

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS'
ENGLISH LEARNING ANXIETY AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT IN
A CHINESE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

Approved



Date: May 4, 2009

Paper Advisor

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS'
ENGLISH LEARNING ANXIETY AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT IN
A CHINESE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

A Seminar Paper Research

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science

in

Education

by

Peng Hui (Daisy)

2009

ABSTRACT

With the advent of humanistic psychology, foreign language educators and researchers abroad have been paying attention to learners' 'affective variables' in language learning since the 1960s. Furthermore, the focus of second language acquisition has shifted from the way that teachers teach to the way that learners learn during the 1970s. Krashen (1985) states that learners are distracted by affective factors in the language learning process. Acquirers with a low affective filter, high motivation, self-confidence, and low anxiety, seek and receive more input. A large number of studies show that a variety of affective variables are interconnected. Of all these factors, language anxiety is possibly the most pervasive factor in second or foreign language learning.

Considered to be an important affective variable, anxiety has been found to be correlated with foreign language learning achievement among different groups of people in various contexts. Much research, especially in western countries, has been conducted to find the relationship between anxiety and achievement in the learning of different foreign languages. Up to now most studies have shown a negative relationship between anxiety and language achievement, that is to say, anxiety is a debilitator in language learning. However, some researchers suggested that language anxiety was actually 'helpful' or 'facilitating' in some ways, such as keeping a student alert.

With regard to the opposite views of language anxiety, this research paper was to identify whether language learning anxiety and learning achievement have a positive correlation or negative correlation, potential sources of anxiety, and the strategies to

reduce language anxiety.

The thesis, first of all, reviews the popular and current research on anxiety, and finds out what is still left to be done. Inspired by the multitudinous Western research results in language anxiety, I adopted case studies to do the relative research for this paper. The results show that, in general, students are more or less negatively influenced by language anxiety. There is negative correlation between outcomes and anxiety most of the time. The factors contributing to different anxiety levels are self-esteem, cultural differences, and personality. The sources from which students' English learning anxiety emerges are expectations from parents, instructor-learner relationship, tolerance of ambiguity, unscientific beliefs about language learning, and identification of culture shock. Based on the above analysis, some teaching strategies are proposed, among which the following are most effective for teachers to alleviate students' language anxiety: being a popular facilitator, creating a relaxing and pleasant learning atmosphere, adopting a cooperative learning model, changing learner beliefs about language learning, and applying affective strategy training.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE.....	i
TITLE PAGE.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v

CHAPTER	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem	
Delimitations of the Research	
Definition of Terms	
Linkage to Theory	
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	5
Definition of Anxiety	
Classification of Anxiety	
Construct of Foreign Language Anxiety	
Anxiety and other Personal Variables	
Anxiety and Gender	
Anxiety and Family Background	
Anxiety and Self-Esteem	
Sources of Language Anxiety	
Over-Expectation from Parents	
Tolerance of Ambiguity	
Unscientific Beliefs about Language Learning	
Identification and Culture Shock	
Effects of Anxiety on Language Learning	
The Theoretical Foundation	
Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis	
Theory of L2 Learning Personality	
Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis	
III. CASE STUDIES AND ANALYSIS.....	27
Student's Manifestations of English Language Anxiety	
Case Studies and Analysis	
Language Learning Anxiety and Language Learning	
Achievements	
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	40
Current Situation in Senior High School English Teaching	

Strategies to Reduce Learners' Anxiety	
Being a Popular Facilitator	
Creating a Relaxing and Pleasant Learning Atmosphere	
Adopting a Cooperative Learning Model	
Changing Learner Beliefs about Language Learning	
Applying Affective Strategy Training	
Conclusion	
An Overview	
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research	
v. REFERENCES.....	56

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

English learning is a rather complicated process. It is influenced not only by the linguistic characteristics of English itself, but also by some other factors. Given these numerous factors influencing English learning, affective variables in foreign language teaching and learning have been studied extensively for the last four decades. Among these affective variables, anxiety stands out as one of the most important factors for effective language learning. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) pointed out since speaking in the target language seems to be the most threatening aspect of foreign language learning, the current emphasis on the development of communicative competence poses particularly great difficulties for the anxious student. To ensure the success of English education in high schools, foreign language anxiety is a significant issue that cannot be ignored.

From the 1940s to 1950s, research on anxiety was a hot topic in the field of educational psychology. During the 1950s and 1960s, a lot of research was attempted on the relationship between the high anxiety and the learners' achievement. Research made by Spielberger (1983) shows that among those who fled school because of failure in learning, more than 20% were highly anxious and 6% maintained low anxiety. The research in the 1970s shows that whichever method is adopted, anxiety has a negative impact on learner's school achievement. At the same time, some researchers suggested that language anxiety was actually 'helpful' or 'facilitating' in

some ways, such as keeping students alert (Scovel, 1978). In the 1980s, most researchers reached a common view that anxiety and language learning is negatively correlated. Research made by Young (1990, 1991, 1992) has consistently revealed that anxiety can impede foreign language production and achievement. Furthermore, Crookall and Oxford (1991) reported that serious language anxiety might cause other related problems with self-esteem, self-confidence, risk-taking ability, and ultimately hampers proficiency in the second language. Further, they noticed if inappropriate measures are taken to reduce foreign language anxiety, it will affect the development of students' mental health and cognitive skills.

Anxiety is a very fundamental human emotion that all students will feel at times. With regard to the impact of language anxiety on language learning, research in the area of anxiety as it relates to second or foreign language learning and performance was scattered and inconclusive. Some scholars (M.Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; I.Mcsikzentmihalyi, 1990; Goleman, 1995) investigated its effect on language learning and performances and found that language anxiety was helpful for language learning while others (Horwitz 1990; Young 1992; Rardin 1994; Omaggio 1991; Terrell 1991; Krashen 1981; Macintyre & Gardner 1994; Johanna Turner 1997; Yukie Aida 1994; Canfield & Well 1976) believed that language anxiety was harmful to the learning process. Up to now, no definite conclusions have been drawn on the correlation of students' learning anxiety and learning performance. No doubt, the debate will continue until more studies provide a definite answer.

In China research on language anxiety started rather late. It began in the 1980s

and developed quickly in the 1990s. Lots of articles on anxiety have surged. However, more attention has been paid to college students' language anxiety, while little attention is focused on the anxiety of students in senior high schools. Therefore, this study completed among Chinese senior high school students is quite significant.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between language anxiety of senior high school students and their achievements in English learning, to find out some causes of their English learning anxiety, and to seek for some strategies to reduce language anxiety. More specifically, the study is designed to answer the following questions:

- (1)What is the relationship between English learning anxiety and learning achievement among Chinese senior high school students?
- (2)What are the sources and influential factors of language anxiety?
- (3)What are the effective strategies to deal with language anxiety in the process of English learning?

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be addressed is “What is the relationship between language learning anxiety and learning achievement?”

Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC and Academic Search Elite and at library at the South-Central University for Nationalities in thirty days as the primary sources. Key search topics included “anxiety”, “language learning anxiety”, “English learning anxiety” and “foreign

language learning anxiety”.

The case study will be based on my own personal experience and my observation of my familiar friends’ learning experience.

Definition of Terms

Foreign language anxiety is a distinctive complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.

Language acquisition is the learning and development of a person’s language. The learning of a native first language is called first language acquisition, and of a second or foreign language, second language acquisition.

Second language (L2) is any language learned after the first language or mother tongue (L1). Some languages, often called auxiliary languages, are used primarily as second languages or lingua francas.

Linkage to Theory

This study will be based on Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), theory of second language learning personality (Allport, 1937; Child, 1977; Eysenck, 1970) and Swain’s comprehensible output hypothesis (1978).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Anxiety

As Lawrence Jun Zhang (2000) posits, the different categories used for research on anxiety have made it quite a challenge to define anxiety in language learning. In Scovel's (1978) definition, anxiety is "apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object" (p. 34). Horwitz (1986) defines anxiety as "a distinctive complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) maintain that language anxiety should be seen as "a stable personality trait referring to the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking in the second language" (p.5). Spielberger (1972) defines anxiety as "an unpleasant emotional state or condition that is characterized by subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, and worry, and by activation or arousal of the automatic nervous system" (p. 482).

In spite of these various definitions, we can broadly think that anxiety is a kind of troubled feeling in the mind. It is a subjective feeling of uneasiness and apprehension caused by the anticipation of something threatening. In this paper, the concept of anxiety is put into the language learning situation. It is one of the affective factors that affect the learners' language learning process.

