

CAUSES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN ONLINE EDUCATION

*Seidikenova A.S.¹, Malshy M.M.²

¹ Candidate of ph.sc., Associate Professor, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan,

² PhD student of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan,

*¹e-mail: almash.seidikenova@kaznu.kz,

²e-mail: zulpasova@gmail.com

Abstract. The article discusses the phenomenon and causes of foreign language anxiety in online foreign language lessons. The purpose of the article is to trace the dynamics of various research approaches to the question and assessment from a psycholinguistic point of view and analyze the data of the pilot experiment. It is believed that various emotions can affect the level of concentration. The brain blocks its functions at the time of a high level of anxiety. Students who tend to experience higher levels of anxiety may have a negative impact on language learning. The practical significance of the work is to help develop methods that contribute to less anxiety in foreign language lessons. The article presents the results of a pilot experiment using the FLCAS scale, which determines the degree of foreign language anxiety in 1st year master and bachelor students. A total of 131 online students took part in the study. FLCAS measures a person's level of anxiety by summing the scores for each of 33 items (minimum 33; maximum 165). Each question on the FLCAS questionnaire is scored on a Likert scale. The higher the score, the more anxious the student. The Spielberg survey was used to identify the type of students' anxiety: situational or individual characteristics. The study indicates that the phenomenon is not limited to the linguo-psychological context, it should be considered in a complex of pedagogical, psychological, linguistic and psycholinguistic factors.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, language learning, situational anxiety, distance learning, personal anxiety, distance learning, online education, foreign language acquisition.

Basic provisions

It is well known that minor stress could be helpful for human organism, as it helps to concentrate and to work more effectively. Minor emotions lead to more focused concentration, while the absolute calmness may deprive the concentration. This idea is also true for the second language/foreign language learners. The concept of Krashen's "affective filter" is the explanation to the idea. Due to this concept emotions are filtering the delivery of the information to the human brain. At the moment of the high level of anxiety the filter blocks the brain functions and the information could not be processed, while at the moment of low anxiety the operative system of the brain gets a chance to analyze and process the information [1; p.13]. Working memory is capable of holding up to 4 objects at one time, and concentration is required for information to move from working memory to long-term memory. Long-term and working memory use overlapping regions of the frontal and parietal zones.

The middle temporal zone is only used for long-term, not working memory [2; p.301]. Thus, the issue foreign language anxiety (иностранная тревожность) becomes relevant. Foreign language anxiety in distance learning is a complexed question that could be described as the psychological anxiety related to the second language acquisition in distance education. In the scientific use there is also a term “xenoglossophobia”.

Number of students learning foreign language experience the “debilitative” anxiety. Debilitative anxiety is a level of anxiety that individual perceives while interfering with performance. As language is a tool of communication, it is important to give speeches and to perform on the lessons of the foreign language. Experiencing the “debilitative” foreign language anxiety leads to the decrease of the brainwork [3; p.11]. Current article attempts to systemize the theoretical approach to the question of emergence of the foreign language anxiety in distance education. The aim of work is to clarify the reasons and peculiarities of the question, that negatively affects the foreign language acquisition and performance.

Introduction

Generally, anxiety is understood as unstable psychological condition and characterized by the emotional discomfort in various levels, followed by the manifestations on the physiological level. For instance: increase of the heartbeat, hidrosis and etc. [3]. Psychologists point out two types of the anxiety: 1) psychophysiological condition of the individual; 2) personal feature [4].

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope were first to appeal the question of foreign language anxiety [5]. The attempt to systemize the information was made. Following conclusions regarding the reasons of foreign language anxiety were made: 1) fear of communication in foreign language; 2) fear of negative assessment; 3) examination anxiety. It was supposed that foreign language anxiety is a complex of feelings, convictions, self-conception and course of action that appears while learning foreign language and related to the specificities of language acquisition. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was introduced by the scientists. The scale includes 33 questions assessed by the Likert scale.

Following empirical studies lead one group the scientist (Young, Aida, Clement, Philips, Woodrow) to the conclusion that foreign language anxiety is situationally conditioned and should not be considered as a trait of person's character, or related to the specific condition only (examination) [6, p.11]. Production of speech especially on the lower levels of language can be even more stressful.

Supporters of the second point of view suggest that emotionally unstable people tend to experience foreign language anxiety more. Exactly the predisposition of the individual to experience higher levels of psychological stress explains the “debilitative effect”, or stupor that appears as a response to the foreign language anxiety. The stupor may occur even among students with high level of language knowledge [3].

