

3rd World Conference on Learning, Teaching and Educational Leadership (WCLTA-2012)

## Speaking anxiety in a foreign language classroom in Kazakhstan

Ziash Suleimenova

*KIMEP University, 2 Abay avenue, Almaty, 050010, Kazakhstan*

---

### Abstract

As I reviewed the literature and deepened on research methodology principles, I used the original study as a starting point to voice Kazakh anxious language learners out about the issue. The given research conducted on speaking anxiety revealed that students have extremely negative experiences with speaking activities in a foreign language class. All the instruments used to investigate the problem of speaking anxiety were considerably helpful. Important measures should be taken to try to minimize its negative effects. Increased speaking anxiety levels in Kazakhstani high school students can be attributed to a variety of factors. One attributing factor may be related to the fact that the Kazakhstani educational system is not designed to increase the communicative competence of students. Therefore, many students experience a feeling of uneasiness and anxiety when having to speak in the foreign language.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Ferhan Odabaşı

*Keywords:* Anxiety; foreign language classroom; high and low anxiety; communication apprehension .

---

### 1. Introduction

Foreign Language Anxiety, recognized as an affective factor in foreign language learning and normally discussed alongside other individual learner differences (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992, 1994), is still considered to be a relatively new and developing area within foreign language research. In the world we live in, anxiety is one of the top emotional encounters a person could have.

Anxiety is defined as distress or uneasiness of the mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune. General anxiety is the excessive and exaggerated worry about everyday things. It is an unrealistic, or out of proportion constant worry that dominates and interferes with daily functions like work, school, relationships, and social activities. As regards foreign language anxiety, different researchers have approached it from different aspects. Today professional interest in the development of students' speaking proficiency is considerable. This concern with oral competence, however, may be intensifying high levels of foreign language anxiety experienced by some learners.

In the educational world, speaking is seen as a necessary, positive personal characteristic (Daly, 1991). However, foreign language learners often express feelings of stress, nervousness or anxiety while learning to speak the target language and claim to have 'mental block' against learning. Campbell and Ortiz (1991) found language anxiety among university students to be 'alarming' and estimated that up to one half of all language students experience debilitating levels of speaking anxiety.

This study addresses the issue of identifying foreign language speaking anxiety and the major consequences of language speaking anxiety reported by students learning English in the evaluation of the foreign language

---

\* Ziash Suleimenova. +7-701-799-8705

*E-mail address:* [ziash@kimep.kz](mailto:ziash@kimep.kz)

classroom. Two types of interviews and a questionnaire were used for this study. The questionnaire administered to the students was based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). It was developed to investigate the specific factors of foreign language anxiety. The FLCAS also investigates other anxieties such as communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

According to von Worde (1998), this scale has been used in many studies of anxiety by Aida (1994), Ganschow and Sparks (1996), MacIntyre and Gardner (1989), Price (1988), and Young (1992) and found to be a highly reliable and valid tool of measurement. Further, such a tool of measurement is chosen because it measures foreign language anxiety regarding the four major skills (reading, writing, listening) and mainly speaking. 20 items from this questionnaire such as those related to speaking were chosen.

## **2. Rationales**

The major purpose of the given research was to find out whether EFL learners feel anxious or embarrassed while learning to speak English and what consequences the students reported. In other words, what the factors or sources are that make speaking English more stressful in some situations than in others. The second most important aim of this study was to give attention to the speaking anxiety problem in the foreign language classroom. It will also inform the teachers about the phenomenon, as a learner, as well as a practitioner in English language teaching. In addition, integrating the findings of this research on language anxiety - regarding its nature, sources, effects and treatment - with the existing literature is also an underlying consideration of the study. The primary goal of this research was to identify those factors, as perceived by students that might have contributed to speaking anxiety and the major consequences of language speaking anxiety reported by students learning English in the foreign language classroom. This was an attempt to understand more fully the role that speaking anxiety may play in learning a foreign language. This study utilized the qualitative research tradition, the semi-structured interview, with the inclusion of a questionnaire. The present study aimed to contribute to our understanding of foreign language anxiety, in general, and speaking anxiety in Kazakhstani environment, in particular. The present study was the first attempt to fill this gap and to reveal more about the speaking anxiety in the Elementary level of Kazakh students group, having considered how anxiety affected speaking and overall classroom performance.

