

ANXIETY AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: HOW TEACHERS DEAL WITH IT

Nguyen Thanh Hien

Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry

Email: hiennt1003@cntp.edu.vn

ABSTRACT

The research is carried out to identify how foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) has effects on students' learning English. A list of questionnaire has been given to 83 English-majored students at HUFU, also an interview used for exploring the sources of anxiety. The outcome shows that the correlation between anxiety and learning a foreign language or English is considerably negative. The research also suggests some classroom activities which teachers can use to support her students to get rid of their anxieties in learning a second language.

Keywords: Anxiety, Correlation, SLA, FLCA, FLCAS, Pearson's.

1 INTRODUCTION

My students usually felt very worried when they were called to answer my questions even though their English is not bad. Therefore, I am always thinking of how to help my students express themselves confidently, instead of sitting quietly. I realized that it was anxiety that prevented them from learning English. Besides that, there are a lot of English teachers who have known that it is anxiety that affects negatively on students not only their learning, but also their reactions and results. These kinds of students are this research's subjects.

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is done to try to identify the influence of anxiety on English learning. Therefore, the two questions are:

Have Vietnamese learners experienced foreign language anxiety?

How should teachers deal with it?

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature usually distinguishes anxiety has three kinds: The first one is "trait anxiety". This kind of anxiety relates to a person's personality. The second is "state anxiety" which is the experience that the learners have in a certain of time, and the third one is "situational anxiety". This anxiety is something that students have to suffer in a particular circumstance.

According to Ellis (1985), anxiety can cause stimulation or hind for the learners in learning a second language. When learners failed in performing a task, they might get discouragement or motivation to keep up with the compatible students.

From Baily’s list, we can see a “seven categories” of anxiety (as cited in Hedge, 2000, p.20):

Overtness – privacy – How I compare myself with others.

Emotional replies which include the way they react emotively to their classmates.

The wish to be the winner in the exam such as to be the first one that can complete the test in the class.

Too many exams and scores/marks, particularly in comparison with classmates.

The hope to gain teacher’s good comments.

The fear at the moment that mistakes on lessons are made in the English class.

The experience in acquiring a language is excited by the time the students’ engagement was so controlled.

Positive anxiety

The opinions about how important are the influences of anxiety on learners’ second language acquisition are different among language researchers. According to Horwitz (as cited in Oxford 1999), he claimed that the anxiety becomes helpful only for the easy and less complicated activities. However, other researchers say that anxiety is always worthy and they are finding the answer to this.

Negative anxiety

Anxiety always appears when students learn the skills such as listening and speaking. This will lead the students to become less proficient (Spolsky, 1989). These interferences may affect students’ language learning. Therefore, MacIntyre (1995) mentioned as below:

Language learning is a cognitive activity that relies on encoding, storage, and retrieval processes, and anxiety can interfere with each of these by creating a divided attention scenario for anxious students. Anxious students are focused on both the task and their reactions to it. (p. 96)

According to Turular (2002, p.31), the differences between an anxious learner differs and a good learner are compared and shown as below.

| Anxious Learner | Good Learner |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Not risky | Risky |
| Depends on short-term memory | Has ambiguous tolerance |
| Has hypothetical reluctance | Has experience in making guess and inference |
| Doesn’t know how to organize ideas | Knows how to monitor, categorize and synthesize. |
| Is always anxious and frustrated | Is optimistic, friendly and extrovert. |

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Foreign Language Anxiety in learning a second language is seen to be a contextual anxiety. Therefore, I suggest to use Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) carried out by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) to evaluate the degree of three related anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of unfavorable evaluation in a foreign language classroom. In

the scale, there are 33 items from point 1 to point 5 (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”) in which 9 statements (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, 32) have been reversed so that a high score shows high anxiety.

FLCAS is administered to 83 English-majored students at HUFİ: The students have been following a specialized English subject which is English for Tourism (3 English periods per week). The students are from 19-20 years old and they almost have the same level (Intermediate).

From the questionnaire, 33 items from each student’s feedback are averaged and the percentage of “agree” which replies agree to item 7, 10 and 19 for degrees of inferiority fearful anticipation, exam worries and scares of being negatively evaluated by the teacher.

I am as a researcher also make two questions to identify how students feel anxious when they learn a second language. 5 participants are picked coincidentally and their names are not shown in the research.

