

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in six major areas along with a summary: 1) general notion of anxiety, 2) language anxiety, 3) anxiety in foreign language classroom, 4) The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), 5) previous related studies, and 6) summary

#### 2.1 WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a vague term to define its exact meaning. Some define it as mental blocking, worries, fear, stress, and so on (Walker, 1975, pp. 1-3). However, Walker broadly defines anxiety as “the reaction we have to a situation in which we believe our well-being is endangered or threatened in some way” (1975, p.3).

Hansen (1977, p. 92) links the word anxiety with the word fear and pinpoints that *fear* and *anxiety* are often superficially used interchangeably. It is traditionally believed that fear arouses reaction that is more reasonable and less harmful than anxiety (Hansen, 1977, p. 92).

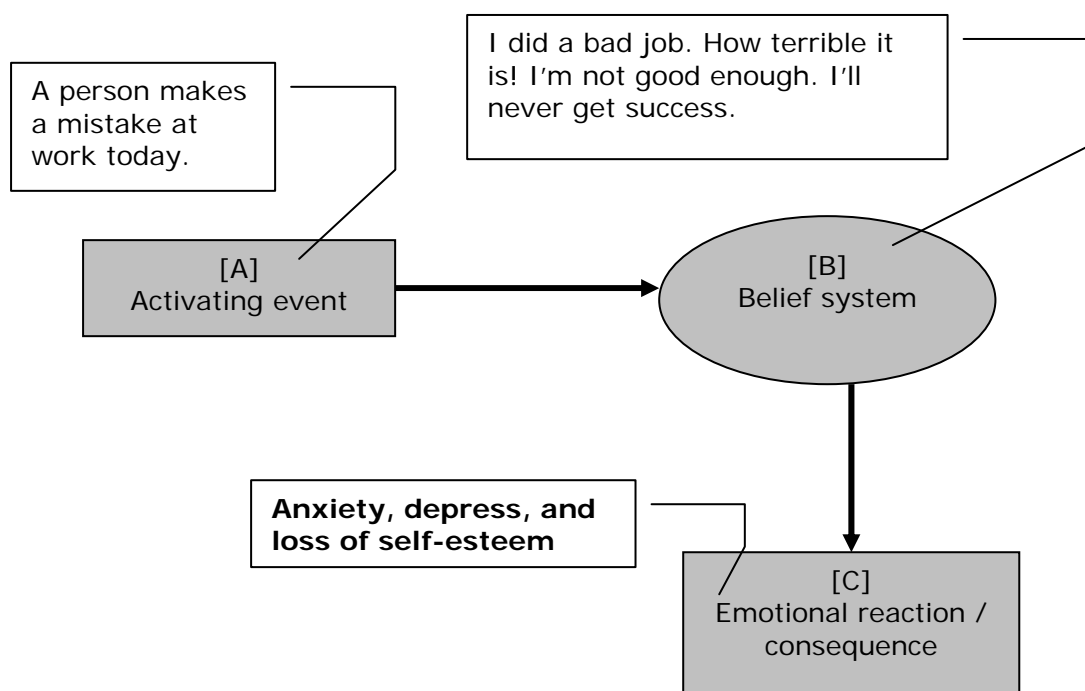
According to the University of Cambridge Counselling Service (2005), anxiety is also defined as a common response to threatening situations in both physical and emotional reactions; however, the degree of feeling anxious depends on individual past experiences, beliefs and attitude.

In the article “Understanding Anxiety” in Anxiety and Stress Disorders Clinic web site (<http://anxiety.psy.ohio-state.edu/informat.htm>), anxiety is described as an emotional alarm that warns us about harmful or threatening situations.

...a normal innate emotional alarm response to the anticipation of danger or threat. This means that fear is part of our biological make-up as human beings. We don't learn to how to become anxious--we are born with it because it helps us to survive. Anxiety serves as an "alarm" to protect us from harmful aspects of our environment. Taken together this definition means that anxiety is an innate, protective response to our environment.