### *2.1. Research questions*

The study set out to answer the following research questions:

How can we identify whether students experience speaking anxiety in the foreign language classroom?

What are the major consequences of language speaking anxiety reported by students learning English in the foreign language classroom?

My first research question dealt with the ways of identifying students experiencing language anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Giving students tasks that would measure their language skills or using a global measure such as final course grade can be revealing in terms of identifying students encountering anxiety. Practical experience showed that students with high levels of anxiety attempted less complicated tasks, and avoided difficult messages and wrote shorter compositions.

This study was aiming to investigate the effect of anxiety in language learning. Interviewing students, supported with the questionnaire, may be important to be able to identify those of them who are particularly anxious in the foreign language classroom. As practitioners we may state what anxious students fear: speaking in a language class, making mistakes, not being understood, being evaluated negatively or poorly, appearing less competent than other students.

In essence, anxiety is responsible for the student behaviours, and before blaming learners for the lack of ability, poor motivation or inadequate background, educators should bear in mind that “students may appear simply unprepared or indifferent” (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students encountering anxiety are always under stress and as long as school environment offers formal setting, since it is an official location, learners are aware of evaluation being dependent on their performance.

Behaviours vary across cultures, and what might seem like anxious behaviour in one culture may be normal behaviour in another culture. Anxiety can reveal some physical behaviours and symptoms, such as squirming, fidgeting, playing with hair or clothing, nervously touching objects, stuttering or stammering, and totally displaying anxious behaviour. Consequences may include complaining about a headache, experiencing tight muscles, and

feeling unexplained pain or tension in any part of the body. Individual reactions to the presence of language speaking anxiety are absolutely different.

Some students may experience very intensive anxiety and they attempt to avoid and postpone registering for the foreign language class, while others may pretend to be sick, skip the class, or hide in the last row lying on their desks. For instance, in language classes, anxious students may not be able to take in a spoken dialogue fast enough because anxiety interferes with their ability to process information. Naturally, if the words or phrases do not enter the system, they cannot be processed or used later.

During the processing stage, students' anxiety can influence both the fluency and the accuracy of speaking. Because anxiety acts as a distraction, students may not be able to learn new words, phrases, grammar, and so on when they are worried. This worry may take the form of worrying about future communication or simply the fear of misunderstanding something.

Students who process information more deeply, who integrate it with existing knowledge, who attempt to understand both what they hear and what its structure is, create a better understanding of the language and its use. Anxiety arousal at the output stage can influence the quality of foreign language communication. Many people have had the experience of "freezing-up" on an important test; they know the correct answer but it will not come to the mind. This happens because the presence of anxiety acts as a disruption to the retrieval of information. Similar effects can be observed when speaking or writing in the foreign language. The correct word may be on the "tip of the tongue," but no amount of effort will bring it forward.

There are a number of ways in which the social context can also influence language anxiety. A competitive classroom atmosphere, difficult interactions with teachers, risk of embarrassment may all influence language anxiety. However, the most troublesome effect of language anxiety is the personal effect it has on the individual language learner. Language learning should not be a traumatic experience, but for some students it is just that.

There is a lot of literature on language anxiety with comments by students on this matter. Anxious individuals often engage in self-deprecating comments, "I feel so dumb in my English class," and "Sometimes when I speak English in class, I am so afraid I feel like hiding behind my chair". Students also worry that others will think that they are "stupid" because they are having trouble using simple vocabulary and grammar structures.