Analysis of reasons of foreign language anxiety also showed difference in approaches. One group of specialists relate reasons of foreign language anxiety with individual's personal traits: low self-esteem, introverts, shyness, high level of competition, fear of losing one's self uniqueness, fear of making mistakes [7]. While others relate reason of FLA specifically with the traits of educational processes: performance in front of the auditorium; fear of unpleasant situations, lack of grammatical, lexical and intercultural knowledge, issues related to spontaneous speech production [13]. According to another approach unpleasant assessment of student's speech in foreign language made by teachers or groupmates during the educational process or in interviews/performances might be the reason of FLA [5].

Number of scientists combine the notions of foreign language anxiety and language anxiety. Thus, interrelation of second language acquisition and first language acquisition problems are emphasized [3, p. 11]. However, not all the scientists tend to agree with this opinion [8], as there is a large number of students experiencing FLA including students with good language skills.

Materials and Methods

To study the issue of personal and language anxiety, and possible interrelation between them, the questionnaire of Spielberg, FLCAS and survey of macro and micro sociology were (gender, year of studies, nationality, level of foreign language) included. Main methods of the research are questionnaires and scaling. Scaling was included into the questionnaire. Questionnaire was held online, during twenty minutes. Results of the questionnaire were analyzed statistically with the help of descriptive statistics of both the total and various sub-samples in the context of the relevant characteristics.

In the methodology for determining the level of foreign language anxiety (FLCAS), questions were distributed in accordance with the subspecies of foreign language anxiety as follows: 9 points are correlated with a negative assessment, 5 points - with exam anxiety, 8 points - with fear of communication in a foreign language, 11 points - with psychological problems in the learning process in the online classroom. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

In the methodology for determining personal anxiety as a stable characteristic of a person (the Spielberg anxiety scale), 13 points are direct questions and 7 points are reverse questions. The FLCAS keys are reversed for the questions with positive word meaning (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, 32) where strongly agree is given 1 point and strongly disagree is given 5 points. For all the other questions with the negative meaning: strongly agree 5; agree 4; neutral 3; disagree 2; strongly disagree 1. Therefore, each item is scored on a 5-point Likert Scale. Questions are related to the following conditions: 1) 8 questions related to the barriers of the interpersonal communication (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32); 2) 9 questions related to the negative assessment fear (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, 33); 3) 5 questions related to the test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, 21); 4) 11

questions related to the psychological problems in the learning environment (4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 29, 30).

Results

The questionnaire was held among 1st year bachelor students (50 students) studying online and 1st year master`s students (81 students) studying online in Kazakh National University. Before collecting the data, permission was obtained from al-Farabi Kazakh National University. The data was collected via google forms on a voluntary basis. The difference between two groups of students is in their experience of learning language offline in the University. While master`s students experienced the educational process of University offline (in the campus), for bachelor students it is the first experience of university education. 42% of the participants are students of the faculty of International relations of Kazakh National University, 58% are the students of the philological faculty of Kazakh National University. For both group of the participants English is their first foreign Language. Regarding the level of English level: 78% of the participants are intermediate level, 28% are pre-intermediate level. From total number of 131 participants, only 3 of them were international students: Afghanistan (2); China (1).

The minimum and maxim score among the bachelor participants were 57 and 124 respectively, while the master`s minimum score was 51 and maximum was 138. The relevant statistics were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of FLCAS scores.

	Minimum points	Maximum points
Bachelor students	57	124
Master`s students	51	138

In order to understand the level of FLA, participants scores were divided into three categories: Slightly anxious, moderately anxious and highly anxious. The scores between 0 and 66 are regarded as slightly anxious, participants scored between 67 and 95 were regarded as moderately anxious, participants scored between 96 and 160 were considered to be highly anxious. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the students with different levels of anxiety.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for students with different levels of anxiety

	Slightly anxious	Moderately anxious	Highly anxious
Bachelor students	4 (8%)	21 (42%)	25 (50%)
Master`s students	7 (9%)	38 (47%)	36 (44%)
Overall	11 (9%)	59 (45%)	61 (46%)

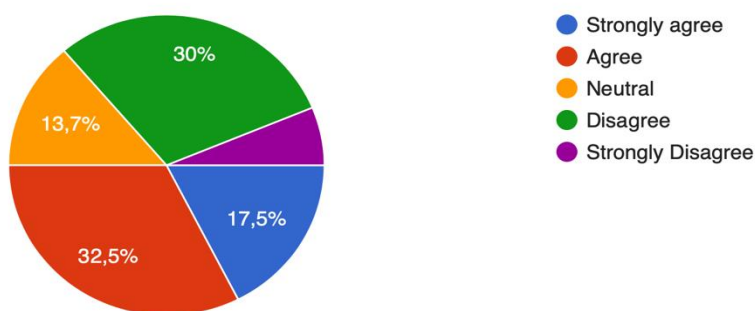
As it can be observed in Table 2 there were 11(9%) participants that refer to the slightly anxious category; 59 (45%) participants refer to the moderately anxious category; 61 (46%) participants were found to be highly anxious. Comparing bachelor and master`s degree students the percentage of highly anxious students among bachelors is slightly higher (6%); while the number of moderate students is a bit higher among master`s students by 5%; percentage

