



Validating Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale for High School Students

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ABSTRACT

With the implementation of the Bilingual 2030 policy by the National Development Council in 2018, understanding the anxiety levels of junior and senior high school students in Taiwan regarding the English language has become crucial, especially in the context of online learning. This study reviewed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, modifying its factor structure and reducing the number of items to 19. The revised scale encompasses four factors: anxiety, self-efficacy, social comparison, and unwillingness to attend English classes. Data collected from 625 junior and senior high school students, within the framework of online learning, indicate the proposed scale's effectiveness and reliability in investigating English language anxiety among students. Additionally, the study offers insights into the impact of gender, grades, and the four identified factors.

KEYWORDS

Anxiety, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), High School Students, Online Learning, Self-Efficacy, Social Comparison, Unwillingness to Attend English Classes

INTRODUCTION

In the context of online learning, students need to develop the ability to manage language learning anxiety prudently. The Bilingual 2030 policy (National Development Council et al., 2021) served as a framework for enhancing the bilingual competence of Taiwan's youth, contributing to increased competitiveness. However, this English-centric view might have overlooked the significance of multiculturalism, diverging from the emphasis on balanced development in the context of online learning outlined in the 2030 Bilingual Nation policy (Chang, 2022). While the policy underscored the importance of bilingual skills, it needed to prioritize students' emotional well-being, foster a relaxed online learning environment, and facilitate virtual expression. This aligned with the perspective mentioned by Ferrer and Lin (2021) on the 2030 Bilingual Nation policy, suggesting that the government's emphasis on English might have overlooked the importance of multiculturalism,

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leading to some inconsistencies and challenges in national language policy. In this context, Graham and Yeh (2023) highlighted the need to pay attention to challenges as Taiwan implemented bilingual education policies and how these challenges translated into different arrangements, whether intended or unintended. It was hoped that this study might encourage dialogue among various stakeholders, aligning policy mechanisms and arrangements to achieve the intended goals. Notably, our study followed the recommendation of limiting the sample, delving into the foreign language classroom anxiety of high school students, and further exploring the impact of these policies on secondary education.

In addition, teachers can enhance oral proficiency through drama and role-playing and by employing positive feedback and rewards to encourage student participation. While it may not be possible to eliminate language learning stress, teachers have a responsibility to identify and mitigate factors that may contribute to anxiety, fostering positive learning experiences for students. We hope these measures will prompt further research into solutions, providing better support for students in the online learning environment (Qaddumi et al., 2023). Qualitative findings from this study indicate that participants in face-to-face learning environments reported higher levels of anxiety compared to those engaged in online courses (Véliz-Campos et al., 2023). Furthermore, Ngangbam (2022) proposed that despite a 55% positive reception of the 2030 Bilingual Nation policy among respondents, convincing the remaining 45% is essential for its smooth implementation and execution. Therefore, addressing the challenges of foreign language classroom anxiety, particularly in online learning environments, necessitates a deeper understanding of high school student perceptions and needs to ensure effective policy implementation.

The research work using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, in secondary school students, the FLCAS demonstrated high adaptability in assessing anxiety related to learning a foreign language, particularly among those aged 13 to 19, according to the results of the study by Mella et al. (2015). The research highlighted the tool's temporal stability, gender invariance in measurement, and its correlation with academic achievement. However, due to the absence of a factor analysis in the work of Mella et al. (2015) on the FLCAS, our study aims to fill this gap in the literature.

On the other hand, the evolving landscape of education, particularly with the increasing prevalence of online learning, necessitates a reevaluation of the applicability of FLCAS in diverse settings. The FLCAS, developed in 1986 (Horwitz et al., 1986), assesses anxiety levels in foreign language classrooms. It helps identify highly anxious students, allowing educators to personalize teaching methods. The FLCAS has reshaped language education by fostering a supportive environment, and its introduction has prompted educators to adopt diverse teaching techniques, create inclusive spaces, and emphasize clear communication. This approach addresses anxiety rooted in language learning and enhances the overall learning experience. It was significant to highlight that middle and high school students, including both junior and senior high school students aged 12 to 17, served as the research subjects in this study. The study examined FLCAS in Taiwan and considered gender disparities. Furthermore, with the continuous advancements in educational technology, understanding the role of FLCAS in mitigating anxiety within the realm of online language learning becomes imperative for educators to tailor effective teaching strategies that address the unique challenges posed by digital platforms. Our understanding of these elements in language education, particularly in the context of online learning, has improved through the application of FLCAS. It provided insights into language anxiety within specific cultural and gender contexts. Therefore, the research work using FLCAS is not only a response to the limitations of previous studies but also a proactive effort to enhance our understanding of language anxiety and inform pedagogical practices in the dynamic landscape of contemporary education.

Across a spectrum of scholarly endeavors, the FLCAS has been harnessed as a critical lens to examine the intricate relationship between anxiety and language learning. Pioneering works, such as the seminal study by Horwitz et al. (1986), laid the foundation by utilizing questionnaires to

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