As regards the second research question about the consequences of experiencing anxiety for students in the foreign language classroom the problem can be found in the situation when an anxious student avoids visiting foreign language classes. Also avoidance can be a fairly common consequence of anxiety. It includes such behaviour as 'forgetting' the answer, showing carelessness, skipping class, coming late, arriving unprepared, and lack of volunteering in class. There might even be a rather extreme form of class avoidance when students just go right to sleep. Eventually all of these together may lead to retaking the course, which is the worst of all the consequences.

Deep investigation is required to find some proof to answer these research questions, and the tools chosen for the given research are likely to help establish a picture of how anxiety affects language learning and performance, how presence of anxiety affects students, and how anxiety is manifested in students with all the consequences it brings with itself.

### *2.1.1. Rationale for the study*

Many researchers view that "even without empirical proof, the mere awareness of foreign language anxiety, even on an intuitive level, is testimony enough to its existence and worthy of fuller investigation" (Shams, 2006, p. 14). Ohata (2005) claims that language anxiety cannot be defined in a linear manner but rather it can be better construed as a complex psychological phenomenon influenced by many different factors. Thus it seems to be more appropriate to deal with this issue from a variety of perspectives or approaches (Young, 1992).

Similar to the numerous interview studies by the language researchers, this study is a further step to investigate the factors that deal with the presence of language anxiety for EFL learners. This study intends to be more comprehensive in nature as it looks at the issue in an attempt to identify the presence of language anxiety; focusing on the actual consequences of anxiety. In addition, this research was conducted in the context of the AgroUniversity of Almaty with the Kazakh group of students.

#### *2.1.1.1. Significance of the study*

The issue of language anxiety is being studied with increasing frequency in recent years because of the influence it can have on foreign language learning, performance and ultimate achievement. This study will be of considerable interest to language educators and students because of the potentially negative impact of foreign language anxiety,

not only on the various domains of language performance, but also on students' attitudes and perceptions of language learning in general (Phillips, 1992, as cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999).

This study is also significant with respect to its implication for foreign or second language pedagogy, particularly in the context where learners have a wide range of linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The investigation of the anxiety-producing factors that arise while learning to communicate in the target language will hopefully broaden the insight into the issue of language anxiety and will help language teachers in making the classroom environment less stressful.

### **3. Results**

This study utilized the qualitative research tradition; the semi-structured interview question was designed to find out the major consequences of speaking anxiety reported by students. Attention was focused on the participants' beliefs, experiences, and feelings in order to generate an enlightening narration of the participants' perspectives of foreign language anxiety.

In this section I will show two different sets of results obtained in answering the research questions. After administering the translated Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), designed by Horwitz et al. (1986), the resulting data revealed interesting information about the presence of anxiety and its consequences for this group of students. The scale was shortened to 20 items and modified to assess the degree to which participants feel nervous during speaking practice in class, some of the original FLCAS items were eliminated, such as the ones asking about concern over grades, discomfort in speaking the language outside the classroom, and anxiety over tests. Each of the 20 items of the FLCAS was scored on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from 5 points (strongly agree) to 1 point (strongly disagree). The results of this survey showed that a fair amount of anxiety exists in the researched Kazakhstani foreign language classroom.

In terms of the data received from the questionnaire items, it should be mentioned that students indicated that they had a great number of fears, uneasiness and worry in class, which led to an increase in anxiety. The results of administering our translated version of the *FLCAS* showed the existence of considerable levels of anxiety in the foreign language classroom. The use of this research instrument with a group of students who had accumulated experience as learners of English as a foreign language has allowed to check that the phenomenon of foreign language classroom anxiety is not necessarily characteristic or exclusive to beginners as seemed to suggest the fact that the *FLCAS* and other scales devised for a similar purpose had been recurrently applied to groups of beginners in previous research (Horwitz et al., 1986; Samimy & Tabuse, 1992).

