



Anxieties as Determinants of ESP Students' Performance Towards English Language Learning at Ho Chi Minh University of Banking

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Abstract— Classroom anxiety has become a huge concern in second and foreign language and foreign language learning and a never-ending research in several of the recent decades. Theoretically, this research is supported with Horwitz, and Cope's theory of anxiety and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis in learning foreign language. Statistically, the data were gathered from 149 participants enrolled in the grades of ESP course at Ho Chi Minh University of Banking, and then analyzed by SPSS with using Pearson to highlight the correlation between anxiety and performance. In addition, Multiple regression was also used to identify the most powerful factor in contribution. The findings shown that there was moderately significant negative correlation between anxiety and academic performance at the level of .001. Furthermore, emotional anxiety was the most powerful contribution in performance, this means that if the students get higher anxiety, they will head for the poorer performance in their learning process.



Keywords— foreign language classroom anxiety; academic performance; ESP students.

I. INTRODUCTION

The growth of concerns of classroom anxiety is so more and more devoted to English language learning that several studies conducted by different researchers. These researches conducted to fondly seek the relationship between learners' foreign language classroom anxiety and academic performance (Bailey, 1983; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Nowadays, anxiety becomes challenges and threats to learners of foreign language in all level of grades; e.g., anxiety is experienced by different types of younger children (Talebinejad & Nekouei, 2013), and young adolescents (Majunggi & Abdul Halim, 2021), primary school pupils (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Phillips, 2017), secondary school students (Estari et al., 2019; Eddraoui & Wirza, 2020; Xiang, 2024), senior school students (Wong, 2009; Kamarulzaman et al., 2013; Estari et al., 2019; Liu & Chen, 2015), and university students (Toth, 2007; 2011).

No more doubts, anxiety is a major catalyst, which makes learners loosely self-confident, demotivated, insufficient, negatively attitudinal in their learning performance. Consequently, these students are facing with fear of failure, stress in the real-world tasks in the classroom. In the same vein, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) believed that anxiety is one of the factors which affects and undermines students' foreign language learning outcomes. Most of the researchers, educators, and psychologists totally agreed that foreign language anxiety raised in language learning process has been debilitating student's academic performance (Alrabai, 2014). In plus, Horwitz (2001) ensured that different students of foreign language suffered negative factors like stress, fear, depression, tension, sinking mood from language anxiety in the different levels and situations. Horwitz and Young (1991) pointed out that increasing number of students, who really felt anxious in their foreign language classroom was alarming. Some

researchers strongly believed that anxiety in relation with a foreign language learning might be the greatest barrier which hinder explicit and implicit learning in their brain. Students with high degree of anxiety in foreign language will always have negatively influences their achievement and performance. So, one of the most important affective factors that has a strong influence on the students' academic performance in second language learning or foreign language leaning is anxiety (Ting & Sunarti, 2022). Anxiety causes big problems for students in which can undermine their performance and achievement in their learning record and portfolio, it may cause a big gap between student learning outcome record. Plenty of studies were conducted on foreign language anxiety stressed that language learners, who experience anxiety in their foreign language learning might not be really enjoyable, just keep in mind that the opposite is true. This state is negatively affecting upon learners' performance and achievement (Krashen, 1982; MacIntyre, 1999; Riasati, 2011; Amiri and Ghonsooly, 2015, Binter, 2022).

As a part, this research aims at exploring the correlation between the students' anxiety and performance that they obtained while they were involving into going-on-learning and doing classroom based-tasks. This research on foreign language classroom anxiety and performance simultaneously in English language learning context seems to be relatively scant and far-beyond.