of slightly anxious students are about the same. For both group of students' online education was the first-time experience, levels of the language skills were about the same. Analysis of the questionnaire for the definition of personal anxiety (Spielberg Khanin anxiety scale) demonstrates that among 1st year students of bachelor the statement 7 prevails (I am worried about possible difficulties); among master`s students – 15 (I get blues).

Analysis of most common causes among master`s degree student`s showed that foreign language anxiety is mostly related to the communication apprehension. For instance, question 33 is related to the communication apprehension, spontaneous speech production (I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven`t prepared in advanced) Picture 1. We can see that 50% of students tend to agree with the claim that they get nervous while performing unprepared speech. While only 35% of students do not experience anxiety caused by the spontaneous speech.

I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance

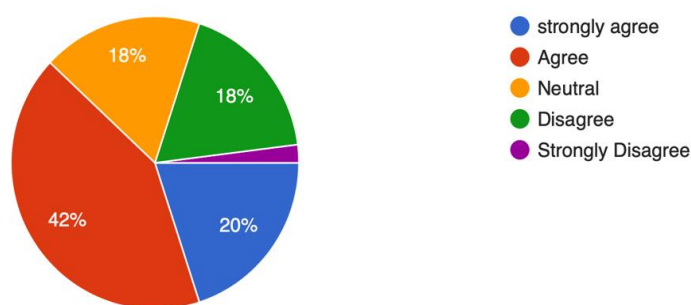
80 ответов



Picture 1 – Communication apprehension

1st year bachelor students tend to experience examination caused anxiety more. Picture 2 shows the result of the question 10. The question is related to the text anxiety (8,10,21). 62% of students tend to agree that they worry about the consequences of failing the class, while only 35% of learners disagree with the statement.

I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class
50 ответов



Picture 2 – Examination caused anxiety

Discussion

Students experiencing higher level of anxiety tend to feel less competent than their peers, unpleasant situations on the foreign language lessons may negatively affect the process of language acquisition and the cause of emotional distress. From the results we can conclude that first-year students of bachelor mostly experience psychological discomfort in situations of control of knowledge of a foreign language. Master`s degree students are more concerned about the negative opinions of others about their achievements.

Considering the results, number of practical recommendations for teachers of foreign language can be itemized. Instructors should bear in mind that some level of anxiety will always be in the class. For this reason, teachers should be empathic towards their students. Feeling of security is one of the fundamental needs of the human being and the same goes for the educational process. Teachers should be careful while carrying out speaking activities and while giving feedback. It is better to provide students with enough time to perform and avoid explicit error corrections in front of their peers. Use positive and constructive feedback and corrective strategies. It is important to bear in mind these factors especially in online education, as students may experience anxiety related to the connection problems in addition.

Conclusion

As a result of the experiment, we can conclude that the concepts of personal and foreign language anxiety are not identical, since they manifest themselves differently in terms of its characteristics. Thus, our study suggests that the concept of foreign language anxiety is not limited to a psychological or linguistic context, it should be considered in a complex of psychological, pedagogical, linguistic and psycholinguistic factors. Analysis of basal anxiety in an educational level context can notice slightly changes depending on the course of the respondents, while the level of foreign language anxiety decreases with improvement of language skills. Analysis showed that the percentage of slightly anxious, moderately anxious and highly anxious students is about the same, however there was a significant difference in causes of the foreign

language anxiety in these two groups. Results showed that more experienced students' foreign language anxiety is caused by communication apprehension, while bachelor students tend to experience anxiety caused by examination situation. In the future, the task is to link the causes of foreign language anxiety with the search for possible strategies and ways to reduce its negative impact on the process of mastering a second/foreign language and its use in various communication situations, which can be useful both in theoretical and practical terms. Qualitative and experiential manifestations in the current educational environment (blended education) can provide valuable knowledge in understanding the concept.