Classification of Anxiet

Heron (1989: 33) put forward the concept of existential anxiety, which is related to a group situation and has three interconnected components in the settings of language classroom. If the learner wonders whether he or she will be liked or liked, he or she has acceptance anxiety. If the learner is worried about whether he or she can understand what is happening in class, orientation anxiety exists. Much to the same, if one doubts his ability to do well using what he has learned, Heron believed it is performance anxiety that makes the learner worried. On the other hand, since it's not clear how foreign language anxiety comes into being, based on where it comes, Heron (1989: 33) termed archaic anxiety, which is 'repressed distress of the past-the personal hurt, particularly of childhood, that has been denied so that the individual can survive emotionally'.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1990) have found it useful to delineate three perspectives from which anxiety has been investigated in a number of different areas, including language-learning context. These are referred as the trait, state, and situation specific viewpoints respectively. Trait anxiety, as Scovel (1978) noted, refers to a more permanent predisposition to be anxious. A person with high trait anxiety would be highly likely to become apprehensive in a number of different situations. Trait anxiety has been shown to impair cognitive functioning, to disrupt memory, to lead to avoidance behaviors and to have several other effects (Eysenck, 1979). It is argued, however, that traits are meaningless unless they are considered in interaction with situations. In essence, the trait anxiety approach requires people to consider their reactions over a number of situations. For most individuals, some situations will

provoke anxiety while others will promote feelings of relaxation. Within a large group of people, the situations provoking anxiety will differ, even among individuals showing similar trait anxiety. The moderate correlations of trait anxiety and measures of performance (Spielberger, 1983) might be attributed to a form of averaging over these situations. State anxiety is a blend of the trait and situational approaches (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). It is apprehension experienced at a particular moment in time, for example, prior to taking examinations (Spielberger, 1983). Thus individuals who are prone to experience anxiety in general (i.e. who have high levels of trait anxiety) show greater elevations of state anxiety in stressful situations. Situation specific approach can be seen as trait anxiety measures limited to a given context. Respondents are tested for their anxiety reactions in a well-defined situation such as public speaking, writing examinations, performing math, or participating in French class or Japanese class (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This perspective is quite different from the previous two particularly concentrates on relatively independent anxiety-provoking situations. An advantage of this approach is: it clearly describes the situation of interest for the respondent. By doing so, the assumptions about the sources of the anxiety reaction can be avoided. However, this also has its criticisms that the situation under consideration can be defined very broadly (e.g. shyness), more narrowly (e.g. communication apprehension), or quite specially (e.g. stage fright). MacIntyre (1991) points out that it is the research's responsibility to define a situation that is sufficiently specific to be meaningful for the purpose at hand. The study of situational anxiety has received considerable attention in second language acquisition

(SLA) research. Situational or state anxiety refers to anxiety, which is usually experienced in relation to some particular situation or event (Brown, 2001). It can be a major character trait when language anxiety does not decrease over time. If repeated occurrences cause students to associate anxiety with language performance, anxiety becomes a trait rather than a state (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). This kind of anxiety is considered to be trait anxiety, different from state or situational anxiety.

According to Kleimann (1977), language anxiety can be divided into two types: facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety. Scovel (1978) comments:

Facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to ‘fight’ the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approval behavior. Debilitating anxiety, in contrast, motivates the learner to ‘flee’ the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behavior. (p. 139)

When we explore the effect of anxiety on language learning, an important insight to which we can refer is the distinction between debilitating and facilitating anxiety (Alpert & Haber, 1960).

Facilitating anxiety is considered to be an asset to performance and shows positive correlations with students’ willingness to attempt difficult linguistic structures in English. Rardin (1988) claims that a positive aspect of anxiety operates all the time, but we only notice when a negative imbalance occurs. Omaggio Hadley (1994) suggests that a certain amount of tension might be useful for language learning, but she refuses to term this tension “anxiety”. Debilitating anxiety, which is a more common interpretation of anxiety, is considered to be detrimental to performance in

many ways, both indirectly through worry and self-doubt and directly by reducing participation and creating overt avoidance of the language. Debilitating anxiety can be related to plummeting motivation, negative attitudes and beliefs, and language performance difficulties.

Construct of Foreign Language Anxiety

In 1986, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope took the literature a step further by proposing that an anxiety construct which they called Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) as a conceptually distinct variable in foreign language learning and is largely independent of other types of anxiety. They viewed foreign language anxiety as related to communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, and they defined foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (P.128). Horwitz et al have attributed the inconclusive results of previous research to the lack of a reliable and valid measure of anxiety specific to language learning. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz aims to capture this specific anxiety reaction of a learner to a foreign language learning setting. Horwitz et al integrate three related anxieties to their conceptualization of foreign language anxiety and they are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Communication apprehension is defined as a person’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; Aida, 1994). Compared to

non-apprehensive people, communicatively apprehensive people are more reluctant to get involved in conversation with others and to seek social interactions. The manifestation of communication anxiety includes oral communication anxiety, such as difficulty in speaking in groups or in public, or in listening to or learning a spoken message. People who typically have trouble speaking in groups or in public are likely to experience even greater difficulty speaking in a foreign language because they lack self-confidence in their ability to control the communicative situation and their performance is constantly monitored and evaluated according to uncertain or even unknown linguistic and socio-cultural standards (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986).

The second element of foreign language anxiety, test anxiety, namely apprehension over academic evaluation, refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). It is associated with both informal quizzes and formal tests. Some students experience anxiety during a test situation because they do not know how to process or organize the course material and information (Aide, 1994). Since performance evaluation is a continuing feature of most foreign language classes, and making mistakes is a normal phenomenon, students may suffer stress and anxiety frequently, which may pose a problem for their performance and further improvement. Those students who are anxious when taking an exam often have unrealistic expectations of their performance, such as perfection.

Fear of negative evaluation, closely related to communication apprehension, is defined as “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations,

and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Waston & Friend, 1969, cited in Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986: p.128). Similar to test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation is broader in scope, it may occur in any social evaluative situation such as interviewing for a job. People who are highly concerned about the impression others are forming of them are more likely to avoid or leave social situations in which they believe others might perceive unfavorably. In the foreign language classroom, learners may be acutely sensitive to the continual evaluation by the only fluent speaker in the class, the teacher, or the real or imagined evaluations of their peers. This would probably lead to the individual’s failing to volunteer to answer questions, failure to initiate questions, giving short answers, or remaining silence, etc.

Horwitz et al conclude that communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation provide useful conceptual building blocks for a description of foreign language anxiety, but they propose that foreign language anxiety is not simply the combination of these fears transferred to foreign language learning.

Anxiety and other Personal Variables

Anxiety and Gender

There are a number of dimensions of learner differences which are generally acknowledged, such as age, aptitude, sex, motivation, cognitive style, and learning strategies. Namely, gender plays an important role in language learning. Related research can be seen quite often. As gender is an issue with important theoretical and pedagogical implication implications in foreign language learning, it has received some attention in language learning strategy research. The studies have suggested that

gender can have a significant impact on how students learn a language. Many related research show females employ more learning strategies and more effectively than males as well.

The existing researches on the relationship between gender and anxiety have yielded conflicting results. Aida (1994, 158) asserts that there is no significant gender difference as far as anxiety is concerned. However, Coleman (1996, 110-115) conducted a series of identical research which are based on self-reporting by nearly twenty thousand university students and he found significant higher levels of language anxiety among females. Machida (2001) also found female learners are more anxious than male learners when she examined FL Japanese language class anxiety based on gender, nationality, first language, and prior foreign language experience. On the contrary, Mejias et al. (1991) found higher anxiety among Hispanic male than females, but noted that these results conflicted with results from their previous studies. When examining state anxiety in different conditions, Spielberger (1983) discovered that females are more emotionally stable than males when they are facing some high pressure or relaxing circumstance. Kitano (2001) reported Japanese male students felt higher anxiety when they were aware that their spoken Japanese was less competent than that of others; however, such a relationship was not found among female students.

In China, males are traditionally on higher positions than females. But in recently years women's status has been gradually improved. The research result of Wu Yan and Wen Qiufang (2000) shows that females are less anxious than males in the college

classroom.

Anxiety and Family Background

The personal factors of family background may involve a wide range of concepts, such as parents' educational experiences, profession and income, location of family, and teaching condition in the neighborhood. Previous studies show that there is a clear parallel between socio-linguistic phenomena and inter-language development (Preston 1989; Burstall, 1975; Skehan, 1989). A general finding is that children from lower socio-economic groups are less educational successful than those from higher groups.

It is unfortunate that up to now few studies have been done on the relationship between anxiety and family ground. In fact it is a noticeable factor in China. Owing to the unbalanced economic development, families can be divided into two types: urban family and rural family. Generally speaking, the former is considered to have more income and attach greater importance to language learning while the latter is regarded as low-income earners and pay less attention to education.

