

Exploring Foreign Language Anxiety in China

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Abstract. Foreign language learning anxiety has been a heated topic in academia in recent years which explores the relationship between foreign language learning anxiety and test scores. Most researchers use Horwitz's FLCAS foreign language classroom anxiety scale to research selected students and then analyze the data to draw conclusions. However, although there are many previous studies in terms of foreign language anxiety, there are still few studies on foreign language learning anxiety among Chinese college students, and most researchers focus on middle and high school students and ignore college students' foreign language learning anxiety. In view of this, this literature review draws on the previous research experience and is based on the relevant theories of foreign language learning anxiety, focusing on the correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and college students' foreign language learning performance. Therefore, this study will provide some implications and solutions for Chinese college students to reduce their foreign language anxiety.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety; Horwitz-FLCAS; teaching strategies.

1. Introduction

Foreign language learning anxiety is defined as the negative and uncertain emotional state of learners in the process of second language acquisition [1]. Horwitz et al. found that foreign language learning anxiety is different from general classroom anxiety, but a complex psychological phenomenon unique to foreign language learning [2]. According to Horwitz's FLCAS Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, it can be concluded that the anxiety factors mainly include fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communicative comprehension fear.

In order to verify the impact of foreign language learning anxiety, researchers have conducted a lot of quantitative studies in addition to some observations. Through one study of learning anxiety and academic performance, it was concluded that foreign language learning anxiety was negatively correlated with its learning effect to a certain extent [1]. Meantime, students with different score bands were affected by different anxiety factors. Another study took junior high school students as the research object, tested the final English scores of junior high school students with the Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Scale, and concluded that anxiety is common in English learning, the level of English scores is negatively correlated with students' anxiety level, and different learning strategies will have different effects on different levels of anxiety [2]. From the above research results, it is noticeable that most studies in this field have shown that anxiety and student achievement are negatively correlated. In order to study the problem in more depth and detail, this paper is based on Chinese college students, which studies their foreign language learning anxiety and foreign language learning performance.

2. Reviewing Foreign Language Anxiety

2.1 Horwitz-FLCAS Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

2.1.1 Definition

Horwitz et al. argue that the anxiety scales used in most previous studies were not designed for foreign language learning, resulting in confusing or even contradictory results. Thus, Horwitz and Cope proposed three conceptual factors of foreign language anxiety, based on previous literature and students' self-reports: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation [2]. Horwitz et al. designed the 33-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, then selected the

corresponding students for trial and test, and confirmed that FLCAS has good credibility, so Horwitz believes that foreign language learning anxiety can be measured.

2.1.2 Fear of negative evaluation

The fear of negative evaluation generally refers to the inability to effectively evaluate one's abilities and thus manifests itself as fear of others correcting one's own problems. In foreign countries, many scholars have done research on negative evaluation fear, such as the structure and measurement of negative evaluation fear, the heritability of negative evaluation fear, attention bias, the application of decision-making, physical activity, learning, helping behavior, eating attitude and so on [3]. This phenomenon is especially reflected in second language acquisition. In the case of Chinese students who are exposed to a new language out of the context of their mother tongue, they will experience foreign language anxiety during the acquisition process. Therefore, when students have problems in learning, teachers or classmates point out and correct mistakes, because students themselves are more sensitive and have strong self-esteem, they always hope to give the teacher or classmates the impression of perfection, so it is inevitable that there will be a fear of negative evaluation.

2.1.3 Test anxiety

Test anxiety is a complicated emotional phenomenon, a special type of anxiety related to the examination environment, and an uncomfortable emotional state accompanied by cognitive difficulties. It is an uneasy psychological feeling caused by an individual's premonition of threat before the exam or stimulated by the examination situation, which is also an emotional state of tension, worry, and even fears associated with attention and cognitive evaluation [4]. Test anxiety is a common psychological state of most students, which often arises before or after the test. Under this circumstance, students are not mentally prepared to face the test or test scores, its root. Or there is no accurate assessment of their level. Excessive performance expectations often aggravate test considerations and affect candidates' performance to a certain extent. Test scores are the root cause of student anxiety, especially now that most schools will rank or divide grades according to the level of grades, and the final results are generally public, so students with strong self-esteem often worry about other people's opinions, thus aggravating their anxiety.

