



Theoretical Research on Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Among English Major Students

Guo Nyuhuan

School of Foreign Studies, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing, Guangdong, China

Abstract. Foreign language learning anxiety is a prevalent emotional phenomenon among English major students that significantly impacts their learning effectiveness and motivation. This study comprehensively examines the definition, classification, causes, and complex effects of foreign language learning anxiety from a theoretical perspective. Through analyzing the interplay of personal factors (such as self-esteem, learning styles, learning motivation) and environmental factors (such as teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, test pressure, cultural differences), it reveals the multidimensional nature of foreign language learning anxiety. The research indicates that this anxiety not only reduces learners' motivation and efficiency but also interferes with their cognitive processes, affects the development of speaking and listening skills, and even negatively impacts their physical and mental health. To address this issue, based on the Affective Filter Hypothesis, Humanistic Psychology, Constructivist Learning Theory, and Social Interaction Theory, this study proposes educational intervention strategies, including optimizing curriculum design, improving teaching evaluation systems, establishing psychological counseling mechanisms, and strengthening the emotional support function of teachers. These strategies aim to create a positive, interactive learning environment to help students overcome anxiety and enhance learning outcomes.

Keywords: Foreign language learning anxiety; English major students; Educational intervention; Affective Filter Hypothesis; Learning effectiveness

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Foreign language learning anxiety, as an emotional phenomenon, is ubiquitous in the language learning process, with nearly every learner experiencing it to varying degrees. It is not merely a psychological state but an emotional factor that can profoundly affect learning outcomes. In diverse language learning environments, the presence of anxiety cannot be ignored, as it may have far-reaching impacts on foreign language learners' learning effectiveness, motivation, and overall learning experience.

From a theoretical research perspective, foreign language learning anxiety is a complex and multidimensional concept. It involves cognitive, emotional, motivational, and sociocultural aspects, which interact to form the unique landscape of foreign language learning anxiety. This research aims to construct a systematic theoretical model to comprehensively analyze the internal mechanisms and influencing factors of foreign language learning anxiety. Through in-depth exploration of anxiety's causes, developmental processes, and dynamic relationship with learning outcomes, we hope to provide new perspectives and approaches for theoretical research on foreign language learning anxiety.

This research also focuses on the practical implications of foreign language learning anxiety. Particularly in educational intervention and curriculum design, deep understanding and effective management of anxiety are especially important. By identifying and analyzing different learners' anxiety manifestations in the foreign language learning process, educators can more precisely implement personalized teaching strategies to help learners overcome anxiety and enhance learning outcomes. Meanwhile, in curriculum design, fully considering learners' anxiety factors helps create a more positive and harmonious learning environment, thereby promoting learners' comprehensive development.

English major students, as a specific learning group, have learning characteristics closely associated with anxiety issues. They often face higher language learning requirements and more severe learning challenges, making them more susceptible to anxiety in the foreign language learning process. Therefore, research on anxiety issues for this group has special theoretical and practical value. Through in-depth analysis of English major students' learning characteristics and their intrinsic connection with anxiety issues, we can not only provide more effective guidance for this group's foreign language learning but also offer valuable references for overall reform and innovation in foreign language education.

This research aims to comprehensively explore foreign language learning anxiety issues from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Through constructing systematic theoretical models and analytical frameworks, combined with in-depth research on the specific group of English major students, we hope to provide new ideas and methods for understanding and addressing foreign language learning anxiety, thereby promoting the continuous development and progress of foreign language education.

CHAPTER 2: RELEVANT THEORIES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY

2.1 Definition and Classification of Foreign Language Learning Anxiety

Foreign language learning anxiety is a specific emotional response that occurs during language learning, reflecting learners' feelings of tension, unease, and fear when facing foreign language learning tasks. This anxiety can not only hinder learners' normal cognitive processes, affecting language information input, processing, and output, but may also lead to negative attitudes and avoidance behaviors toward foreign language learning (Meng, 2007).

Regarding the definition of foreign language learning anxiety, different scholars may have subtle differences, but they generally emphasize the negative impact of anxiety on language learning. For example, Oxford considers anxiety to be the greatest barrier to language use,

especially in the processes of language input, processing, and output (Cai, 2006). This anxiety may stem from individual characteristics, such as introversion or lack of confidence, or may be related to learning activity forms or teaching methods, such as tense classroom atmosphere or excessive teaching requirements (Ma, 2013).

In terms of classification, foreign language learning anxiety can be categorized based on its causes and manifestations. A common classification method divides foreign language learning anxiety into trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situational anxiety (Ma, 2013). Trait anxiety refers to an individual's long-term stable tendency toward anxiety, usually related to personality traits; state anxiety refers to anxiety emotions experienced by individuals at specific times, which may fluctuate with changing situations; situational anxiety refers to anxiety responses specific to foreign language learning contexts, such as test anxiety and speaking anxiety. Additionally, some scholars categorize foreign language learning anxiety into facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety based on its impact on the learning process, where the former can stimulate learners' motivation while the latter hinders normal learning progress (Ji & Zheng, 2009).