Anxiety and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a self-judgment of worth or value, based on feeling of efficacy, a sense of interacting effectively with one's own environment. Efficacy implies that some degree of control exists within oneself. Unsuccessful language learners often have lower self-esteem than successful language learners (Price, 1991). Whether this affects their overall self-esteem or only their situational self-esteem partly depends on how important language learning is to the individuals involved. Self-esteem is vulnerable when the learner perceives himself or herself as very competent in the

native language and totally inadequate or limited in the target language (Price, 1991).

E. Horwitz, H. Horwitz and Cope (1986) noted that foreign language learning can cause a threat to self-esteem by depriving learners of their normal means of communication, their freedom to make errors, and their ability to behave like normal people. Among highly anxious language students, those with high self-esteem might handle their anxiety better than those with low self-esteem, thus resulting in better performance.

A number of studies examined the relationship between language anxiety and self-esteem. One of the studies was conducted by MacIntyre, Noels and Clement in 1997. They found two biases operating in the second language learning situation. The first bias, self-enhancement, stems from a need to increase feeling of personal satisfaction and self-worth. Accordingly, individuals view themselves or their behavior in a positive light; in fact, they may become unrealistically optimistic (Taylor & Brown, 1994). The second bias, self-derogation, arises from a tendency that some individuals systematically underestimate their abilities. The researchers also find that highly anxious students often underestimate their language proficiency while lowly anxious students tend to overestimate themselves.

Sources of Language Anxiety

In a close review of the literature on anxiety in language learning, four key sources of language anxiety can be identified. Some are associated with internal factors and some with external ones. Namely, language anxiety may arise from: (1) Over-expectation from parents; (2) Tolerance of ambiguity; (3) Unscientific beliefs

about language learning; (4) Identification and culture shock.

Over-Expectation from Parents

Some students claimed that they tried to avoid facing their parents because of their parents' over involvement in their schooling. It is natural that parents long to see their children get successes in the world. However, until recently, it is a fact that it is difficult for senior high students to get access to college. At present, 50% of students from senior high schools can go to college after they finish senior schooling.

Sarason et al. (1992), the original developer of the Test Anxiety Scale for Children, believes that anxiety has its roots in parent-child relationship. They claim that test-anxious children may be unconsciously reacting to previous experiences in the family context. They maintain that parents of a highly anxious child hold unrealistically high expectations and are overly critical of the child. The child internalizes the parent's negative evaluations and consequently feels inadequate in evaluative situations. The child's unconscious hostility toward the parent for being too critical is internalized in the form of anxiety, rather than externalize in overt aggressiveness.

Tolerance of Ambiguity

Tolerance of ambiguity is the acceptance of confusing situations. Second language learning has a great deal of ambiguity about meanings, referents and pronunciation. It requires that learners cope with information gaps, unexpected language and situations, new cultural norms and substantial uncertainty. It is highly interpersonal, which is in itself fraught with ambiguity and unpredictability. Language

is composed of symbols, which are abstract and often hard to pin down. Concepts and expressions in any two languages do not relate one-to-one (Ehrman, 1996, p. 119). Those who cannot tolerate moderate levels of confusion will bear anxiety. Anreis (1981) believes that the successful language learners are more likely than their unsuccessful counterparts to tolerate ambiguity and that the former are often more assertive than the latter. To a great extent, it depends on their learning styles. That is, “ego boundary”, defined by Madeline Ehrman (2000), as the degree to which individuals tend to compartmentalize their experience, can be divided into two types: thick and thin. Generally speaking, thick boundaries correlate moderately with sensing, thinking, and judging as illustrated in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCarley, 1985) while thin boundaries correlate with great sensitivity and creativity.

With thick ego boundaries, the student is likely to want a clearly structured curriculum, seek conscious approaches to learn, display some discomfort with role-playing and similar suspensions of everyday identity, and reject ambiguity. Students with thin boundaries tend to enjoy content-based learning where the focus is on what is being said more than how it is said. They often like to have everything available at once so they can get a sense of how everything relates. Many of them prefer non-linear approaches to learning and enjoy unexpected learning events. Therefore, learners under such learning contexts are less likely to conceive anxiety.

Tolerance of ambiguity can be viewed as being made up of three levels of function. The first level is to permit information to enter one’s conceptual schema in

the first place, namely, “intake.” The second level is called tolerance of ambiguity proper. At this level, it is necessary for learners to deal with contradictions and incomplete information or incomplete construct. The third level is called accommodation-learners making discriminations, setting priorities among competing concepts and developing hierarchies of information in terms of abstraction, integration, and making something new (Levin 1990; Ehrman & Oxford 1995).

Tolerance of ambiguity is crucial to success in language learning aimed at real communicative use (Ehrman, 1999). Omaggio and Birckbichler (2000) define the students with a low tolerance for ambiguity as those who “give up quickly when the task presents difficulty doubt or ambiguity. They cannot hypothesize well and do not like to take risks” (Annreis, 1981, p. 122).

Unscientific Beliefs about Language Learning

Researchers suggest that the beliefs of both learners and instructors are linked to language anxiety.

Learner beliefs about language learning are a major contributor to language anxiety. Gynan reports on a variety of practices that learners’ beliefs are important for successful language learning (Young, 1991, p. 428). His subjects believe, for instance, that pronunciation is the most important practice in language learning. Others prefer learning practice, in the order of starting with vocabulary, classroom conjugation, communication, toward memorization of grammar and traveling to a country where the language is spoken. Similarly, language learners in Horwitz’s study (1) express great concern over the correctness of their utterance; (2) place a great deal of stress on

speaking with “excellent accent”; (3) support the notion that language learning is primarily translation of the language; (4) believe that two years’ learning is enough to become fluent in another language; and (5) believe that some people are more able to learn a foreign language than others (1988). As some of these beliefs are unrealistic for the language learner, they could lead to anxiety. For example, most beginners, unless they are highly motivated, will not sound like a native speaker. If they believe that pronunciation is the most important aspect of a language, they will end up frustrated and stressed. The same frustration and anxiety will set in if they believe that memorization of grammar is the most important practice in language learning. In other words, when beliefs and reality clash, anxiety results.

Instructor beliefs about language teaching are another source of language anxiety. In China, the majority of the instructors consider intimidation a necessary and supportive motivator for promoting students’ performance. Most instructors never consider their role in the language class to be a counselor or a friend. They reject friendly and non-authoritative student-teacher relationship. Instructors who believe their role is to constantly correct students’ mistakes, who feel that they should allow students to work in pairs because the class may get out of control, who believe that the teacher should be doing most of the teaching, and who think their role is more like a drill sergeant’s than a facilitator’s, may be contributing to learner language anxiety.

Identification and Culture Shock

Second language learning is often second culture learning. “To be bilingual, one must be bicultural” (H. D. Brown, 1989). In the process of language learning, because

students learn another new language on the foundation of their own native culture, it is unavoidable for them to be involved in identification and culture shock.

Identification with a language group or target culture implies that the learner is an insider, a member of the 'club' of French, Spanish, German or Chinese speakers. Young (1992) suggested that anxiety is lower (that is, the affective filter is reduced) if a student feels such identification, and anxiety is higher if the student does not identify with the language group. Paradoxically, for other learners, anxiety can arise due to over-identification with the language group and the concurrent feeling of loss of personal identity.

Anxiety about losing one's own identity can be part of culture shock. Culture shock refers to phenomena ranging from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis. Culture shock is associated with feelings in the learner of estrangement, anger, hostility, indecision, frustration, unhappiness, sadness, loneliness, hopelessness, self-pity, alienation, a sense of deception, a perception of 'reduced personality', and glorification of one's own native culture.

It is feasible to think of culture shock as one of four successive stages of acculturation. The first stage is the period of excitement and euphoria over the newness of the surroundings. The second stage is culture shock, which emerges as individuals feel the intrusion of more and more cultural differences into their own image of self and security. The third stage is typified by what Larson and Smalley (1972) called culture stress: some problems of acculturations are solved while other problems continue for some time. The fourth stage represents near or full recovery,

assimilation or adaptation, acceptance of the new culture and self-confidence in the “new” person that has developed in this culture.

