

A Study on the Correlation between Listening Anxiety and Listening Performance in Sla

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Abstract: about the Relationship between Language Anxiety and Second Language Acquisition, There Has Been No Consentaneous Conclusion. to Know the Effect of Anxiety on Listening Performance, the Author Conducts a Study on Some English Majors of Sichuan Tourism University. the Result Shows That They Experience a Relatively High Degree of English Listening Anxiety, Which Has a Negative Correlation with Their Listening Performance.

1. Introduction

As a Common Emotional Experience of Human Beings, Anxiety Has Attracted the psychologists' Attention for a Long Time. Since the 1960s, Language Researchers Have Come to Realize That Anxiety is Also One of the Important Affective Variables in Language Acquisition or Language Learning, and It Varies in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

1.1 Definition and Classification of Anxiety

Anxiety is a Very Important Affective Factor for the Second Language Learning Brown (1994) Noted That Anxiety Has Been Studied in the Psychological Domain and It is Associated with Feelings of Uneasiness, Frustration, Self- Doubt, Apprehension or Worry. from the Perspective of Definition, Anxiety is Viewed Negatively and It is Also Regarded as Emotional Disorder and a Common Emotional Problem. Anxiety is, Perhaps, the Most Pervasively Obstructive Factor in Learning Process. There Are Two Kinds of Anxieties from h. d. Brown (1987): Trait Anxiety (a Predisposition Toward Feeling Anxious) and State Anxiety (Anxiety Produced in Reaction to a Specific Situation).

Language Anxiety Refers to the Fear or Apprehension Occurring When a Learner is Expected to Perform in the Second or Foreign Language. in Oxford's Opinion, Language Anxiety is the Main Factor of Those That Affect the Second Language Learning (Daimanchun, 2000). and Horwitzetal (1986), Identified Three Components of Foreign Language Anxiety: Communication Apprehension; Fear of Negative Social Evaluation; Test Anxiety.

1.2 Anxiety in Sla

1.2.1 Source of Anxiety

Young (1991) Examined the Language Anxiety Literature, and Then Discerned Six General Sources of Language Anxiety: (1) Personal and Interpersonal Anxieties; (2) Learner Beliefs about Language Learning; (3) Instructor Beliefs about Language Teaching; (4) Instructor-Learner Interactions; (5) Classroom Procedures; (6) Language Testing.

1.2.2 Factors Correlated with Language Anxiety

(1) Self- Esteem

Unsuccessful Language Learners Often Have Lower Self- Esteem Than Successful Language Learners(Price,1991). Self - Esteem Consists of Two Interrelated Aspects: Self-Efficacy-Confidence in one's Ability to Think, Learn, Choose, and Make Appropriate Decisions, and, by Extension, to Master Changes and Manage Change-and Self-Respect-Confidence in one's Right to Be Happy and,

by Extension, Confidence That Achievement, Success, Friendship, Respect, Love, and Fulfillment Are Appropriate for Oneself.

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. Scarcella and Oxford (1992) also pointed that those with high self-esteem might handle their anxiety better than those with low self-esteem, resulting in better performance.

(2) Belief

Influenced by previous experiences as language learners, or shaped by their own cultural backgrounds, second language learners often hold different beliefs or notions about language learning (Horwitz, 1987).

Belief is one of the characteristics the learners hold about in the process of language learning. A growing body of evidence suggests that beliefs play a central role in learning experience and achievements. In a study of the relationship between individual difference variables and proficiency ratings for a large group of adults involved in intensive language training, Ehrman and Oxford (1995:79) report that "Believing that one can learn languages well was significantly correlated with proficiency in both speaking and reading." Gremmo and Riley (1995:158) cite a number of recent reports which emphasize the central role of beliefs and representations about language and language learning play in determining behavior. Therefore, in second language learning, it is very important to hold a firm belief.

1.3 The Roles of Anxiety in Sla

Language researchers hold different views about the existence or significance of anxiety in SLA. Horwitz (1986) and MacIntyre (1994, 1997) found that students with high anxiety seldom participated in and even evaded class activities. Some of them often forgot what they had acquired because of intensesness and fear, and some paid too much attention to their weakness instead of class tasks which, therefore, affected their language input. Moreover, many researchers quantitatively proved that there is a negative correlation between the degree of students' anxiety and their scores.

However, there are still many researches which have different or even opposite results. The research done by Backman (1976) showed that there was no correlation between students' anxiety and their scores. Chastain thought that a certain degree of anxiety would accelerate foreign language learning, while excessive anxiety had side effect. A research done by Wu Yi'an, Liu Renqing and Jeffrey (1993) also indicated that anxiety nearly had effect on students' scores. In a word, about the effect of anxiety, there has been no consentaneous conclusion.

At the same time, influenced by the reform of English teaching and learning, many people have gradually realized the importance of improving listening teaching and learning, and a lot of new researches have been generated, many of which are on the relationship between the students' anxiety and their listening performance, but the results are still not identical. So the author conducts a study on some English majors of Sichuan Tourism University, attempting to answer the following three questions:

(1) Do English majors of Sichuan Tourism University experience anxiety in the process of English listening?

(2) What's the degree of their English listening anxiety?

(3) Is there correlation between the students' anxiety and their listening performance?