Foreign language learning anxiety is a complex and multidimensional concept involving learners' emotions, cognition, and behavior. To better understand the nature and impact of foreign language learning anxiety, it is necessary to comprehensively consider different scholars' perspectives and classification methods, combined with specific empirical research. Meanwhile, educators should also pay attention to foreign language learning anxiety issues, helping learners reduce anxiety emotions and improve foreign language learning effectiveness through optimizing teaching methods and creating harmonious learning atmospheres (Liu, 2004).

2.2 Analysis of Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Causes

The causes of foreign language learning anxiety are complex and diverse, which can be examined in depth from both personal and environmental factors.

Regarding personal factors, these mainly include learners' self-esteem, learning styles, learning motivation, and beliefs and attitudes toward foreign language learning. Self-esteem is an important predictor of foreign language learning anxiety, as learners worry about performing worse than others and fear making mistakes in front of classmates or teachers, thus generating anxiety (Gu, 2010). Additionally, different learning styles affect learners' anxiety levels. For example, field-dependent learners may prefer learning in groups, while field-independent learners may prefer independent learning. When the learning environment doesn't match their

learning style, anxiety may arise (Ding, 2008). Learning motivation is also an important factor affecting foreign language learning anxiety. If learners have weak learning motivation or hold negative attitudes toward foreign language learning, they may be more prone to anxiety in the learning process (Gu, 2010).

Regarding environmental factors, these mainly include teachers' teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, test pressure, and cultural differences. If teachers' teaching methods are too monotonous or don't meet learners' learning needs, they may trigger learners' anxiety. For example, if teachers overly emphasize grammatical accuracy while neglecting learners' speaking practice, learners may feel anxious when expressing themselves orally (Gu, 2010). Classroom atmosphere is also an important factor affecting foreign language learning anxiety. If the classroom atmosphere is too tense or lacks interaction, learners may feel suppressed and anxious. Conversely, if the classroom atmosphere is relaxed and lively, learners are more likely to actively participate in classroom activities, thus reducing anxiety levels (Ding, 2008). Furthermore, test pressure is another important cause of foreign language learning anxiety. Learners worry about poor test performance and fear criticism from teachers and parents, thus generating anxiety (Ding, 2008). Cultural differences are also a factor that cannot be ignored. When learners encounter significant differences between the foreign language culture and their native culture, they may feel confused and uneasy, leading to anxiety (Li, 2013).

2.3 Impacts and Consequences of Foreign Language Learning Anxiety

Foreign language learning anxiety has far-reaching effects on learners, and its consequences cannot be ignored. This anxiety not only concerns learners' psychological state but also directly relates to their language learning effectiveness. The following will discuss these impacts and consequences in detail.

Foreign language learning anxiety significantly affects learners' motivation and attitudes. When learners are in a state of high anxiety, they often develop resistance to learning tasks and lose interest and enthusiasm for language learning. This negative attitude further hinders learners' engagement and effort in language learning, creating a vicious cycle (Wu, 2010).

Anxiety also interferes with learners' cognitive processes, reducing learning efficiency. Language learning requires extensive memorization, comprehension, and application, while anxiety emotions can distract learners, making it difficult to focus on learning tasks. Meanwhile, anxiety may also lead to rigid thinking, limiting learners' creative thinking and problem-solving abilities (Huo, 2007).

In foreign language learning, speaking and listening are two crucial skills. Foreign language learning anxiety often causes learners to encounter difficulties in oral expression and listening comprehension. They may fear making mistakes or being ridiculed, thus appearing tense and insecure in oral communication. This psychological state undoubtedly hinders effective language output and input, affecting learners' practical language application abilities (Chen, 2003).

Foreign language learning anxiety may also negatively impact learners' physical and mental health. Long-term anxiety and tension may cause learners to experience physical symptoms such as insomnia, headaches, and stomach aches, and even trigger more serious psychological problems such as depression and inferiority complexes (Wu, 2010).

The impacts of foreign language learning anxiety on learners are multifaceted, including learning motivation, cognitive processes, language skill application, and physical and mental health. Therefore, both educators and learners should highly value this issue, adopting effective measures to alleviate and overcome foreign language learning anxiety to promote more efficient language learning. For example, educators can create relaxed, enjoyable learning environments, encourage learners to actively participate in classroom activities, and enhance their language confidence; learners can alleviate anxiety emotions through self-adjustment of mindset and seeking help and support.