Albert Ellis (as cited in Walker, 1975, pp. 15-16) proposes the model of how anxiety is aroused as follows:

*Figure 1.* ABC's of anxiety.



According to Figure 1, [A] is an event that seems to directly arouse an emotional reaction [C], but, actually, it is [B] or belief system that tries to interpret the event [A] and then causes the emotional consequence [C]. Therefore, if our belief system always interprets the reality negative, our thought will be full of anxieties, worries, failures and unhappiness.

## 2.2 LANGUAGE ANXIETY

Spielberg's study (as cited in Hansen, 1977, p. 93) classifies the nature of anxiety into two distinguished types: state anxiety and trait anxiety.

### 2.2.1 State or Situation Anxiety

State or situation anxiety indicates feelings of fear and "heightened automatic nervous system" according to a situation and it can change over time. A student who is going to give a presentation in front of the class without good

preparation would feel nervous or develop anxiety, for instance. After the presentation, the anxious feeling would be dissolved.

### **2.2.2 Trait Anxiety**

Trait anxiety refers to the difference of anxiety reaction to a situation that is inherited in individual persons. People who have trait anxiety are likely to feel anxious easily to most situations and frequently perceive a somehow difficult situation as a threatening condition.

Anxiety can be also separated into 2 types according to being negative or positive arousals: debilitating and facilitating.

### **2.2.3 Debilitating Anxiety**

Anxiety in the classroom is mostly recognized as a negative factor that lessens the proficiency and performance of learners as mentioned in “A Map of the Terrain” written by Jane Arnold and H. Douglas Brown (Arnold, 1999, p. 9):

When anxiety is present in the classroom, there is a down-spiraling effect. Anxiety makes us nervous and afraid and thus contributes to poor performance; this in turn creates more anxiety and even worse performance.

Under anxious and nervous moments, it is difficult to think clearly. With their anxiety, the good and highly motivated learners can reduce their ability and performance in a foreign language class (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 125). Moreover, many students think that they should say or answer nothing in the foreign language classroom until they are sure that the answer or expression is correct (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 127).

### **2.2.4 Facilitating Anxiety**

At the optimal degree of anxiety, however, can facilitate and arouse learners' motivation (Argaman & Abu-Raia, 2002; Hansen, 1977). Proper anxiety in classroom somehow can stir motivation for achievement because students want to protect their self-esteem; and with too low anxiety, there would not be any motivation of learning. (Argaman & Abu-Raia, 2002, p. 146). Nevertheless, Horwitz argues that facilitating anxiety can be helpful to simple tasks only, not complicated ones like foreign language (Arnold, 2000, p. 61).

### **2.3 ANXIETY IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

Failure of learning a foreign language in classroom results from many factors such as lack of motivation, learner's style of learning, low proficiency; however, the factor that has been recently dominantly focused on by many studies is language anxiety (Argaman & Abu-Raia, 2002; Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2004; E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Ohata, 2005; Turula, 2002).

Dr. Kenneth Dinklage of Harvard University (as cited in Schwarz, 1997) argues that lack of motivation and effort are not always the crucial factors of language learning failure. He found that the best and most intelligent students who devoted their time and effort on the classes still sometimes failed their language class. These students revealed that they felt extremely anxious about their failure.

Argaman and Abu-Raia (2002) assert that language anxiety not only influences speaking and listening skills, but also reading and writing skills. Also, E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, and Cope (1986) pinpoint that before claiming the poor performance of students comes only from their lack of ability, motivation and educational background, teachers should also think about the anxiety of learning in a classroom.

### **2.4 THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY SCALE (FLCAS)**

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale has been designed by E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, and Cope (1986) for measuring language anxiety. It consists of 33 items scored in five-point Likert scale with 0.93 alpha coefficient. This questionnaire has become relatively popular for many educational studies. Three performance anxieties are measured: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

*Communication apprehension* is a kind of fear, shyness or nervousness when communicating with other people. For example, speaking a foreign language in public where all movements and manners are monitored all the time can create communication problems.

