiences described by Lubid (2024), Quierrez et al. (2024), and Untalan et al. (2024). Villegas et al. (2023) and Secapuri et al. (2023) noted that the effects of humor and peer labeling may vary according to students' coping mechanisms and classroom climate. The non-significant findings therefore indicate insufficient statistical evidence of a meaningful relationship rather than the complete absence of influence.

3.2.3 Relationship Between Language Anxiety and Self-Efficacy

Speaking anxiety had a negligible negative correlation with confidence in speaking, with $r = -.007$ and $p = .940$, and a very weak positive correlation with task completion and persistence, with $r = .107$ and $p = .249$. Performance and evaluation worry had a weak negative correlation with confidence in speaking, with $r = -.014$ and $p = .882$, and task completion and persistence, with $r = -.030$ and $p = .750$. Based on the correlation classification of (Evans, 1996), the relationships had negligible to very weak effect sizes. All p -values were greater than .05, indicating no statistically significant relationship between language anxiety and self-efficacy. Although existing theoretical perspectives generally propose an inverse relationship between language anxiety and self-efficacy, this pattern was not statistically supported among the respondents. The criminology context may help explain why language anxiety and self-efficacy functioned relatively independently. Students may have become accustomed to performance pressure, discipline, and demanding tasks, allowing them to maintain confidence and persistence despite anxiety. The overall findings show that smart-shaming was low, while language anxiety and self-efficacy were both high. However, the variables did not demonstrate strong statistical interdependence. This suggests that the environmental, emotional, and cognitive components of Social Cognitive Theory may not operate in a strictly linear manner within a non-language-specialized academic setting.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study found that criminology students experienced a low level of smart-shaming, a high level of language anxiety, and a high level of self-efficacy. Smart-shaming was not prevalent, suggesting that the classroom environment generally supported self-expression without strong fear of peer ridicule. However, students experienced considerable anxiety when speaking English, responding immediately, and being evaluated by others. Despite this anxiety, they maintained confidence in completing English-related tasks and persisted when difficulties arose. The relationships among smart-shaming, language anxiety, and self-efficacy were very weak and statistically non-significant; therefore, the null hypotheses were not rejected.

Educators should maintain supportive classroom environments that discourage smart-shaming and reduce performance pressure during English communication. Gradual exposure to speaking tasks and low-stakes oral activities may be used to address language anxiety. Universities may also provide structured communication activities, including role-playing, mock interviews, and case presentations, to strengthen speaking confidence and task-based self-efficacy. Future studies should involve larger samples from different disciplines and cultural settings and examine teaching strategies, classroom climate, and students' coping mechanisms.

The study was limited to a relatively small sample of criminology students from different year levels in one private institution, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to other populations and educational settings. The disciplined social environment of the criminology program may also have influenced the respondents' experiences and responses. Since psychological experiences in language learning depend on context, the findings should not be generalized to all students or institutions.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study was conducted with due regard for research integrity, participant welfare, transparency, privacy, and confidentiality. Before data collection, the respondents were informed of the study's purpose, rationale, possible risks, and benefits. A validated survey questionnaire was administered to collect the required data, while the respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

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