Effects of Anxiety on Language Learning

A growing body of research has been devoted to examining learners’ self-reported anxiety in relation to second language achievement or performance. However, as pointed out by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) and Scovel (1978), studies conducted in the 1970s were difficult to interpret because of contradictory results. For example, in their study of English-speaking French immersion children, Swain and Burnaby (1976) found a significant negative correlation between anxiety and one measure of the children’s proficiency in French, but no significant correlation with any other measures of proficiency. Chastain (1975) reported that the correlation between test anxiety and course grades was significant and negative for the audio-lingual French class, significant and positive for the traditional Spanish class, marginally positive for the traditional German class, and not significant for the traditional French class. No significant correlation was found between trait anxiety and course grades for the audio-lingual French class, traditional French class, and traditional German class although a small but significant positive correlation was found for the traditional Spanish class. Many researchers have attributed the discrepant findings in part to the use of general measures of anxiety and to the inadequate conceptualizations of second language anxiety, which did not take into consideration the unique nature of second language learning (E. Horwitz, H. Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989).

Tobias (1986) proposes a model of the effect of anxiety on learning from instruction. She holds that interference may occur at three levels: input, processing and output. At input, anxiety may cause attention deficits and poor initial processing of information. In short, not as much information is registered. During processing, if the task is relatively simple, anxiety may have little effect. The more difficult the task becomes, the greater the effect of anxiety on processing. At output, anxiety may interfere with the retrieval of previously learned information. The experience of “freezing” on a test can be attributed to the influence of anxiety at the time of retrieval.

Kleinmann (1988) found that ESL students with high levels of debilitating anxiety attempted different types of grammatical constructions than did less anxious ESL students; and Steinberg and Horwitz (1990) found that students experiencing an anxiety-producing condition attempted less interpretive message than those experiencing a relaxed condition. These studies indicate that anxiety can affect the communication strategies which students employ in language class. That is, the more anxious student tends to avoid attempting difficult or personal messages in the target language. These findings are also consistent with research on other types of specific communication anxiety. Researchers studying writing in a native language have found that students with higher levels of writing anxiety write shorter compositions and qualify their writing less than their calmer counterparts do. It is commonly accepted that foreign language anxiety interferes with foreign language learning.

On one hand the researchers’ studies show the negative correlation of anxiety

with the following:

- Grades in language courses (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1986; Trylong, 1987);
- Proficiency test performance (Ganschow, Sparks, Anderson, Javorsky, Skinner & Patton, 1994; Gardner, Lalonde, Moorcroft & Evers, 1987);
- Performance in speaking and writing tasks (Trylong, 1987; Young, 1986);
- Self-confidence in language learning (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993);
- Self-esteem, i.e., the judgment of one's own worth (E. Horwitz, H. Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Price, 1991; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992).

On the other hand some researchers suggested that language anxiety was actually 'helpful' or 'facilitating' in some ways, such as keeping student alert (Scovel, 1978). Also, in Bailey's (1983) study of competitiveness and anxiety, it was found that facilitative anxiety was one of the keys to success, and closely related to competitiveness. Helpful anxiety has been shown in a few studies to be related to:

- High language proficiency and self-confidence among a hand-picked group of excellent language learners (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995);
- Oral production of different English structures among native Arabic-speakers and Spanish-speakers (Kleinmann, 1977);
- Good grades in language classes for students in regular French, German, and Spanish classes but not for students in audio-lingual classes (Chastain, 1975).

In China, there have also been some studies conducted in the Chinese context to explore the relationship between anxiety and English learning achievement (Lei, 2004;

Tang, 2005; Xue, 2005). Most of them found a negative correlation.

Going through these studies, it was found that there is undoubtedly certain relationship between language anxiety and language learning outcomes. Although the debilitating anxiety, which is a more common interpretation of anxiety, is considered to be detrimental to learning achievement, facilitating anxiety might be useful for language learning in many ways. Sometimes in the same experiment, the researchers found that language learning anxiety will play a positive role in one aspect in language learning achievement, for example, it will do well to foreign language writing. However, it will play a negative role in other aspects in the learning outcome, for example, the speaking and listening of foreign language.

Therefore, it is not proper to say that language learning anxiety and learning achievement are complete positive correlation or negative correlation. The overall situation is waited to be researched. We cannot decide arbitrarily to draw a conclusion that language learning anxiety should be fully responsible for one's bad learning outcome.

The Theoretical Foundation

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

Since the 1970s, research interest in EFL has shifted from teacher's teaching to student's learning. It has been broadly recognized that the success of one's second language acquisition depends largely on the learner himself/herself. In the field of second language acquisition, the most direct theoretical foundation is laid by Stephen Krashen (1982).

Krashen's theory consists of five linked hypotheses: input, acquisition/learning, monitor, natural order, and affective filter. Krashen suggested that language acquisition is actually only a way of understanding messages or receiving comprehensible language input. But why all foreign language learners are not equally successful in language acquisition, even if they receive apparently identical comprehensible input? Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985) further suggests that the comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition, but not sufficient. For acquisition to take place, the learner has to be open to the input, that is, to be able to absorb the appropriate parts of the input. There can be "a mental block" called "the affective filter" that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they receive for language learning. In Krashen's opinion, comprehensible input and the strength of the filter are the true causes of second language acquisition, but one positively, the other negatively. If the filter is "up", the learner may understand what she or he hears and reads, but the input will not reach the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). When it is "down", the language learning process turns to be effective. Anxiety contributes to one of the three affective variables in his Affective Filter Hypothesis. In other words, only learners with high motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety can accept comprehensible input and acquire the target language more easily.

Theory of Second Language Learning Personality

When compared with attitude and motivation, personality factors have received scant attention in the study of the relationship between affective variables and second

language learning. As early as 1930's Allport (1937) defines personality as the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determines his characteristic behavior and thought. Personality is definitely one of the most important affective factors linked to success in L2 learning. It may be helpful or determined to successful language learning. Recent studies have attempted to identify and interpret personality in the light of clinical or psychological research. Child (1977) presented a number of diverse theories. But Eysenck (1970), who also occupies a pivotal position in the field of personality studies, elaborates a most comprehensive objective approach to the study of personality. His theory, using dichotomies, identifies two general traits. There are many aspects of personality factors, but the major dimensions of personality may include five pairs, one of them is: anxiety vs. relaxation.

Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis

Swain (1978) acknowledged in her Output Hypothesis the role of comprehensible input in second language acquisition (SLA) but argued that the role of learners' production of comprehensible output in many ways is independent of the role of comprehensible input. Comprehensible output, as she claimed, is also necessary for SLA. "Its role is, at minimum, to provide opportunities for contextualized and meaningful use, to test out hypothesis about the target language, and to move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of the language to syntactic analysis of it".

On the basis of the existent theories, Ellis (1994) confirms that the learner's

affective states are of crucial importance in accounting for individual differences in learning outcomes. Research shows that language anxiety is a success predictor in language class and it affects all of the three stages (the input stage, the processing stage, the output stage) of cognitive processing in second language acquisition or learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Many other researchers also suggest that anxiety is perhaps the most pervasive obstruction in language learning (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Language teachers have also attempted to explore the anxiety problems in the language classroom and to help their students overcome the language anxiety by providing some useful suggestions.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDIES AND ANALYSIS

Student's Manifestations of English Language Anxiety

Language anxiety is observable in or outside the classroom if the language instructors are observant of subtle behavior in their English learners. Some behaviors or body language reflect their deepest feelings. Actually, some of the behaviors are easy to identify while others are difficult to distinguish.

According to Jahanna Turner (1997:227), there are three main ways of telling whether a person is anxious: first, by observing certain physiological symptom such as sweating, trembling, blushing or vomiting; second, by observing a person's general behavior such as whether a person is very restless before a test, if he talks too loudly and too much; third, by means of anxiety tests which are most frequently used by psychologists.

Oxford (2000:66) believes that behaviors vary across cultures, and what might seem to be anxious behavior in one culture might be normal behavior in another. What's more, he divides possible signs of language anxiety into four kinds:

General avoidance: 'forgetting' the answer, showing carelessness, cutting class, coming late, arriving unprepared, low levels of verbal production, lack of voluntary contributions in class, and seeming unable to answer even the simplest questions.

Physical actions: squirming, fidgeting, playing with hair or clothing, nervously touching objects, and stuttering or stammering over the target language even after

repeated practice

Physical symptoms: complaining about a headache, experiencing tight muscles, or feeling unexplained pain or tension.

Other signs which might reflect language anxiety, depending on the culture: over studying, perfectionism, social avoidance, conversational withdrawal, lack of eye contact, hostility, monosyllabic or noncommittal responses, image protection or masking behaviors (exaggerated smiling, laughing, nodding, joking), failing to interrupt when it would be natural to do so, excessive competitiveness, excessive self-effacement, and self-criticism.

Case Studies and Analysis

This study is designed to investigate the sources and influential factors of language anxiety, the relationship between foreign language learning anxiety of senior high school students, and their achievements in English learning. The investigation will be discussed in detail in this chapter, including a description of my observations of my most familiar friends' learning experiences as well as my own personal experience.