Thus, more research is called for in this area in order to determine how and to what extent foreign language anxiety affects students' academic performance in foreign language learning. Especially in English learning context, at which students often have access and exposure English language as an EFL rather than L2. In this context, they acquire such a language for ESP, attaining mainly concrete purposes like school requirement, and getting a better job in the future. Here is the case study at Ho Chi Minh University of Banking, Vietnam. The current study is situated at the specific context of grades of finance and banking, business administration, and accounting. Mainly, the purpose of this current study is to test the correlation and to measure the affects ESP students' anxiety on performance in their learning at Ho Chi Minh University of Banking, as well as hopefully to seek answers for the following questions:

Q. 1: Is there any a statistically significant correlation between ESP student's anxiety and performance in English language learning at HUB?

Q. 2: To what extent does anxiety have an impact upon ESP students' academic performance towards English language learning?

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To help recognize foreign language anxiety in the classroom, the models of well-known theory of SLA used to anchor this study in order to provide in-depth insights into the theoretical background for the concept are Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's (1986) theory, and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) of foreign language anxiety.

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's theory of foreign language anxiety, this theory is shortly described foreign language students' state and perception at a specific situation when they really involved. Also, the core of this theory is used to anchor study's background by plenty of the facts and supports. For instance, MacIntyre and Gardner's (1989) study tested anxiety dimensions in relation with various measures of learning. They found that foreign language anxiety is closely allied with foreign language proficiency and performance. Likewise, Chen and Chang (2004) proved that foreign language anxiety is a perspective of three types, that is state, emotional and situation anxiety. In their article widely published. The findings revealed that anxiety associated with foreign language learning is aroused by different causes and different learners. More importantly, one of the most major contributions of this theory was the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) used to measure the levels of anxiety as evidenced by negative attitudes, subjective perceptions, beliefs, and feelings toward foreign language classes. The FLCAS is a self-report instrument that consists of 33 items aiming to assess a learner's level of foreign language anxiety and to measure whether language anxiety is a specific form to language learning or not. The FLCAS items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale numbered from 1 to 5, which are ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This scale has been widely accepted and valid, reliable from language researchers like Horwitz (1991); MacIntyre and Gardner (1989); Yan (2003); Liu (2006); Sengkey (2022); Liu (2024) and used by many others in their going on researches.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) is a theory of background used to platform in second language acquisition (SLA). This theory strongly focused on how affective factors concerned with route, rate and success in second language acquisition process. Krashen (1982) explained that the affective factor may be as the affective filter for learners' psychology which may be classified into three sub-states: 1. motivation; 2. self-confidence; 3. anxiety. Three these very different mentioned factors can have either indirectly or directly influences on learning by preventing input (i+1 well developed, or underdeveloped i+2 or far-beyond developed i4-0). To be more precise,

this theory actually explains partly the relationship between emotional variables and success or failure of second language acquisition (route, rate, and success). For example, when the affective filter increases, students may be anxious, tensed, and unconfident which may be strongly believed that these negative feelings will prevent route and success. On the contrary. Low filters may lead to anxiety at all. Instead, it helps students get

comprehensible input a lot more easily and quickly. Overall, this theory is extremely important in pedagogy because it helps language lecturers, who can effectively facilitate comprehensible input and make it understandable in a low anxiety classroom environment. By utilizing this theory, English language leaning will be completely expected to be improved this is because comprehensible input will be much more gained. It sure is.



Fig. 1: Flowchart of relationship between Anxiety and Performance

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants and Instrument

The sample of the study consisted of 149 students, being of between 20 and 23 years of age, who enrolled in the course of "English for Specific Purposes" as a part of program arrived from various economic fields: Finance, Banking, Business Administration, and Accounting in the second semester of the academic school year 2024-2025.