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ОНЛАЙН ШЕТЕЛ ТІЛІ САБАҚТАРЫНДАҒЫ ҚОБАЛЖУДЫҢ ПАЙДА БОЛУ СЕБЕПТЕРІ

*Сейдикенова А.С.¹, Малшы М.М.²

¹ф.ғ.д., профессор, әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ Ұлттық Университеті,
Алматы, Қазақстан,

²докторант, әл-Фараби Қазақ Ұлттық Университеті,
Алматы, Қазақстан,

*¹e-mail: almash.seidikenova@kaznu.kz,

²e-mail: zulpasova@gmail.com

Аңдатпа. Мақалада онлайн шет тілі сабақтарында қобалжудың пайда болу құбылысы мен себептері қарастырылады. Мақаланың мақсаты-сұрақ пен бағалауға психолінгвистикалық тұрғыдан әртүрлі зерттеу тәсілдерінің динамикасын бақылау және пилоттық эксперименттің деректерін талдау. Әр түрлі эмоциялар концентрация деңгейіне әсер етуі мүмкін деп саналады. Ми алаңдаушылықтың жоғары деңгейі кезінде өз функцияларын блоктайды. Қобалждың жоғары деңгейіне бейім студенттер тіл үйрену процесіне теріс әсер етуі мүмкін. Жұмыстың практикалық маңыздылығы-шет тілі сабақтарында аз уайымға ықпал ететін әдістерді жасауға көмектесу. Мақалада

магистратура мен бакалавриаттың 1 курс студенттерінің шет тілін меңгерудегі қобалжу дәрежесін анықтайтын FLCAS шкаласын қолдана отырып, пилоттық эксперименттің нәтижелері келтірілген. Зерттеуге барлығы онлайн оқитын 131 студент қатысты. FLCAS 33 ұпайдың әрқайсысы бойынша ұпай жинау арқылы адамның қобалжуға бейімділік деңгейін өлшейді (минимум 33; максимум 165). FLCAS сауалнамасының әр сұрағы Лайкерт шкаласы бойынша бағаланады. Балл неғұрлым жоғары болса, студенттің қобалжуы соғұрлым жоғары болып табылады. Спилбергтің сауалнамасы оқушылардың қобалжуының : жағдайлық немесе жеке сипаттама түрлерін анықтау үшін қолданылды. Зерттеу жұмысы көрсеткендей, құбылыс лингвистикалық-психологиялық контекстпен шектелмейді, оны педагогикалық, психологиялық, лингвистикалық және психолингвистикалық факторлар кешенінде қарастырған жөн.

Тірек сөздер: шет тілін меңгерудегі қобалжу, тілдік аспектідегі қобалжу, тіл үйрену, ситуациялық үрей, қашықтықтан оқыту, жеке қобалжу, онлайн оқыту, шет тілін меңгеру.

ПРИЧИНЫ ВОЗНИКНОВЕНИЯ ИНОЯЗЫКОВОЙ ТРЕВОЖНОСТИ НА ОНЛАЙН УРОКАХ

*Сейдикенова А.С.¹, Малшы М.М.²

¹к.ф.н., профессор, Казахский Национальный университет им. аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан,

²докторант, Казахский Национальный университет им. аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан,

*¹e-mail: almash.seidikenova@kaznu.kz, seydikenova781022@yandex.ru,

²e-mail: zulpasova@gmail.com

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются явление и причины возникновения иноязыковой тревожности на онлайн уроках иностранного языка. Цель статьи – проследить динамику различных исследовательских подходов к вопросу и оценке с психолингвистической точки зрения и проанализировать данные пилотного эксперимента. Считается, что различные эмоции могут влиять на уровень концентрации. Мозг блокирует свои функции в момент высокого уровня тревожности. Студенты, которые склонны испытывать более высокий уровень тревожности, могут негативно повлиять на процесс изучения языка. Практическая значимость работы заключается в помощи разработки методик, способствующих меньшей тревожности на уроках иностранного языка. В статье представлены результаты пилотного эксперимента с использованием шкалы FLCAS, определяющей степень иноязыковой тревожности у студентов 1 курса магистратуры и бакалавриата. Всего в исследовании принял участие 131 студент, обучающийся онлайн. FLCAS измеряет уровень тревожности человека, суммируя баллы по каждому из 33 пунктов (минимум 33; максимум 165). Каждый вопрос анкеты FLCAS оценивается по шкале Лайкерта. Чем выше балл, тем более тревожен студент. Опрос Спилберга использовался для выявления типа тревожности обучающихся: ситуационная или индивидуальная характеристика. Исследование свидетельствует о том, что феномен не ограничивается лингвопсихологическим контекстом, его следует рассматривать в комплексе педагогических, психологических, лингвистических и психолингвистических факторов.

Ключевые слова: иноязыковая тревожность, языковая тревожность, изучение языка, ситуационная тревожность, дистанционное обучение, личностная тревожность, дистанционное обучение, онлайн-обучение, овладение иностранным языком.

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