1. What makes you feel annoyed the most when you learn English?
2. Do you know how to reduce the stress in language classes?

Data Analysis

| | Group |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Item 7: Inferiority apprehension | 38.25% |
| Item 10: Test anxiety | 57.20 % |
| Item 19: Fear of negative evaluation | 24.05 % |
| Pearson Correlation (r) | -.3052 |

The table shows that FLCA and SLA have a significantly negative correlation ($r = -.3052$). The results also indicate that learners experience much stress, especially in terms of test anxiety (57.20 %). Meanwhile, 38.25% feel that other students speak better English than they do (Item 7) while a quarter are worried about negative evaluation (Item 19). According to Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, there exists “a mental block, caused by affective factors... that prevents input from reaching the language acquisition device” (1985, p.100). Therefore, learners with higher anxiety level prevent themselves from receiving comprehensible input, which leads to worse achievements. After a series of failures, they lose all interest and may give up learning. On the contrary, students with lower anxiety can not only make a response immediately but also adjust themselves promptly to novel situations.

5 DISCUSSION

5 students - 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from the group of 83 English-majored (personal communication, April, 2018) give answer to the two following questions in an interview.

Leaner 1:

I think, I feel very scared when the teacher called me to present in front of a lot of people and I also care about scores too because my parents will be sad if I do not get good results.

I think the teacher should have more funny games during the lesson.

Learner 2:

I am not sure of myself only when I am not well-prepared.

Teacher should have more activities for students to speak

Learner 3:

I hate test because my grammar is very poor.

Teacher should have more practice about grammar during the lesson.

Learner 4:

My heart often stands still when I think I am going to be called. I do not know why.

Group activities.

Learner 5:

Speaking, though I like it... because I often stammer. I felt frightened when the teacher called my name to answer her questions because I lack English vocabulary.

I need more funny activities and games for me to join.

The results of the interview reveal that almost every student who was in the interview had to suffer different degrees of foreign language anxiety. There was one student said that it was the lack of vocabulary that caused his anxiety, and most of them thought that their biggest problem was oral presentation. Hence, it is important that the teacher should tell her students how to use the learning techniques effectively and how to make them become confident. Besides, from the interview I can see that students also suffered a lot of stress because of their exams and they are really worried for the marks. In the second question for students' interview, those 5 interviewees also suggested some ways that the English teachers can use to make their classes less stressful.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEACHING

Anxiety can negatively affect language learning in numerous ways and that reducing anxiety does increase language acquisition. The question is: What should a good teacher do?

The teacher should act as a facilitator whose role is to help their students to become more independent and more responsible for their own learning, not just a manager or an assessor. As a result, the teacher become students' partner in the learning process.

According to Wörde (2003), he insists that creating a crowd such as letting students sit in a semi-circle or oval is advisable. Moreover, active ambience will motivate more students' participation in the classroom activities positively when they make efforts to be a member of their peers.

It is said that creating a less stressful and funnier classroom atmosphere depends much on the way the teachers manage their classes. A competent teacher would know clearly about how to encourage their students' competence. To do that, the teacher gear their students to a lot of exciting topics such as talking about students' daily routines/ hobbies, Vietnamese/ world's popular destinations etc. as their subject is English for tourism.

7 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Structuring Group work is a good idea for anxious students to have time to do their practice before they perform in front of their teacher and friends. When I organized pair work and group work, some students refused to follow since they just stuck to their usual position or they were not used to working with others. However, the ways that teacher divided the workload also cause students' dissatisfaction. It meant that there were some students who might feel overwhelmed when they had to do a lot of share. I often organize competitive games to encourage risk-taking and facilitate students' positive attitudes towards learning. I also organized a lot of activities which help my students can express themselves such as board games, interviews, play-acting, topic presentation or even group discussions. Almost of them act more and they participate more Most learners can be active and participative after they made a lot of mistakes, but what they received is that improved significantly both their English and confidence.

I have to face with the problem that I cannot make a classroom in which students are centered because of the large class size. Instead, I tend to call some dynamic students to make oral presentations first to set good examples. Sometimes, my class is like a mess when I let students form groups for discussion. I think it deserves a try because I noticed some quiet students got involved in their team's activities and raise aloud their answers. They can overcome their anxiety gradually by this way.