CHAPTER 3: EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION AND ALLEVIATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY

3.1 Theoretical Foundations of Educational Intervention

Before discussing how educational intervention can alleviate foreign language learning anxiety, it is necessary to understand its underlying theoretical foundations deeply. These theories not only provide guidance for practice but also help educators more systematically understand and address students' anxiety emotions.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis constitutes an important theoretical pillar of educational intervention. This hypothesis suggests that learners' emotional states, especially anxiety, can act as a "filter" affecting the reception and processing of language input. When learners are in a state of high anxiety, their affective filter becomes more "dense," thus hindering the effective absorption of language information. Therefore, reducing anxiety levels is seen as key to improving language learning efficiency. One purpose of educational intervention is to reduce students' foreign language learning anxiety by creating positive learning environments and providing emotional support, thereby promoting their language acquisition.

3.2 Implementation Strategies for Educational Intervention

In the educational field, implementation strategies targeting foreign language learning anxiety are diverse and specific. These strategies mainly focus on teaching reform and psychological counseling, aiming to effectively reduce anxiety emotions among English major students during their learning process and enhance their learning efficiency and outcomes.

Regarding teaching reform, the first focus is on curriculum design optimization. Based on English major students' learning characteristics, curriculum design should emphasize practicality and interest, enhancing students' sense of engagement and achievement in foreign language learning through interactive teaching methods such as authentic scenario simulation and role-playing. Meanwhile, adjusting course difficulty to achieve balance between challenge and achievability helps avoid anxiety emotions caused by excessive task difficulty.

The improvement of teaching evaluation systems is also crucial. Traditional evaluation methods that solely rely on test scores often cause tremendous pressure for students, leading to anxiety emotions. Therefore, establishing a diversified, whole-process evaluation system is particularly important. This includes incorporating various forms such as classroom performance, group assignments, and oral presentations into assessment, as well as providing timely feedback and personalized guidance to help students better understand their learning progress and existing problems, thereby reducing anxiety.

Regarding psychological counseling, establishing comprehensive counseling mechanisms is equally important for alleviating foreign language learning anxiety. Schools should be equipped with professional psychological counselors to provide personalized consultation services. Through psychological counseling techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy and relaxation training, they can help students identify and adjust anxiety emotions, enhancing self-awareness and self-regulation abilities. Meanwhile, conducting group counseling activities, such as foreign language learning anxiety workshops and learning motivation enhancement groups, allows students to face and overcome anxiety emotions through peer support.

Teachers' roles play a crucial part in alleviating foreign language learning anxiety. Teachers need not only solid professional knowledge and teaching skills but also attention to students' psychological needs and learning emotions. During teaching, teachers should focus on emotional communication with students, create relaxed, harmonious learning atmospheres, encourage active classroom interaction, and provide timely positive feedback and encouragement. Additionally, teachers should regularly participate in relevant training to

enhance their professional expertise in psychological counseling to better help students cope with anxiety emotions in foreign language learning.

Through implementation strategies in both teaching reform and psychological counseling, English major students' foreign language learning anxiety can be effectively alleviated. These strategies not only help improve students' learning efficiency and outcomes but also cultivate healthy psychological qualities and positive learning attitudes. In future educational practice, these strategies should continue to be explored and improved to adapt to different students' learning needs and the requirements of contemporary development.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

After in-depth research on English major students' foreign language learning anxiety, this study has achieved several important theoretical findings. Through comprehensive analysis of anxiety's definition, classification, causes, and impacts, we have provided a more systematic perspective for understanding foreign language learning anxiety. Meanwhile, the proposal of educational intervention strategies has also indicated directions for anxiety management in practice.

No research can be perfect. Upon reflection, we find that this study still has some limitations. For example, the discussion of anxiety causes might not be comprehensive enough; future research could consider more dimensional factors such as learners' cultural backgrounds and learning styles. Additionally, although educational intervention strategies have been proposed, their effectiveness and applicability in practical application still need verification through more empirical research.

Technological advances have brought new possibilities for research and management of foreign language learning anxiety. Particularly, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has provided us with more precise data collection and analysis tools. In the future, we can use AI technology to monitor learners' anxiety levels in real-time, thereby adjusting teaching strategies timely to achieve personalized anxiety management. Meanwhile, AI technology can also assist us in developing more effective psychological counseling tools to help learners better cope with anxiety emotions in foreign language learning.

Research on foreign language learning anxiety still has broad scope. Besides further improving the theoretical system, we can also focus on more different types of language learners to explore anxiety's manifestation and impact in different groups. Meanwhile, interdisciplinary research methods will help us understand the complexity of foreign language

learning anxiety more comprehensively, providing strong support for constructing more effective anxiety management strategies.

5. FUNDING PROJECT

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