A general interview guide was followed, using the set of 15 questions that were developed to elicit answers without limiting or inhibiting the respondents. The results of the interview on speaking anxiety in the foreign language classroom depicted a general picture of the students' learning experience. First, most of the students did not spend much time taking English courses. Second, the majority of them did not have the experience of touring, studying, or speaking with native English speakers. Third, with regard to the instruction language in class, most students would like their English teacher to use more English, and to switch to Kazakh when necessary, especially in difficult parts. Some preferred half English and half Kazakh. Fourth, they preferred to be evaluated by means of games or activities, and they preferred to take part in the class activities with the whole class or in small groups. Finally, they felt that their pressure of learning English came both from the demands they put on themselves, and their teacher's expectation. In other words, the prevalence of foreign language speaking anxiety of the students in the investigated group was obvious.

As to interviewing eight people every week it really proved to be a tiring experience for me as a researcher. I knew that I could get some valuable information regarding encountering anxiety in the foreign language classroom. My most important question was, "Do you encounter anxiety in English class?" Students were fairly nervous for my interview with them. While I was interviewing them, I was very aware of not getting sincere answers to my interview questions. When responding to my questions, they used a lot of hesitations, most notably "um". Also, they would often use hedges, especially "like". The channel of our communication was a face-to-face talk, which allowed me to completely focus on and understand what they were saying. Our meeting took place in the classroom, where there was virtually no noise. The classroom was quiet and comfortable, so there were no external variables that hindered my ability to listen. I came in to the interview ready to learn about anxiety problems in speaking a foreign language, so that positive attitude was an internal variable which helped me listen to students' comments. Finally, I had nowhere to go after my interview, so I was prepared to listen until I had all of the information I needed; therefore, time did not have a negative influence on me while I was listening. Interviewing

gave a lot of insight and tips as to how deal with students being “at-risk,” “some-risk,” or “low-risk”, when encountering anxiety in the foreign language classroom.

There is a range for the scores that places a student into one of those categories. “At-risk” means in danger of not making the end-of-the-year goal in that area. Those are the ones who need the most attention during their classes. There are students with pretty severe emotional/behaviour problems. Students from different ethnic groups usually stick together, communicate in their native language. One emotionally disturbed student made matters worse by not getting prepared for the classes.

To increase understanding of the data and interpret the results, analysis of qualitative data can help. I collected data via observations, interviews and a questionnaire. These methods helped me amass a lot of raw data that I currently need to sort through. Looking at the similarities and differences in responses I grouped my data by different categories in the following way: High Anxiety students vs. Low Anxiety students. First I identified common themes in responses. I could also see patterns that have emerged between and across groups of High and Low Anxiety students. According to the data gathered from the questionnaire, six of the participants considerably suffer from anxiety while speaking English (HA students), and the rest two are considered to be Low Anxiety students (LA students). Table 1 shows the major stressors when speaking English found out through the questionnaire answers.

Table 1. Major stressors when speaking English

Stressors	Number of High Anxiety students (6 Ss)	Number of Low Anxiety students (2 Ss)
Jumbled and confused thoughts	4	0
Fear of speaking	5	0
Performing in front of others	6	1
Being called out to the board	6	0
Doing poorer because of anxiety	5	0
Anxious waiting for a turn to speak	5	0
Loss of confidence while speaking	5	2
Volunteering answers	4	2
Constant fear of forgetting what prepared to speak about	4	0
Getting tense and nervous	4	0
Teacher correcting mistakes	3	0

In this study, there were several categories of anxiety-provoking situations found in the obtained data. Being called out to the board and performing in front of others were the two most common anxiety-provoking situations for HA students. 100% of HA students reported that these were stressors. They have been widely discussed in previous studies (Woodrow, L., 2006) and topped the categories in this study as well.

Data from the interviews revealed that being called out to the board provoked anxiety in most of the students. Some students reported anxiety when the teacher used random selection, complaining that they always felt on edge not knowing when or if they would be called on. On the other hand, when the teacher called on the students in a predictable order, other students reported increasing anxiety as their turn approached. Perhaps a predictable order would provoke less anxiety for the class as a whole, but we cannot say if the intensity of anxiety is more or less in one case or the other based on this study.