Topic Presentation



Working in group



Role-play

Working in groups is ideal for communicative activities. Once I gave my students some candies with different colors for various topics (E.g.: red for transports, blue for accommodations, brown for

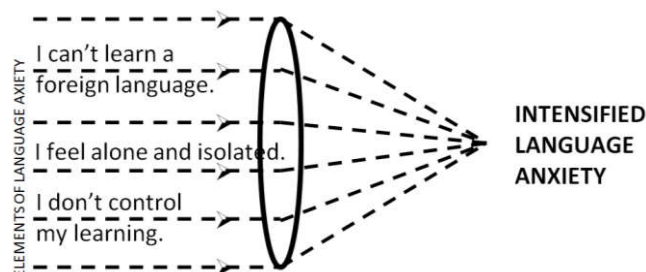
destinations, etc.). After a few minutes of deservedness, they started to talk freely about themselves and then enjoy the sweets. In the role play below, one student was more competent than the other, which required the teacher’s encouragement to engage in the conversation, and she could make it.

8 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

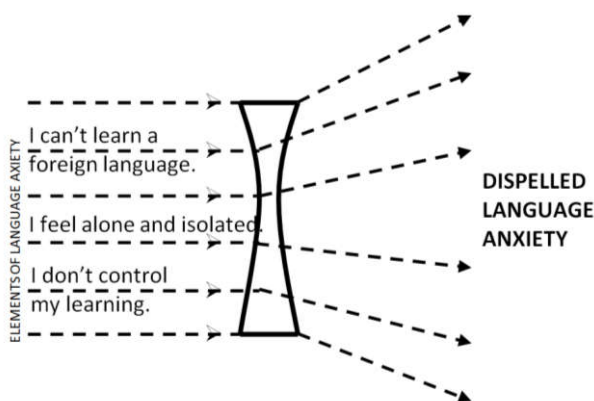
It is evident that anxiety somehow influences on learners when they learn a second language. To motivate anxiety become a helpful one, debilitating effects should be tackled with cautions. As a teacher, I think I should do many roles in my classroom such as working as not only a facilitator, an organizer, a controller but also a generous evaluator to encourage my nervous and anxious students. His attitudes resemble the way light passes through a lens, which can contribute to stress intensification (a convex lens) or worry reduction (a concave lens). A sense of caring and sharing will help students, of course.

The Lens Analogy: Intensified and Dispelled Language Anxiety (Turula, 2002, p. 33)

An Authoritarian Uncompromising Teacher



A Compromising Teacher



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- [12] Adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986)
- [13] (1 = I strongly disagree; 2 = I disagree; 3 = No comment; 4 = I agree; 5 = I strongly agree)

| How do I feel in class? | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class. | | | | | |
| 2 | I don't worry about making mistakes in English class. | | | | | |
| 3 | I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class. | | | | | |
| 4 | It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English class. | | | | | |
| 5 | It bothers me to take more English classes. | | | | | |
| 6 | During English classes, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course. | | | | | |
| 7 | I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than me. | | | | | |
| 8 | I am not usually at ease during tests in my class. | | | | | |
| 9 | I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class. | | | | | |
| 10 | I worry about the consequences of failing my English class. | | | | | |
| 11 | I understand why some people get so upset over English class. | | | | | |
| 12 | In English class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know. | | | | | |
| 13 | It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class. | | | | | |
| 14 | I would be nervous speaking English with native speakers. | | | | | |
| 15 | I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting. | | | | | |
| 16 | Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it. | | | | | |

| How do I feel in class? | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | I often feel like not going to my English class. | | | | | |
| 18 | I don't feel confident when I speak in English class. | | | | | |
| 19 | I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make. | | | | | |
| 20 | I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class. | | | | | |
| 21 | The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get. | | | | | |
| 22 | I feel pressure to prepare very well for English class. | | | | | |
| 23 | I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do. | | | | | |
| 24 | I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students. | | | | | |
| 25 | English class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind. | | | | | |
| 26 | I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes. | | | | | |
| 27 | I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class. | | | | | |
| 28 | When I'm on my way to English class, I don't feel very sure and relaxed. | | | | | |
| 29 | I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says. | | | | | |
| 30 | I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English. | | | | | |
| 31 | I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English. | | | | | |
| 32 | I would probably feel uncomfortable around native speakers of English. | | | | | |
| 33 | I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance. | | | | | |