Case 1

Tom, who was one of my best friends in the senior high school, was an active student. When our teachers asked us to answer their questions, he would be the first student to raise his hand for delivering his opinion. He was so extroverted that he liked to share his ideas with others. Whenever he heard something new, he would speak out loudly during the class breaks. However, when we were asked to

communicate with our partners in English in the classroom, he never seemed to have a chance to express his ideas fully. At first we did not consider his behavior to be exceptional because it was normal that one cannot say too much during the limited class time and he was the type of person who would like to say much. But after we all turned to cooperative learning with him in order to train our oral English, we came to the conclusion that he did not say much and spent most of his time in pausing and thinking. It was certainly not because he was ashamed of speaking a foreign language with classmates but rather because of his “inner tension”, as he agreed, when he had to communicate with others in English only.

I realized that his failure in speak English fluently might be due to the influence of language learning anxiety. Therefore I telephoned him and asked him to offer his feelings and experience of learning English in senior high school. He admitted that at that time he put much emphasis on accent or pronunciation and the spelling of his utterance. That is to say, he asked himself to speak English with an “excellent accent”, and if he uttered a word which he was not sure of, he would stop and look it up in dictionary to avoid making mistakes. According to him, “I would rather spend lots of time in looking up pronunciation in the dictionary and organizing well before I utter a sentence because I did not want to be laughed at by classmates, due to my incorrect pronunciation at that time.”

Putting aside Tom’s intense concern for an excellent accent, which was a tough aim to be attained in itself, his over-exaggerated diligence in spelling was also time-consuming and was an obstacle for the passage of unstopped conversation. It

was no wonder that he could not speak out what he wanted to say in the limited time allowed.

Actually Tom's failure in English speaking lies in Eastern-Western cultural differences and his low self-esteem.

Pursuing perfection has always been deeply rooted in Chinese culture. People are taught to hold back their ideas until they have weighed every word and idea, and until they are sure everything is totally correct or acceptable (Bai, 2003). This, in turn, also creates troubles for language learners as learning a language involves having tolerance of ambiguity and risk-taking behavior. One thing lacking in Chinese is the adventurous spirit many Westerners have. This is due to the influence of a different culture. Language learners are encouraged to take risks and treat mistakes as a necessary part of language learning; however, most Chinese students still feel quite uncomfortable when required to present themselves in another language.

Besides, Chinese students are affected by negative evaluation from either their teachers or their classmates. The teachers are always ready to correct learners' mistakes while the classmates are inclined to laugh at those who offer a poor performance. Students get little encouragement and this may lower students' self-esteem to some extent. The students with low self-esteem worry about what their peers think, and they are concerned with how to satisfy others. All these have much to do with anxiety. Based on Tom's response to my asking, I can safely conclude that he is a person with high negative anxiety during English learning.

Mary was a friend I met in senior high school. Before she came to our senior high school, she lived and studied in a remote village. Because of the lack of teaching equipment and qualified teachers, the students in remote villages are generally weaker than students in big cities in English pronunciation and communicative ability in a foreign language. Therefore, when she began to study while accompanying us, she seldom opened her mouth during English classes and could not catch up with most of our classmates. At the beginning of her transferring to our school, our English teacher paid special attention to her and always encouraged her to answer questions. When she was selected to answer a question, she would stand up and play with her long hair, stuttering her answer in broken sentences.

What's more, she developed a habit from the beginning of English learning in that village that she had to hold a pen in her hand and write down the letters of the words one by one when she began to memorize new English words. Therefore, she did not memorize a word as a whole or according to its phonetic construction, but instead remembered it as a scattering of alphabetic structure.

When I had a conversation with her at this time, I asked her, "How did you feel when you began to study in our senior high school?" She replied, "I would rather that the teachers were not so kind. You cannot imagine how scared and pressed I was while waiting for my name to be called by the English teacher. When English class began, I hoped that I could become an unseen person." Then I asked her why she chose such a rigid way to learn English. After all, all of us know that memorizing words as a scattering of alphabetic structure is not a scientific way. She confessed that

she knew the shortcomings of her special way of learning and explained to me the reason why she chose to use that stiff method to learn English. She told to me, “I can remember a word well as a scattering structure. But after a long period I would forget the construction and pronunciation of the word I had learned. Because I could not remember those words, I did not know what to say when we had conversation, nor what to write when we had tests or exams. However, this way of learning English was imparted to me by my first English teacher and it was a useful way to deal with written tests or exams at the senior middle school. So I could not abandon it easily.”

As Oxford describes, Mary’s physical actions revealing anxiety in foreign language learning were obvious. The reasons and influential factors inducing her anxiety in English language learning might due to unscientific beliefs about language learning, family background, and low self-esteem.

Because Mary’s family location and teaching conditions in her neighborhood were not good, her foundation of English language knowledge was not stable or comprehensive. It is a recognized fact that children from lower socio-economic groups are less educationally successful than those from higher income groups. In addition, the traditional English teaching method pays inadequate attention to the importance of communicative skills, and students are provided with fewer opportunities to communicate with each other in target the language. However, with the development of international communication, there are more and more possibilities for the students to express their ideas. It is unfortunate that they cannot speak with fluency when they are confronted with foreigners. Therefore, the difficulty

and inability to communicate freely and fluently results in a suspicion regarding their personal abilities.

Besides, her rooted belief in an authoritative student-teacher relationship restricted her progress. After she adopted her first teacher's way of learning, she excluded other effective and efficient methods.

Case 3

Lucy, who was a self-confident girl, was my best friend. When she was a child, she began to show her interest in foreign countries under the influence of her parents. Her father was a government officer and her mother was an English teacher in a senior middle school. Her mother had dreamed of going abroad when she was young. After she gave birth to Lucy, she expected that her daughter could fulfill her aim and realize her dream.

After Lucy entered senior high school, she appreciated the customs of foreign countries more and more, and was eager to have her personal experiences abroad. She was not satisfied with the content which described foreign countries in books. Any time that we encountered a foreigner, she was active in talking with him/her in order to learn the local customs. Besides, she listened and read a lot about the social phenomena in foreign countries, and wrote to her pen pal who was American. Although she devoted herself to English learning, she did not give up studying Chinese language and cultures. She said "I decided to spread our excellent Chinese culture through the use of excellent English." Her desire to be accepted by the countries she loved and appreciated drove her to study hard, and in so doing, she

attained a good result. Her English achievement became good and stable with my friends and me.

Because of her curiosity and open-mindedness, she did well in getting used to new knowledge and was good at studying. She believed that life is “a box of chocolates” and said “I would like to experience new things by myself because other people’s description and experience cannot meet my need.”

From Lucy’s deeds and words we can see a positive side to cultural differences. For a long time the long and glorious ancient history has always been a source of pride to Chinese people, allowing them to have a strong culture identity. When East meets West, as is required by English language learning, some Chinese students would have an identity crisis (Lee, 2003), feeling that they had to forego one set of cultural beliefs in order to appreciate a different one. When teachers required students to think in English, Chinese students find it very hard to follow the instruction and to incorporate at least part of a different culture into their way of “thinking and being and of experiencing reality”, and then there may often be major emotional disruptions (Arnold, 1999). However, Lucy combined her Chinese language identity with her appreciation for foreign language and attained a good result. She created a situation where her language anxiety gained a facilitating aspect.

Case 4

John was an interesting person. He liked to tell us many humorous jokes and you could hear his voice above the others in laughter during the breaks or after classes. In a sense, he was like Tom, whom we have discussed in case 1, but the

difference between them was that Tom was active during class while John kept silent and did not make any contributions during the whole class.

John said that he knew the answers to the teacher's questions raised in class, but he did not want to raise his hand up to make his contribution. He said jokingly that he was a traditional Chinese man and his belief was that 'Silence is gold'. In fact, his attitude and belief toward English learning stemmed from the traditional Chinese culture, in which there are criterion for judging a wise person, which in nature, are actually against the rules of language learning. Real gentlemen are slow in speech and quick in action. Keeping silent would hardly allow us to learn a language well. In a culture that values self-control so much, the exhibition of personal ability in front of others as is required by most language learning would definitely pose a threat to language learners' psychology in deed (Wang, 2002). Although this situation is changing in China; however, being able to present oneself in front of others would always be perceived jealously and be criticized as showing off.

In the English classrooms of senior high schools, we always find that students are generally shy, silent, humble, and are too concerned about their peers' evaluation. They understand language rules, but they are unwilling to express their ideas. However, it is well-known that only through practicing over and over again can we master a language well. The fewer speeches they make, the poorer their spoken proficiency achieved. Thus their anxiety in classroom learning will surely heighten.