*Test anxiety* is a fear of failure or expectation of a perfect test result when people have a test or quiz.

The last performance anxiety is *fear of negative evaluation*. This anxiety is a general fear of being evaluated by others, not only in a test-taking situation but also social situations such as job interviewing, or role playing in the foreign language class.

## 2.5 PREVIOUS RELEVANT STUDIES

According to the study E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, and Cope (1986) conducted, with 75 university students' responses, more than one third of the respondents supported the 19 statements and over a half of the respondents showed agreement on 7 statements. The findings concluded that anxiety in foreign classrooms is common "at least in beginning classes on the university level" (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 131).

"Measuring Language Anxiety Perceived by Spanish University Students of English" carried out by Cebreros and María (2004) also used FLCAS as the instrument. The informants were studying the second year of English Philology in Spain with at least an intermediate level of English competency. The findings showed higher scores in 17 items than those exhibited in E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, and Cope (1986). Therefore, the anxiety in foreign language dominates not only the beginners learning foreign language but also those with higher levels of English competency.

Additionally, Cebreros and María added that some contextual factors should also be determined when measuring foreign language anxiety, such as numbers of students in a class, background of students and educational system. These factors can vary the level of individual anxiety. Compared to the findings E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, and Cope (1986) conducted, a larger number of students in Cebreros and María's study showed higher levels of anxiety. Moreover, under the educational curriculum at their university, the subjects in Cebreros and María's study had more chances to have contact with native speakers than in E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, and Cope's. Therefore, the agreement on items 14 (I would not be nervous speaking then foreign language with native speakers) and 32 (I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language) in Cebreros and María's appeared higher than Horwitz et al.'s.

The research of Von Worde (1998) on “An Investigation of Students' Perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety” also agreed that anxiety can negatively affect on language acquisition. The investigation was carried out by using the FLCAS questionnaire and interview of 15 participants, intermediate-level university students in French, German, and Spanish language classrooms. The findings were compared with final grades of the semester to find the relationship between level of anxiety and language proficiency. The respondents to the FLCAS showed that 73% of the responses were anxious learners and 34% of these learners had high anxiety. The interview was intended to answer five questions and the answers can be summarized as follows:

1. Do students believe that anxiety hinders language acquisition? Some students were not aware of their foreign language anxiety; some felt unsure and some believed that anxiety obstructs language acquisition.

2. Which factors do students believe contribute to anxiety? There were many factors that the students think arouse anxiety but the most frequently mentioned were non-comprehension, speaking activities, pedagogical and instructional practices, error correction, and native speakers.

3. Which factors do students believe may help to reduce anxiety? The students suggested a sense of community, classroom environment, pedagogical practices, and the role of teacher.

4. How is anxiety manifested in the students? The students reported physical manifestations, internalized reactions, and avoidance.

5. Do students believe any one of the three languages being investigated to be more anxiety provoking than another? French was supported as the most anxiety provoking, followed by German and Spanish.

Lastly, the relationship between the final grade and FLCAS score exhibited a significant negative correlation. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that the grade can be varied by many factors such as anxiety, motivation, and ability of anxiety coping.

Another related study is “Foreign Language Anxiety and Perspectives of College Students of Japanese” conducted by Fukai ([http://www.columbia.edu/~mf2249/yukki/papers/l630\\_term\\_paper.html](http://www.columbia.edu/~mf2249/yukki/papers/l630_term_paper.html)). It is a qualitative study by using

FLCAS and in-depth interview as the instruments. Two American college students, under the pseudonyms of Lillian and Leah, were interviewed deeply about their experience of anxiety in Japanese learning. The findings showed that the three main factors influencing foreign language anxiety were teacher characteristics (helpful guidance and positive feedback and attitudes), good relationship with classmates, and well-organized courses (correlation between content, materials and test tasks).