Table. Data gathered from 83 English-majored students at HUF I

| S | A | B | A2 | B2 | AB |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | 2.20 | 9.40 | 4.84 | 88.36 | 20.68 |
| 2 | 3.70 | 8.40 | 13.69 | 70.56 | 31.08 |
| 3 | 3.40 | 6.60 | 11.56 | 43.56 | 22.44 |
| 4 | 3.50 | 8.40 | 12.25 | 70.56 | 29.40 |
| 5 | 2.60 | 9.40 | 6.76 | 88.36 | 24.44 |
| 6 | 2.90 | 9.20 | 8.41 | 84.64 | 26.68 |
| 7 | 2.70 | 9.20 | 7.29 | 84.64 | 24.84 |
| 8 | 2.60 | 9.20 | 6.76 | 84.64 | 23.92 |
| 9 | 2.70 | 8.80 | 7.29 | 77.44 | 23.76 |

| S | A | B | A2 | B2 | AB |
|----|------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| 10 | 3.00 | 10.00 | 9.00 | 100.00 | 30.00 |
| 11 | 2.60 | 9.00 | 6.76 | 81.00 | 23.40 |
| 12 | 3.20 | 9.00 | 10.24 | 81.00 | 28.80 |
| 13 | 3.00 | 8.40 | 9.00 | 70.56 | 25.20 |
| 14 | 3.20 | 6.40 | 10.24 | 40.96 | 20.48 |
| 15 | 3.10 | 4.00 | 9.61 | 16.00 | 12.40 |
| 16 | 2.60 | 7.60 | 6.76 | 57.76 | 19.76 |
| 17 | 2.60 | 8.60 | 6.76 | 73.96 | 22.36 |
| 18 | 2.80 | 8.40 | 7.84 | 70.56 | 23.52 |
| 19 | 2.30 | 9.00 | 5.29 | 81.00 | 20.70 |
| 20 | 2.80 | 8.80 | 7.84 | 77.44 | 24.64 |
| 21 | 3.10 | 7.20 | 9.61 | 51.84 | 22.32 |
| 22 | 2.50 | 9.60 | 6.25 | 92.16 | 24.00 |
| 23 | 2.80 | 9.00 | 7.84 | 81.00 | 25.20 |
| 24 | 3.30 | 6.60 | 10.89 | 43.56 | 21.78 |
| 25 | 3.20 | 8.20 | 10.24 | 67.24 | 26.24 |
| 26 | 2.80 | 8.80 | 7.84 | 77.44 | 24.64 |
| 27 | 2.90 | 9.00 | 8.41 | 81.00 | 26.10 |
| 28 | 2.40 | 9.00 | 5.76 | 81.00 | 21.60 |
| 29 | 2.80 | 8.80 | 7.84 | 77.44 | 24.64 |
| 30 | 2.70 | 9.60 | 7.29 | 92.16 | 25.92 |
| 31 | 3.30 | 8.80 | 10.89 | 77.44 | 29.04 |
| 32 | 3.30 | 8.60 | 10.89 | 73.96 | 28.38 |
| 33 | 2.60 | 8.80 | 6.76 | 77.44 | 22.88 |
| 34 | 3.60 | 7.20 | 12.96 | 51.84 | 25.92 |
| 35 | 2.90 | 8.00 | 8.41 | 64.00 | 23.20 |
| 36 | 3.00 | 8.60 | 9.00 | 73.96 | 25.80 |
| 37 | 2.30 | 8.20 | 5.29 | 67.24 | 18.86 |
| 38 | 2.50 | 8.40 | 6.25 | 70.56 | 21.00 |
| 39 | 2.90 | 8.20 | 8.41 | 67.24 | 23.78 |
| 40 | 2.90 | 9.60 | 8.41 | 92.16 | 27.84 |
| 41 | 2.60 | 8.20 | 6.76 | 67.24 | 21.32 |
| 42 | 3.20 | 8.20 | 10.24 | 67.24 | 26.24 |
| 43 | 3.00 | 8.80 | 9.00 | 77.44 | 26.40 |