This case shows the typical syndrome of Chinese students' anxiety in English classrooms: the students always keep silent in the classroom. What's more, physical

symptoms are commonplace in Chinese English learners. They often feel nervous, even experiencing unexplained pain, and restlessness before tests. In addition, due to lack of self-confidence, certain physiological symptoms always emerge, such as sweating, trembling, blushing or vomiting.

Case 5

My name is Daisy. Although I have chosen English Education as my major today, my English achievement was very poor when I was in senior high school.

I began to learn English when I went to senior middle school. At that time, I had a good relationship with my English teacher. She was an active and kind person. With her patient guidance I did well in English learning. However, when I went into senior high school, I met a more serious and stringent English teacher. I could not behave in a leisurely and relaxed way in front of him as I had in my senior middle school; he definitely elevated my fear of making errors and increased my language anxiety. In addition, the English grammatical points and structures were more difficult than those addressed in senior middle school. As a result, my English test marks were terrible. Because of my failure to learn English, my parents began to pay greater attention to my achievements. Every time I went home from school, they would remind me of the importance of the scores of a required course needed for the College Entrance Exam and show their disappointment in me when I performed poorly. Every time I went back to school, I felt guilty about disappointing my parents. I thought that I did not deserve my parents' concern and love. Then I decided to study diligently, got rid of bad habits in learning English, and changed my negative opinion of my English

teacher.

However, when I entered into the classroom and had eye-contact with my English teacher, I would start to become nervous. If he asked me to answer his questions, I would blush and stammer. All in all, I fell into a vicious fear of learning English.

Even though fearing English language learning, I did manage to pass the first year of my senior high school examination. Before I had to persuade myself to endure the next two years of learning English, the serious English teacher asked me to visit him in his office. I knew that I had failed English the last term, and expected much criticism. It seemed, however, that this knocking on his door changed my life. When I sat down opposite him, he smiled at me and congratulated me upon my good marks in my other courses in Chinese, math and chemistry. My heart suddenly swelled with gratitude toward him because he did not criticize me directly for my poor English mark.

Then he told me why he wanted to talk with me. It was because he was eager to encourage my success in my other courses and did not want the subject he was teaching to be an obstacle to my success. At last he offered me many tips to improve my English and promised that he would be there whenever I needed help. When I stepped out of his office, I found the world had changed. The sky was blue and the air was sweet. I ultimately understood that he was a kind and warm-hearted teacher. I did not need to fear that he would despise me when I gave wrong answers to his questions in the classroom. I felt so relaxed that I could devote myself to learning without

considering my former language fears.

The conversation with my teacher changed me a lot. I caught up with my classmates in English achievement and showed my great interest in English. As a result, I chose English Education as my major.

My own personal experience represents the over-expectation of parents and the importance of the relationship between instructor and learner as highly significant elements in creating my English learning anxiety.

Based on the previous cases detailed above, and with hints from both existent literature and my own experience, an analysis might be made that validates the literature. The factors contributing to different anxiety levels are self-esteem, cultural differences, and personality. The sources from which students' English learning anxiety emerges are expectations from parents, the instructor-learner relationship, student tolerance of ambiguity, the holding of unscientific beliefs about language learning and identification of culture shock. Tom's low tolerance in ambiguity of English pronunciation and spelling (case 1) led to his failure in English learning. Also, Mary's rigid and limiting way of memorizing English words (case 2) results in her short retention of words and her inability to speak and write well, which is due to her unscientific beliefs about language learning. Lucy's identification and culture shock became an impetus for her to learn English well (case 3). John's debilitating anxiety came from cultural restrictions (case 4) and my personal experience (case 5) proves the importance of parental expectations and the relationship between students and instructors.

Language Learning Anxiety and Language Learning Achievements

In going through the previous review of literature and the presented case studies, it was found that there is a certain relationship between language anxiety and language learning outcomes. Although the debilitating anxiety, which is a more extreme interpretation of anxiety, is considered to be detrimental to learning achievement (cases 1, 2, 4, 5), facilitating anxiety might be useful for language learning in many ways (case 3). Sometimes in the same experiment, the researchers found that language learning anxiety will play a positive role in one aspect of language learning achievement and play a negative role in another aspect. We cannot decide arbitrarily to draw a conclusion that language learning anxiety should be fully responsible for one's bad learning outcome.

CHAPTER 4

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Current Situation in Senior High School English Teaching

For a long time, many students in senior school conduct painful English study experience and then disliked studying. There are three major factors about senior high school English teaching lead to this situation.

(1) Test-oriented teaching method

Since the test competitions are also violent, many teachers have to adopt the test-oriented teaching methods to teach English in senior high school. Teachers pay more attentions on the score of every English test. So test anxiety was often mentioned during the interviews, particularly in connection with oral testing or listening exercises.

(2) Monotonous teaching methods

Some teachers are not quite qualified. Their teaching methods are not rich with unitary contents. With stiff facial expression and plain teaching language, the teachers just force students to memorize English vocabulary and text mechanically. They don't organize any communicating activities such as game, group work and so on. It makes students loose learning interests.

(3) Emotion education was ignored, and the relation between teachers and students became tense

For a long time, teaching aim is negatively influenced by test-oriented education. In teaching procedure, cognitive side is emphasized, while the important role of affects play in education is neglected. When students have no confidence after they fail time and again, their teachers do not give them courage, instead, they criticize, blame, laugh at them and look at them with scorn and even hatred. The result of this is that students dislike the teachers and the subjects they teach as well. Because of these reasons students felt unhappy at school. They had pressure and painful emotional experience. The unhealthy psychology does harm to their study and the teaching results .If they go on with such bad psychology, they could not develop wholly. As many students could not bear heavy load of homework, pressure and dull lives, they dropped out.

Strategies to Reduce Learners' Anxiety

Being a Popular Facilitator

There is a saying, “love me, love my dog”. When the students love their English teachers, they will be naturally willing to get close to them, believe in them, and perform actively in the class. To make the students like their teachers, English teachers in senior high schools, should change their roles, educating themselves as qualified facilitators, rather than teachers or lectures.

In Adrian Underhill's (2000:123-131) view, “A lecturer is a teacher in any educational context who has a knowledge of the topic taught but no special skill or interest in the techniques and methodology of teaching it; a teacher is a person who has a knowledge of the topic and is also familiar with a range of methods and

procedures for teaching it; a facilitator is a teacher in any educational setting who understands the topic, is skilled in the use of current teaching methods and techniques, and who actively studies and pays attention to the psychological learning atmosphere and inner processes of learning on a moment by moment basis, with the aim of enabling learners to take as much responsibility for their learning as they can.” Based on learner-centered model of education, teachers need to be sensitized to their new role. They are not on superior and dominant position any longer, the current communicative language teaching approach allows the teacher to be seen as more of a facilitator whose responsibility is to provide students with opportunities to communicate in English in situations as authentic as possible with authentic materials.

To be a facilitator, first of all, the teachers should be expert at language learning and teaching, for which not only should they keep on learning related knowledge, that is to say, knowledge about linguistic psychology, pedagogy, and language teaching methodology, but also they should have the correct points of view on the instructors, the learners and the relation between them. To realize different roles of an instructor in different occasions is important. Keep it in mind that teachers and students are equal during English language learning.

In addition, special attention to the way of correcting students’ errors should be paid for a successful facilitator. On one hand, being patient is necessary. On the other hand, don’t hurt learners’ self-esteem. Lack of patience or hurting students’ esteem is what students hate most. Many a student made errors when using English. For example, we may come across this kind of sentences from unsuccessful learners: (1) I

is a student; (2) I very miss you.

Improper ways of correcting errors should be avoided. In the questionnaire, some students argue that the following sentences from their teachers make them feel uncomfortable. “How stupid it is of you not to understand so simple a question” or “I’ve explained the question to you several times, still you made such a error!” etc..

Try not to correct errors orally and in public, which may cause learners to feel ashamed in public. What the students worry most is to lose face in front of their peers. If possible, we had better correct errors in their exercise books.

Therefore, how to correct errors is not simple. It depends on learners and instructors. The basic principle is that don’t hurt the learners’ esteem in order not to produce learner’s language anxiety.

Creating a Relaxing and Pleasant Learning Atmosphere

As far as classroom atmosphere is concerned, it’s important to produce relaxing and pleasant learning atmosphere. When a teacher become a facilitator or director, it is helpful to create a learner-friendly, supportive and secure classroom atmosphere. In such classes, the teacher and the students are all actors and all the students are actively involved in the classroom activities. For example, classroom activities such as games playing, English-song singing, role-playing, and pair work can make students relax in class and concentrate on learning tasks.