When they felt nervous they might have hesitated or stumbled or simply looked uncomfortable and became silent. In other words, anxious students feel a deep self-consciousness when asked to risk revealing themselves by speaking the foreign language in front of their peers.

Most Low Anxiety students were nervous because of their low proficiency in English. To summarize, most students got anxious in the situations where proficiency was a pivotal factor. Speaking anxiety appeared when students had low proficiency. When they were in low evaluative situations like games or activities, they went through less language anxiety.

Loss of confidence made many students nervous, too. Students were afraid that they could not respond appropriately or correctly in front of their classmates. Sometimes, their peers would laugh at them if they had poor performances. They did not want to lose face. It is obvious that volunteering answers has always been an anxiety-provoking situation and resulted in some students’ worry and uneasiness. Half of the LA students said that they were nervous when the teacher was correcting their mistakes.

The results of the given research revealed that anxiety may impair foreign language production and achievement. The negative impact of anxiety has also been identified at the specific stages of language learning: input, processing,

retrieval, and output stage. What is more, anxiety was found to cause problems related to self-confidence, self-esteem, risk-taking ability, and ultimately hampers proficiency in the foreign language.

Among activities judged to produce high anxiety, apart from those included in the table above, were also impromptu answers, role-plays and saying how you would react in a given situation. It was found that students reacted in an anxious way to speaking mainly because they feared being laughed at by their peers or making a fool of themselves in public. What anxious students' questionnaire or interview comments appeared to have in common was that they felt anxiety interfered with their ability to concentrate, to pay attention to what is being said in the target language.

It seemed strange sometimes to hear from the students that their difficulty to speak was not due to inadequate knowledge of the language, but instead they had no idea whatsoever of what to say, no ideas came to their minds at all, and this situation might have been taken for anxiety. And still, anxiety interfered with their speech performance; it occurred at the pre-verbal stage, when students had to generate ideas, and conceptualize what they wanted to say. However, there were students who thought that they felt nervous when they had to speak without preparation and felt very self-conscious about speaking in English in front of other students. The results of this study seemed to confirm the findings of a study by McCroskey (1992) who found that the majority of people experience communication apprehension when speaking to a group of people in a formal setting.

Finally, based on the findings, the students also felt overwhelmed by the number of rules that they had to learn in order to speak in English. A possible explanation for this might be that the focus of learning activity is on form rather than the overall meaning, which is typical of Kazakhstani teaching methods. Students should be exposed to the correct use of language so that they can apply the knowledge in an appropriate context. In this study, I found that many students suffered from incomprehensible input. They were anxious because they did not know what their teachers were talking about. For some students, English was "a kind of language that I do not know," (student A1, personal communication, March 2010) and the teacher was like a machine that produced the language at a high speed.

The analysis of the above-mentioned results suggests that foreign language speaking anxiety does play an important role in EFL learning. Moreover, not all anxiety is simply harmful or helpful. Anxiety has both positive and negative effects on EFL learners. When students are anxious, they should ask themselves if that anxiety is really debilitating. A little nervous tension can keep students alert in their learning process. The facilitative anxiety is considered to be competitive (Brown, 2000, p152). Anxiety is only helpful in the appropriate proportion—just enough, no more than necessary.

The results of the given study have shown that anxiety influences the communication strategies learners employ in a language class. High Anxiety learners were less likely to take risks in the language class. Similarly, it was found that High Anxiety learners produced less interpretive and more concrete messages than relaxed learners.

The results found in this study is consistent with research on other types of specific communication anxiety, which states that anxious learners generally speak, write, and participate less in the language classroom than relaxed students (Spolsky, 1989).

I find the data very fruitful and revealing. As it has been mentioned above, a highly possible source of speaking anxiety is the fact of speaking before peers. If the classroom is perceived as a hostile environment that threatens the learner as an individual, feelings of discouragement and fear will likely result in that kind of anxiety. Speaking before peers is a factor over which students do not have any control and it contributes negatively to both self-perceptions when compared to others and what the learner can actually do to lessen his/her uneasiness. Low Anxiety students seem to realize they are not anxious by nature and that there are circumstances that cause this state when they try to find the source of their present anxiety. They start by acknowledging that overcoming their anxiety is probably a two-way effort, and that although circumstances have not been favorable, they have actually tried certain strategies and may need to try out some others.