| | | | | | |
|----|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 44 | 2.00 | 9.00 | 4.00 | 81.00 | 18.00 |
| 45 | 3.30 | 9.50 | 10.89 | 90.25 | 31.35 |
| 46 | 1.80 | 9.50 | 3.24 | 90.25 | 17.10 |
| 47 | 3.50 | 8.50 | 12.25 | 72.25 | 29.75 |
| 48 | 3.60 | 8.50 | 12.96 | 72.25 | 30.60 |
| 49 | 3.50 | 7.00 | 12.25 | 49.00 | 24.50 |
| S | A | B | A2 | B2 | AB |
| 50 | 3.90 | 8.00 | 15.21 | 64.00 | 31.20 |
| 51 | 2.50 | 7.00 | 6.25 | 49.00 | 17.50 |
| 52 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 9.00 | 25.00 | 15.00 |
| 53 | 2.90 | 9.00 | 8.41 | 81.00 | 26.10 |
| 54 | 2.60 | 7.00 | 6.76 | 49.00 | 18.20 |
| 55 | 2.50 | 7.00 | 6.25 | 49.00 | 17.50 |
| 56 | 2.70 | 7.50 | 7.29 | 56.25 | 20.25 |
| 57 | 2.90 | 7.00 | 8.41 | 49.00 | 20.30 |
| 58 | 2.20 | 8.00 | 4.84 | 64.00 | 17.60 |
| 59 | 3.10 | 9.00 | 9.61 | 81.00 | 27.90 |
| 60 | 2.80 | 9.00 | 7.84 | 81.00 | 25.20 |
| 61 | 2.90 | 8.50 | 8.41 | 72.25 | 24.65 |
| 62 | 2.80 | 8.00 | 7.84 | 64.00 | 22.40 |
| 63 | 3.50 | 7.00 | 12.25 | 49.00 | 24.50 |
| 64 | 3.00 | 8.00 | 9.00 | 64.00 | 24.00 |
| 65 | 2.50 | 8.50 | 6.25 | 72.25 | 21.25 |
| 66 | 2.40 | 9.00 | 5.76 | 81.00 | 21.60 |
| 67 | 2.90 | 8.00 | 8.41 | 64.00 | 23.20 |
| 68 | 3.10 | 8.00 | 9.61 | 64.00 | 24.80 |
| 69 | 2.00 | 9.00 | 4.00 | 81.00 | 18.00 |
| 70 | 2.80 | 9.00 | 7.84 | 81.00 | 25.20 |
| 71 | 2.30 | 9.00 | 5.29 | 81.00 | 20.70 |
| 72 | 2.10 | 8.50 | 4.41 | 72.25 | 17.85 |
| 73 | 1.40 | 9.50 | 1.96 | 90.25 | 13.30 |
| 74 | 3.10 | 9.00 | 9.61 | 81.00 | 27.90 |
| 75 | 2.30 | 8.00 | 5.29 | 64.00 | 18.40 |
| 76 | 3.10 | 8.00 | 9.61 | 64.00 | 24.80 |
| 77 | 3.00 | 7.50 | 9.00 | 56.25 | 22.50 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|---|
| 78 | 3.20 | 8.00 | 10.24 | 64.00 | 25.60 | |
| 79 | 2.80 | 7.50 | 7.84 | 56.25 | 21.00 | |
| 80 | 2.80 | 8.00 | 7.84 | 64.00 | 22.40 | |
| 81 | 2.50 | 8.00 | 6.25 | 64.00 | 20.00 | |
| 82 | 2.70 | 7.00 | 7.29 | 49.00 | 18.90 | |
| 83 | 3.00 | 9.00 | 9.00 | 81.00 | 27.00 | |
| Totals | 235.10 | 688.70 | 681.89 | 5798.35 | 1939.6 | The Pearson's r (Hatch & Farhady, 1982, p.198) |

$$r = \frac{S \sum AB - \sum A \sum B}{\sqrt{[S \sum A^2 - (\sum B)^2][S \sum B^2 - (\sum B)^2]}}$$

$$r = \frac{83 \times 1939.60 - 235.10 \times 688.70}{\sqrt{(83 \times 681.89 - 235.10^2)(83 \times 3115.60 - 5798.35^2)}} = \frac{-926.57}{\sqrt{9214898.2496}} = -.3052$$

The data mean:

S = the SUM of students