Kich and Terrell, Price, Young and Omaggio (1990) suggest that language anxiety is alleviated when students work in small groups, do pair work, and experience individualized language instruction. Group work not only addresses the

affective concerns of the students, but also increases the amount of comprehensible input such as student talk. Adopting the Natural Approach is another way to reduce the learners' affective filter. This can be done in several ways. In addition to group work, personalized instruction can also be adopted to make students feel the most comfortable. Examples of personalized instruction include using pictures to present vocabulary and associating the vocabulary with students and objects in class; personalizing grammar; pairing students to work with each another.

Saunders (1985) and Crookall (1991) suggest that playing games with the language can also reduce language anxiety. They posit: "if the learning of a new language provokes inhibition and caution in the part of the adult who fears ridicule because of incompetence in a real situation, the activity of play within game scenarios has great potential. In effect the person at play can be more easily forgiven for errors of judgment and poor communication". There is always the excuse of unfamiliarity with the social rules, roles and norms of a game for novice players. Playing games with the language does not necessarily mean playing traditional, competitive games such as Jeopardy, Password, or Hangman. Language game might include something as simple as using the target language to solve a problem. Saunders and Crookall (1991) think it can be an effective way to create interest, motivate students, encourage participation and reduce anxiety. Clement Laroy (1998:11) believes that music has sometimes been described metaphorically as a language without words. Playing music is a good way to create a different atmosphere, which is conducive to learning, fosters concentration and encourages learners to be active. Students are often

surprised but grateful when well-chosen music is played during examinations, but above all it unbolts the door that stands between the students and expressions. When talking about music in foreign language teaching and learning, we can't talk without mentioning Suggestopedia, a method developed by the Bulgarian psychiatric educator Georgi Lozanov. Lozanov believes most learning takes place in a relaxed but focused state. A most conspicuous feature of Suggestopedia is the centrality of music to learning. Suggestopedia thus has a kinship with other functional uses of music, particularly therapy. In the classroom using Suggestopedia, the musical background helps to induce a relaxed attitude, which Lozanov refers to as concert pseudo-passiveness. This state is felt to be optimal for learning, in which anxiety and tension are relieved and power of concentration for new material is raised (Richard and Rodgers, (2000:146). A variety of songs-nursery rhymes, children's songs, folksong, protest songs, topical songs, pop songs, raps and serious songs, when properly chosen, are a useful tool to teach stress and phonology. Some songs are suitable for structure and vocabulary learning, some songs can be used for oral and written expression while other songs can be taught to introduce culture. We should make proper choices used for teaching and learning. Sanderson (2000) concluded that "using their own choice as much as possible will be an important key to using songs effectively in the classroom".

Furthermore, teachers should try to reduce the competition because it is easy for those timid students to become easy and less anxious if they are submerged in a less competitive situation. As a result, the students always find it a pleasure to sit in such a

class where they are encouraged to use language instead of memorizing grammar rules mechanically and passively. What students master is not only their academic work, but also skills in putting what they learned into practice. Hence, students develop both academic knowledge and practical ability. Last but not least, instructors should have a good sense of humor and be friendly, kind and patient all the time. As a teacher, he/she has to bear peaceful mind in their classroom teaching no matter what happens to him/her. When the students make mistakes in the classroom, the teacher ought to use gentle or non-threatening methods of error correction, offering words of encouragement and minimizing criticism. Furthermore, mistakes had better be corrected in their written homework and it is unnecessary to point them out quickly in public, otherwise, the students will feel lose of dignity. In Young's (1990) study, the subjects described certain instructor characteristics that helped reduce their anxiety over error correction. Their comments suggest that instructors can reduce language anxiety by believing in the notion that mistakes are a natural part of the language learning process and that everyone has to make certain mistakes to become fluent in language communication. Therefore, students can take an amusing look at errors and realize that they are not taboo-and that mistakes can contribute to learning. Students feel more at ease when the instructor's manner of correction is not harsh and when the instructor does not overreact to mistakes. The most frequent suggestion made by Price's subjects for alleviating language anxiety was "that they would feel more comfortable if the instructor were more like a friend helping them to learn and less like an authority figure making them perform". Only when the instructors praise more,

criticize less; encourage more, punish less will the students not be afraid to make mistakes any more in English classroom, and then they will dare to take risks, tolerant language ambiguity and take more active part in classroom activities, thus leading to the creation of relaxing and pleasant classroom atmosphere.

Adopting a Cooperative Learning Model

Recently, since the teaching ways are changing from knowledge impartation to knowledge development in China's classrooms, a new teaching model named cooperative learning, is being adopted. Compared with the traditional methods, cooperative learning model is a good method as a new way to reduce learners' anxieties. And research shows that it is effective to adopt the task-based teaching approach in cooperative learning.

Task-based teaching approach is a method of teaching by which learners learn or acquire language by "doing" instead of "drilling". It is new and different from the drill in the traditional English teaching. A task lays its emphasis on its "process" but not its "end", while a drill cares for its "end". To finish a task, the learners are active, while the learners are passive to complete a drill. Perhaps a task's biggest advantage is the effect it can have on motivation. "Providing students with a problem to solve or a task to complete engages their curiosity where more conventional exercises often do not (Barbara Mcdevitt 1999:29)." Besides task-based teaching approach is a good way to avoid learning style conflict, thus create a cooperative atmosphere. Tasks should be properly designed. When tasks are properly designed, which are neither too difficult nor too easy, interesting, challenging but reachable, members in the cooperative group

will be active in completing them. Most of psychology experts believed that too difficult or too easy tasks will lead to a loss of learners' interest.

Cooperative learning (CL) in second and foreign language is suggested in the New English Curriculum and dozens of examples are given. Cooperative learning activities can be developed in different forms. Think/pair/share, Jigsaw, roundtable/round robin, number heads together, group investigation, paired classes, cooperative doze competition, collaborative and cooperative writing, and peer response are examples which are popular with students. Teachers can choose a suitable method with regard to learners' needs and possibilities specific to learning contexts.

However the group should be heterogeneous because group structure is important in cooperative learning. Whatever activity is chosen, a cooperative group should be formed by the students of different characters, different sexes, different proficiency and abilities, and even different family backgrounds. Thus in the cooperative group, each individual may play a unique role. For instance, an introvert is suitable for the recorder of the group while an extrovert had better act as a reporter. Proper role assigned can increase the individual's chance and sense of success. On the other hand, Learning tasks, which are neither too difficult nor too easy, interesting, challenging but reachable, should be properly designed according to their personal information. Only so will students among these groups be active in completing their learning tasks.

The characteristic of cooperative learning is that the realization of personal goal

is reflected in that of each group's. Both individual responsibility and interdependence are needed to achieve the success of cooperative learning. Members have both something to contribute to and learn from the others. Fear of failing or appearing foolish is a constant threat to interaction in the English classroom for the unsuccessful learners, especially when teachers ask questions which only a few students can answer. However, this debilitating anxiety of fear is decreased when the possibility of providing a correct or acceptable answer is increased and when learners have had an opportunity to try out their contributions with each other. Cooperative learning improves the overall climate of the classroom. Thus, it provides supportive evaluation and expands opportunities to receive feedback from group members, which put learners into greater likelihood of success than individual effort can lead to. The help from group members and the duty shared by others reduce learner's debilitating anxiety. Meanwhile, support from group members becomes a powerful motivator, especially to shy, insecure, and uninterested learners. And the successful results of learning through cooperation build in learners greater confidence and self-esteem on the whole (Slavin, 1990), which will in turn lead to increased learner effort and willingness in language learning.

In order to make students cooperate well, cohesiveness must, firstly, be stressed. Strong group cohesiveness makes group cooperation more dynamic and effective. Secondly, the students had better be taught some specific skills to interact, such as turn-taking, active listening, positive feedback and so on. Finally, every member in each group has to express their ideas in foreign language. From above, we see that it

is cooperative learning that can encourage the students to develop positive feeling such as improving self-esteem, self-initiation, self-actualization and self-evaluation; increasing the chances of learner's participation in language use; building up good relationship between members; relieving the pressure between the teacher and students; stirring motivation of learning and so on. All these help to reduce the anxiety of learning foreign language.

Changing Learner Beliefs about Language Learning

To reduce language anxiety, learner's beliefs about language learning is necessary to be paid attention in the process of language teaching and learning. According to Horwitz (1988) we can see that instructors should "discuss with their students reasonable commitment for successful language learning and the value of language ability if it is less than fluent". She contends that "as students' beliefs about language learning can be based on limited knowledge and/or experience, the teacher's most effective strategy may be to confront erroneous beliefs with new information. However, in some cases, students may never have had their views about language learning challenged." In addition, instructors may want to hold brief discussions about the process of language learning periodically throughout the whole language learning.