They seem to use some strategies which help them and these are positive thinking in the first place, and peer seeking in the second. The apparent preference for positive thinking strategies seems to be due to personality and cultural factors. Having collected some facts about the students' family backgrounds during the interview, I sense there was a feeling of pride and responsibility with low anxiety students.

I used a scale to be certain about the levels of speaking anxiety my participants experienced in the foreign language classroom, I did find evidence of this state through data analysis. I also found evidence of consequences speaking anxiety leads to. This allows me to say that the methodology I followed helped me gather qualitative data to answer both research questions.

Replicating this study may not result in new insights about the issue of speaking anxiety. Nevertheless, it does have implications on how both learners and teachers can become aware of and how to address the problem. The fact

that avoidance on the side of the learner is very likely to happen may pose some additional problems due to absenteeism, coming in late and failing on purpose. A last point to make here is the fact that studies do not say whether learners have been given help with anxiety so they can tell the difference and say what they do when nothing else is helping them.

Finding ways to ensure learners attend class and are given the opportunity to experience the use of preparation, relaxation, peer seeking and positive thinking strategies through collaborative work and other techniques may be necessary. As to consequences of anxiety they are projected on the following aspects as reported by students during the interview:

Table 2. Aspects of consequences of anxiety

Aspects	Consequences
Academically Socially Cognitively	Anxiety is one of the best predictors of language proficiency Avoidance of interpersonal communication Anxiety can influence both speed and accuracy of learning, anxiety can occur at any stage of language acquisition
Qualitatively	Anxiety arousal can impact the quality of communication output and when students get anxious, they encounter “freezing-up” moments
Personally	Language learning experience could, under some circumstances, become a traumatic experience, which may in turn deeply disturb one’s self-esteem or self-confidence as a learner.

To analyze the descriptive factors of FLCAS, the following table may be maintained as an example.

Table 3. Descriptive factors of FLCAS

Factors	Labels	Items included
Factor 1.	Lack of confidence in speaking English in class.	Items 5, 8, 11, 12, 17
Factor 2.	Fear of speaking in public	Items 1, 3, 4, 7, 14, 15
Factor 3.	Anxiety about not understanding everything taught in class	Items 2, 16, 18, 19
Factor 4.	Helplessness and negative attitude toward the English class	Items 6, 9, 10, 13, 20

A factor analysis yields four factors, the first two of which are quite highly correlated but which represent distinctive facets of language anxiety. Factor 1 reflects a perceived lack of competence in speaking English as compared with the other students in class, which is associated with a lack of confidence in speaking English. Factor 2 includes physiological reactions to public speaking such as trembling and heart pounding as well as cognitive consequence of stage fright including forgetting things and being confused. It includes affective responses such as nervousness and panic. The third factor capture the tendency to feel frightened, nervous and upset when one does not understand everything that the teacher says in the class. The students who endorse highly on this factor may be serious students who cannot leave things they do not understand or do not appear to have tolerance for ambiguity. They would stand in marked contrast to those students who do not wish to pursue English studies and cannot be bothered to learn the finer details of the language. My interpretation of this factor rests on the WLP (World Languages Program) context, where the majority of English classes have been taught by local teachers who use Kazakh to explain grammar and meaning of English texts. As mentioned earlier, only recently have the communicative approach and direct methods been adopted in colleges and high schools, and this transition from traditional grammar/translation approaches to teaching to communicative approaches may have made them anxious. If students are used to explanations being given in Kazakh and/or attempt to translate all sentences into Kazakh, classes taught in English may leave them puzzled or discontent as it is quite likely that they do not understand some part of what the teacher says. Probably this contributes to a feeling of pressure to prepare well. The fourth factor describes anxiety associated with feelings of helplessness combined with a negative attitude toward the English class. Their helplessness makes them tense and nervous in the English class and contributes to their negative attitude toward the class.