2.1.4 Communicative understanding of fear

Communicative comprehension fears are more likely to occur when communicating with people in a language other than their mother tongue. Students are often ashamed to express themselves, which is not only related to the student's own learning level but also closely related to the student's personality traits [5]. Especially in public communication, students with more introverted personalities rarely take the initiative to interact with teachers. Even if they answer questions passively, they are often nervous and anxious to fear that their answers are incorrect or inaccurate pronunciation. College students have just left the dull and heavy high school life and are eager to communicate with people, but the huge academic pressure of high school makes them neglect to interact with people. Even after coming to college, they are afraid that their views or accents will cause ridicule from classmates, thus becoming inferior, which often aggravates their fear of communicative understanding.

2.2 Foreign language learning anxiety and foreign language learning performance

Since the middle of the last century, a large number of studies have emerged in China on whether foreign language anxiety is correlated to foreign language performance. During the past five years, most of the research methods were conducted in the form of questionnaires, and a few combined questionnaires and interviews. However, regardless of the research methodology, most of the research conclusions have something in common, that is, there is a negative correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and foreign language learning performance.

Luo Laiyue selected 94 students from the junior and second-grade experimental classes of Zhangzhou Experimental Middle School in Fujian Province, using the Oxford Learning Strategy

Scale adapted from the actual situation of Chinese students. Horwitz et al's Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Scale showed a significant negative correlation between junior high school students' anxiety and their English scores, which pointed out that learning strategies were positively correlated with achievement [6]. Qianhui Sun mainly used a questionnaire survey to collect relevant data on the anxiety level of junior high school students in foreign language learning and used SPSS17.0 software to integrate and analyze the data according to the valid data. It is found that there is a negative correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and foreign language learning performance of junior middle school students, and there is no gender difference in foreign language anxiety among junior middle school students [7]. Liu Qing took third-grade students of Weifang Economic School as the research object, used random sampling to conduct a questionnaire survey, and found that there was a correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and foreign language learning effect bearing, and there were obvious differences in the four factors of foreign language learning anxiety among students in high and low groups conclusion [8]. Based on positive psychology, Wu Qingqing selected 679 first- and second-year non-English majors from a science and engineering college in Beijing as the research objects. Using quantitative methods, the relationship between psychological capital, foreign language learning anxiety, and English score of college students in science and engineering institutions was explored in the form of questionnaires. To conclude, there was a significant negative correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and English score, which also pointed out that students' psychological capital was significantly negatively correlated with foreign language learning anxiety. There was no significant association with English scores [9]. Yu Zijuan randomly selected 140 high school sophomores, and used quantitative and qualitative research methods to conduct a multidimensional study on the sample of listening, speaking, reading, writing and classroom learning anxiety, and concluded that there are certainly significant differences between high school students English multi-dimensional anxiety [10]. The causes of anxiety were analyzed, which were teacher-related factors and student-related factors, respectively.

3. Teaching Strategies and Recommendations

It can be seen from the results of the study that students' anxiety level affects their academic performance, and there is a negative correlation between the two. In view of the above research results, the following two strategies can be used to improve the anxiety level of college students in foreign language learning, so as to improve the quality of their foreign language learning.

Teachers should create relevant teaching situations to stimulate students' interest in learning. Teachers should constantly reform teaching methods, take students as the center, carry out a variety of classroom activities, such as debating competitions, fun dubbing, drama, etc., make full use of multimedia to stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning foreign languages, promote the improvement of students' listening, speaking and communication skills, so as to reduce the anxiety of foreign language examination learning [11]. At the same time, it is necessary to guide students to participate in activities such as foreign language corners, and carry out related club activities, so that students can truly feel the fun brought by foreign languages, so that students are no longer ashamed to express their anxiety, which is also conducive to reducing communication and understanding anxiety.

Students should learn to use a variety of adjustment methods to adjust their psychology, correctly assess their own level, and reduce anxiety about foreign language learning. Students should choose appropriate learning tasks according to their English foundation, appropriately use multimedia means to increase their interest in learning foreign languages, and maintain a sense of freshness and expectation in foreign language classes [12]. At the same time, in the process of preparing for the exam, it is necessary for students to persevere for the exam, equip themselves with certain learning tasks every day, strengthen their knowledge reserve over time, and correctly assess their foreign language learning level, so as to alleviate exam anxiety.

4. Conclusion

Based on Chinese college students, this paper focuses on exploring the relationship between students' foreign language learning anxiety and their academic performance, which concludes that anxiety and students' grades are negatively correlated. At the same time, corresponding countermeasures are put forward from the perspectives of teachers and students, expecting that teachers can actively guide students to establish correct three views. Also, student should enhance their correct self-evaluation awareness, use learning strategies suitable for themselves, reduce foreign language learning anxiety, and improve foreign language learning performance.

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