To carry out this study, the authors used the foreign language anxiety scale (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) for a questionnaire with 60 items, 30 items for Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and 30 other ones for academic performance, was designed and completed a survey. As detailed below. All the items except the questionnaire items of background would be marked on a four-point Likert scale ranging as standard level gradual grading system from "5=strongly disagree- SD" to "1=strongly agree-SA". Therefore, in calculation, the lowest score on the scale 1 is 1, while the highest score was 240 on the scale 5. However, to constructively validate the empirical validity of each item in the

questionnaire before addressing, four English experts developed their own comments on and verify items in terms of relevance, appropriateness. Besides, Cronbach Alpha formula was applied to calculate an overall value of $\alpha \leq .80$ ($\alpha \leq .80$) generated that the instrument has been reasonably reliable and indicate a good internal consistency (Sedgwick, 2012; Bonett & Wright, 2015; Piniel, 2024). So reliability of foreign language anxiety and academic performance was measured by being computed by IC (Internal consistency). Cronbach's α for the anxiety was .904 (items number in total=29) and Cronbach's Alpha for academic performance was .875 (items number in total=10).

Data analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using the SPSS with a priori set Alpha level of 0.01. The relationship of study anxiety affecting academic performance toward English language learning at HUB was examined by Pearson (r) correlation. Furthermore, the significant coefficient and coefficient correlation are examined to find out the research results based on the parameter of David's Index (see table 1)

Table 1. David's Index Table (DIT)

Coefficient of Correlation (r)	Relationship Explanation	Description	Coefficient of Correlation (r)
0.70 or more (0.7 or >)	Very strong	(+)Highly significant (-)	-0.70 or -> (0.7 or >)
0.50 to 0.69 (0.5 -0.69)	Strong	(+)Distinctively significant (-)	-0.50 to -0.69 (0.5 -0.69)
0.30 to 0.49 (0.3-0.49)	Moderate	(+)Slightly significant (-)	-0.30 to -0.49 (0.3-0.49)
0.10 to 0.29 (0.1-0.29)	Low, weak	(+)Less significant (-)	-0.10 to -0.29 (0.1-0.29)
0.01 to 0.09 (0.00-0.09)	Ignore/zero	(-)No significant (-)	-0.01 to -0.09 (0.00-0.09)

IV. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Table 2. Correlations between of anxieties and Achievable performance performance toward ELL

Measured Variables-Anxiety		Achievable Performance	Personal Anxiety	Emotional Anxiety	Situational Anxiety
Personal	r	-.469**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
Emotional	r	-.515**	.473**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
Specific	r	-.481**	.469**	.406**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
Population (N)		149	149	149	149

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As stated earlier, the current study first tried to discover potential relationship between the ESP students' anxiety and their academic performance in examinations. In terms of the first research question. Table 2 reveals that there is statically significantly negatively correlated between the three (3) types of anxiety and student's achievable performance: personal anxiety ($r = -.469$; $p < .001$); emotional anxiety ($r = -.515$; $p < .001$); specific anxiety ($r = -.515$, $p < .01$). Based on David's Index Table, the relationship between (two) 2 variables anxiety and performance weigh about moderate to strong (level: M to T). Particularly, they are correlated negatively slightly significant to distinctively significant. Deductively, this means that if a student who is more anxious in English language class, s/he will be likely to get more negatively performed and obtain poorer and poorer achievement. Meanwhile, with coefficients ranging from 0.10 to 0.29 ($p < .001$). This means that the more anxious students raised about the English language class, the worse they performed in English language learning.

The negative effect of foreign language anxiety on academic performance and language learning is also confirmed through the current findings. Furthermore, we observed a negative relationship between anxiety and academic performance. This current finding is consistent with those of the different periods of time (Aida, 1994; Cheragian et al., 2008; He, 2018; Alnuzaili & Uddin, 2020; Agustina Hananingsih, 2023; Xiang, 2024; Zhang, 2024). Plus, the finding also is closely allied with those of some other studies (Spielberger; 1983; Horwitz, 1986; Trylong, 1987; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz, 2001; Pappamihel, 2002; Awan et al., 2010; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Chen, Cheng & Chuang, 2022; Zhu, 2024; Mierzwa-Kamińska, 2025; Ibrahim & Elhabashy, 2025). As oppose to abovementioned ones, some studies reported a positive relationship between language anxiety and language performance in learning foreign language. (Liu, 2006).