2. Methodology

2.1 Subjects

The subjects of the study are 47 sophomores of English majors form one natural class of Sichuan Tourism University, which are selected at random. Of the subjects, 26 are female and 21 male, who ranged in age from 19 to 20. They have an average of 7.5 years of exposure to English.

2.2 Instruments

The instruments employed in the study are:

(1) ELAS (English Listening Anxiety Scale), designed according to the FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) of Horwitz (1986), ELCAS (English Listening Class Anxiety Scale) of Chen Xiuling (2004) and the specific situation of the research. This scale consists of 34 statements concerning the students' psychological states, especially anxiety states, both in listening practices and examinations. Each statement is scored on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In the scale, 8 statements are positively worded, and a student's choice of "strongly disagree" is equated with a numerical value of one, "disagree" with two, "neither agree nor disagree" with three, "agree" with four and "strongly agree", five. In the 26 negatively worded statements, scoring is reversed. The total score ranges from 34 to 170. A high score represents high anxiety and a low score low anxiety.

(2) The subjects' scores of Listening English in final examination of last term.

(3) Two model-tests of English listening comprehension, the form and level of which are designed on the basis of final examination for sophomore English majors of Sichuan Tourism University. The tests are given to the subjects as normal exercise. The average score of the two tests is used to compare with their scores in final examination.

(4) SPSS 11.5 for Windows

2.3 Procedures

(1) Gave the two model-tests to the subjects as normal exercise in April and May respectively, and then worked out the average score. Before the exercise, the subjects were told that it is just a practice in class and the results had no relation with their final scores in order to make them take it easy.

(2) After the two model-tests, gave the subjects a questionnaire--ELAS to answer, according to which calculated their general English listening anxiety and their anxiety in both listening practice and listening examination.

(3) Got the list of the subjects' scores of listening comprehension in final examination of last term.

(4) Entered all the data obtained from the final examination, model-tests and ELAS into SPSS for statistical analysis.

3. Data Analysis and Results

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

In the study, 47 scales were handed out and 43 valid scales were returned. By analyzing the data gained from the 43 subjects' ELAS, their general English listening anxiety value were gained. Table 1 is descriptive analysis of the subjects' general English listening anxiety value, from which we can see that the general anxiety value ranges from 70 to 138, with the Mean of 104.6, and 53.5% subjects have an anxiety value above it. 102 (= 3 times 34) was taken as a diving line, stipulating that scores above it indicate high anxiety level, and there are 58.1% subjects exceed it. The table shows that listening anxiety exists prevalently and the degree of anxiety is generally high.

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis Of the Subjects' General English Listening Anxiety Value

LAV	Subjects	Percentage (%)
136-170	1	2.3
102-135	24	55.8
68-101	18	41.9
34-67	0	0
0-34	0	0
Above 102	25	58.1
Above Mean:104.6	23	53.5

Note:

LAV: general English listening anxiety value

3.2 Difference Analysis

After analyzing the data obtained from the scales, the subjects' anxiety value in listening practice and in listening examination can be worked out respectively. Through significance test of difference, we figure out $t=2.831$, which is above the critical value $t_a=2.021$ ($\alpha=0.05$). So there is a significant difference between the anxiety value in listening practice and listening examination.

Comparing the scores subjects get in listening practice and the final examination of last term, we can also find difference. Through calculation, we get $t=10.993$, which is obviously above $t_a=2.021$ ($\alpha=0.05$). The data confirms the significant difference between the scores of practice and final examination.

Table 2 Significance Test Of Difference of Anxiety Value and Scores

	t	t_a
Difference between Anxiety Value in Listening Practice and Examination	2.831	2.021
Difference between Scores of Listening Practice and Examination	10.993	2.021

Note:

t_a : critical value when difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

3.3 Correlation Analysis

As other variables are substantially controlled, it can be inferred that the difference between scores of listening practice and examination is related to the difference of anxiety value. That is to say, listening performance is related to listening anxiety value.

In order to test the hypothesis, correlation analysis is employed to examine the relationship between scores and anxiety value. Because the Pearson correlation coefficient of the two variables is $r= -0.386$, which is above the critical value $r=0.304$, it can be said that the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The data also shows that listening performance and anxiety value have a negative correlation.

4. Conclusions

From the results of the study, we have arrived at the following conclusions: English-major sophomores of Sichuan Tourism University do experience English listening anxiety; the degree of their English listening anxiety is generally high; the students' listening anxiety has a negative correlation with their listening performance. Anxiety is a psychological phenomenon universally existing in the process of English learning, especially English listening comprehension, which negatively affects English learning. The more anxious listeners get the lower scores they are likely to achieve.

The present study implies that listening anxiety plays an important psychological role for listeners. It has influenced students' listening performance. The results of the study implicate that listening teachers need to address the emotional issue of students and do more exploration on how to face and reduce the students' anxiety. Recently, more and more researchers suggest that strategy training be the effective way to facilitate language learning. It can make language learning more meaningful and encourage a collaborative spirit between learner and teacher. So the author thinks that to give the students strategy training, making them realize listening anxiety in its right perspectives and changing debilitating anxiety into facilitating anxiety is helpful for the students to improve their listening performance.

Of course, there are some limitations in this study which need to be considered: the number of sample is limited; the data of anxiety value is based on the subjects' answers, the veracity and stability of which may be influenced by some subjective factors. In further study, these problems will be paid attention to. Consequently, we can have a better comprehension of the nature and effects of language anxiety and language-skill specific anxiety.

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