On one hand, discussing the nature of English learning can help to relieve students' concepts of anxiety-inducing factors. It is important that they have realistic expectations related particularly to accuracy if they are not to become merely anxious about their ability to speak in English. Realistic expectations include the understanding that language learning is a long procedure and errors are unavoidable in

the process of language learning. It is noted that many students don't volunteer to answer teacher's questions because they believe nothing should be said in English until it can be said with a standard accent and without any mistakes; and that it is not good to guess an unknown English word because they can't understand the material; and that only through enough input can output occur well because they regard English as a knowledge instead of a tool. Therefore, instructors should help learners change wrong beliefs through discussion or other efficient methods. At the same time, the teacher should be aware that apprehensive students assess their performance in a more positive and optimistic way so as to raise their level of motivation and effort to better their language learning.

On the other hand, it is also another effective strategy to learn to face language anxiety. As for Chinese senior school students, the most important facet is that they should learn to enjoy losing face and meeting frustration. A student learning a new language faces three major problems or dilemmas according to Stern (1981). Briefly stated, they are: (1) the problem of dominance of the first language as reference system as opposed to the new underdeveloped reference system; (2) the problem of having to pay attention simultaneously to linguistic forms and communication-a psychological impossibility; (3) the problem of having to choose between rational and intuitive learning.

Through systematic desensitization is an effective way. One way to reduce anxiety in forms as diverse as stage fright and snake phobias is through systematic desensitization, which aims to eliminate or reduce anxiety by repeated and controlled

exposure to a potentially anxiety-causing situation, generally in one's imagination, until the situation can be experienced without anxiety (Arnold, 2000:79). In fact, if the learners frequently expose themselves to the situations where they may lose face and cause anxiety, as time goes by, they will be gradually accustomed to the situations and save face because of the gradual progress in English. It is important that the purpose of doing so should be told clearly to the students first.

Applying Affective Strategy Training

According to Krashen (1980), anxiety contributes to an affective filter, which prevents students from receiving input, and then language acquisition fails to progress. A certain amount of anxiety sometimes helps learners with their study, but too much anxiety blocks language learning. Even the ordinary language classroom can create high anxiety, because learners are frequently forced to perform in a state of ignorance and dependence in front of their classmates and teacher. Teachers can influence the emotional atmosphere of the classroom by providing authentic communication and teaching learners to use affective strategies.

Oxford identified three main sets of affective strategies (Brown, 1994: 127): (1) Lowering your anxiety: using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation; using music; using laughter. (2) Encouraging yourself: making positive statements; taking risks wisely; rewarding yourself. (3) Taking your emotional temperature: listening to your body; using a checklist; writing a language diary; discussing your feelings with someone else.

Anxiety-reducing strategies like laughter and deep breathing are therefore

necessary. However, strategies directly targeted at anxiety reduction are not the only ones that help the students to calm down. Self encouragement via positive statements can change one's feelings and attitudes and can directly reduce performance anxiety.

Conclusion

An Overview

In English learning and teaching, student's affective variables play an essential role. Among the variables, English language anxiety is one of the factors which influence language learning whether learning environment is formal or not. Some language researchers found language anxiety was actually facilitating, such as keeping student alert, while the majority of the studies revealed that language anxiety was negatively correlated with course achievement significantly. Although a plethora of research has been achieved in western countries, the significance of affective variable anxiety still needs extensive attention in China because the present English learning and teaching situation is far from satisfaction.

The study reveals some valuable findings which deserve our consideration. Firstly, the findings of this study indicate that among the senior high school students there do exist foreign language anxiety. Generally, students are more or less interfered with English language anxiety. However, language learning anxiety and learning achievement are not complete positive correlation or negative correlation. The language anxiety could be facilitated or deliberated. Secondly, through a close observation and conversation with my most familiar friends, we found that the factors contributing to different anxiety levels are self-esteem, cultural differences and

personality. The sources from which students' English learning anxiety emerges are expectation from parents, instructor-learner relationship, tolerance of ambiguity, unscientific beliefs about language learning and identification of culture shock. On the basis of these findings, some teaching strategies are proposed, among which the following are most effective for teachers to alleviate students' language anxiety: being a popular facilitator, creating a relaxing and pleasant learning atmosphere, adopting a cooperative learning model, changing learner beliefs about language learning, and applying affective strategy training.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are several limitations that should be kept in mind while interpreting the findings of this study. First of all, this is only a tentative study on the relationship of anxiety and foreign language learning. There exist limitations because of limited duration and limited cases as well. Another limitation is that the accuracy and stability of the subject's answers might be influenced by many factors including subjective and objective conditions, which may lead to inconsistent results. Further, whether the strategies proposed to reduce anxiety are feasible or not will have to be verified by empirical research.

Though in recent years language teachers are beginning to pay attention to the role of anxiety in senior high school students' foreign language learning, the problems of how to deal effectively with anxious students and how to make the language learning environment less stressful is still left researched. The areas where further research is needed are suggested as follow. First, future investigation needs a larger

sample size than that used in this study. The second suggestion for future research is that researches about foreign language anxiety mostly are done with advanced learners, whereas with beginners or intermediate learners are comparatively limited. Therefore, future research could well look into the potential interaction between foreign language anxiety and beginning language learners and discuss the possible effect of early experiences of anxiety in the whole formation of foreign language anxiety in the later language study of learners. Finally, it suggested to explore positive effect on facilitating anxiety, as well as negative effect of debilitating anxiety on foreign language learning and to find ways to fully utilize facilitating anxiety to enhance language learning ability.

REFERENCES

- Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, and Horwitz and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78, 155-168.
- Albert, R. & R. Haber. (1960). Anxiety in academic achievement situations. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 61, 207-215.
- Arnold, J. (2000). *Affect in language learning*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Bailey, K. (1983). Competitiveness and anxiety in adult second language learning: Looking at and through the diary studies. In H. Seliger and M. Long (Eds.), *Classroom-oriented research in second language acquisition* (pp. 67-102). Rowley: Mass Newbury House.
- Bai, Y. (2003). The effect of foreign language anxiety in foreign language learning. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research in Basic Education*, 29, 25-27.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Gardner, R. C & P. D. MacIntyre. (1993). On the measurement of affective variables in second language learning. *Language Learning*, 43, 157-194.
- Heron, J. (1989). *The Facilitator's Handbook*. London: Kogan Page.
- Horwitz, E., M. Horwitz & J. Cope. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125-132.
- Horwitz, E. K. & Young, D. J. (Eds.). (1991). *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications*. NJ: Prentice-hall.
- Kitano, K. (2001). Anxiety in the college Japanese language classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125-132.
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.
- Lee, C. (2003). Code-Switching in Hong Kong Cantonese and English.

- Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 35, 14-20.
- Li binbin. (2005). The Influence of language anxiety on oral English learning. *Journal of Taizhou University*, 27, 68-71.
- Machida, S. (2001). Anxiety in Japanese language class oral examinations. *Sekai no Nihongo Kyoiku*, 11, 115-138.
- MacIntyre, P. D. & R. C. Gardner. (1991). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning*, 41, 85-117.
- Oxford, R. L. (1999). Anxiety and the language learner: New insights. In J. Arnold (Ed.), *Affect in language learning* (pp. 58-67). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sarason, E. M. (1992). The effects of language anxiety on students' oral test performance and attitude. *The Modern Language Journal*, 76, 14-16.
- Scovel, T. (1978). The effect on affect on foreign language learning: A review of the anxiety research. *Language Learning*, 28, 128-142.
- Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: What does language anxiety research suggest? *Modern Language Journal*, 75, 426-439.
- Ye huilin. (2006). An investigation of students' English learning anxiety in Chinese senior middle schools. *Journal of Jiangxi Normal University*. Retrieved March 7, 2007, from CNKI database.
- Zhao Na. (2005). A study of high school students' English learning anxiety. *Journal of Shandong University of Technology*, 9(3), 18-22.
- 雷宵. (2004). 本科生英语学习课堂焦虑调查及其对英语教学的启示. *外国语言文学*, 79, 46-51.
- 〔Lei Xiao. (2004). An investigation for anxiety in undergraduate English classroom and its inspiration to English teaching. *Foreign Language and Literature Studies*, 79,46-51.〕
- 薛利芳. (2005). 英语学习焦虑与英语成绩的相关研究. *山西农业大学学报 (社会*

科学版), 4, 246-248.

[Xue Lifang. (2005). Research on the relationship between English learning anxiety and English achievement. *Journal of Shanxi Agricultural University (Society Science Edition)*, 4, 246-248.]