Table 3. Predictors of achievable performance in English language learning

Coefficients									
Model 1		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	R ²	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.424	.182		24.276	.000	.380		
	Personal Anxiety	-.153	.061	-.198	-2.508	.013		.685	1.461
	Emotional Anxiety	-.246	.059	-.316	-4.139	.000		.733	1.364
	Situational Anxiety	-.242	.071	-.259	-3.405	.001		.736	1.358

a. Dependent Variable: Achievable Performance
b. Predictors (constant): personal; emotional; situational anxiety.

Table 3 indicates that the regression coefficients of independent variables: x_1 , x_2 , and x_3 reveal that the R^2 which equalizes to 0.380 obtained percentage contribution of only 38% to the variability of Y (achievable performance). This means that 62 % may be attributed to other variables not included in the regression analysis. More over, the value of significance of independent variables (personal, emotional, situational anxiety) is less than 0.05 level (Sig $x_1=.013$; $x_2=.000$; $x_3=.001 < \alpha=.05$).

The obtained resulting regression equation was stated thus:

$$Y = (\text{Constant}) - X(x_1)(x_2)(x_3), \text{ equals } Y = 4.424 - .153 - .246 - .242$$

Based on the results, the following conclusions were withdrawn as under:

On the basis of the above equation it can be said that every unit increase of x_1 corresponds to an increase of -0.153 in Y holding x_1 constant, similarly every unit increase of x_2 is matched by an increase of -0.267 in Y , holding in x_2 constant. Likewise, the obtained regression coefficient shows that Y increases by -0.242 every unit of x_3 increases by -0.242 for every unit increase of Y . Deductively, regards to trait or personal anxiety, the more personally anxious the respondents feel, the more decreased they obtain at the level of .153 or higher score at 15.3% in achievable performance. In connection to equivalently emotional anxiety, the more emotionally anxious the respondents involve in, the more decreased they obtain at the level of .246 or higher score at 24.6% in achievable performance. With respect to situational or specific anxiety, the respondents with the more specifically anxious aspect will have decreased achievable performance at the level of .242 or score at 24.2%. it can be said, therefore, that among variables considered in this sample, emotional anxiety is the best predictor of achievable performance. Therefore, the results of the tests indicated that the above regression model employed satisfactorily adequate.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Drawing on the abovementioned results and discussions, we inferred the following statements for foreign language anxiety and performance in English language learning. Anxiety has got a strong influence on performance. Undoubtedly, ESP students, who get more and more anxious may perform worse and worse in their learning English. According to this study, anxiety is not only the main factor, which entirely affects student's performance on learning, as just few parts approximately over one third of impact index found in this study, too.

The knowledge of university lecturers in the teaching classroom might be useful to boost up students' performance and renew E & I learning (explicit and implicit learning), not used for cut off student's anxiety but reducing anxiety should be lots carefully cares and their responsibilities. Teachers are advised that a safe, friendly and relaxed classroom atmosphere should be created to cool up their mind so that students feel secured to express themselves most confidently and comfortably (Mierzwa, 2019; Mierzwa-Kamińska, 2025). In some words of the writers, if we cool your students successfully, we win their mind, if we inspire students successfully, we win their whole heart of ease. This means that teachers should avoid evaluating negatively students' manners if their performance lies beyond our expectation, do not upset them in front of the whole class (e. g., student's accent, pronunciation and others), remember that making mistakes makes students perfect. To be able to avoid negativity and debilitations, students should be provided with some best ways heading for anxiety-provoking situations appropriately. As a choice, cooperative learning is one of the good examples in this case, because "one problem shared is a problem halved, no man is an island alone". Of course, not many single results are perfect at all in any researches. With its complexity and controversy, it seems to be likely that foreign language anxiety and performance should be encouraged and continued to be a key area of research interest.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data and materials are available.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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