This study proved that a combination of FLCAS and interview showed useful tools to examine the phenomena taking place in the EFL context. Pinpointing the specific anxiety related problems that individuals and groups experience will help teachers and language educators to cope with varied needs of language learners and help them take measures before negative affect can start harming willingness to learn.

The results suggest that by measuring some vital individual difference variables, English teachers in Kazakhstan, will have a clearer picture of the different profiles of learners, which, in turn, will allow teachers to use tasks and procedures that are considered suitable for each affective profile of the learners.

#### 4. Conclusion

In recent years there have been signs of a revival of interest in foreign language study to the phenomenon of anxiety. The problems of learners' language anxiety remain one of the greatest obstacles teachers have to overcome in foreign language classrooms. As revealed by the results of this study, English language speaking anxiety does exist among the second- year high school students who participated in this study. And it revealed that students have extremely negative experiences with speaking activities in a foreign language class. All the measurement instruments used to investigate the problem of speaking anxiety were considerably helpful.

The results of the current research should be of some guidance to both teachers and students of foreign languages, to help promote acquisition of the foreign language, and more specifically, to address one of the issues that is popular with foreign language learners, that is anxiety and particularly, speaking anxiety in a foreign language classroom. It may be helpful for teachers to become familiar with the FLCAS instrument (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) to better understand the many ways in which students experience anxiety.

Recommendations suggested by this study are that teachers strive to create a low stress, friendly and supportive learning environment; foster a proactive role on the part of the students themselves to create an atmosphere of group solidarity and support; be sensitive to students' fears and insecurities and help them to confront those fears; use gentle or non-threatening methods of error correction and offer words of encouragement; make judicious use of purposeful group work or collaborative activities; use relevant and interesting topics for class discussions and exercises; consider decreasing the amount of new material to be covered in one semester; consider ways to layer and reinforce the material in an attempt to aid acquisition and retention; give written directions for homework assignments; speak more slowly or consider using English to clarify key points or give specific directions; attend to the learning styles or preferences of the students; and hear and appreciate the voices of students for valuable insights, ideas and suggestions.

The results of this study show that high levels of anxiety can lead to some consequences, among which uncertainty of one's abilities, difficulty in speaking in public, participating in conversations minimally, failure to initiate conversation, and finally becoming self-conscious and inhibited speakers. This in turn can create more anxiety, as foreign language learners may feel overwhelmed by the fear of failure, by panic, and by the presence of new material. All these negative factors can influence their effort to learn English and may consequently impede their learning, and therefore cause them to do poorly on their speaking English.

It is extremely important that English teachers not only recognize that anxiety can be a major cause of students not being successful in speaking English, but also assist them to overcome the consequences of anxiety as well. The prevalence of language learning anxiety has currently been realized in every English class in Kazakhstan, and the next step is that important measures should be taken to try to minimize its negative effects. There is much we do not yet know about language anxiety as a factor shaping students' experiences in foreign language learning, so more research in this area would be particularly fruitful.

#### Acknowledgements

My first advisor, Dr. David Landis, Associate Professor at KIMEP University's Language Centre, for his knowledgeable and meticulous guidance, and continuous encouragement. His insightful perceptive and valuable suggestions helped me complete this research study.

I am deeply indebted to my co-supervisor, Dr. Elise Ahn, Assistant Professor at KIMEP University's Language Center and the MA in TESOL Program Coordinator, who, during the academic year 2011 – 2012, read my draft copies, listened to my anxieties and whose stimulating suggestions and encouragement helped me throughout the time I was researching and writing this paper.

#### References

- Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78, 155-167.



- Bailey, K. M. (1983). Competitiveness and anxiety in adult second language learning: Looking at and through the diary studies. In H. W. Seliger & M. H. Long (Eds.), *Classroom oriented research in second language acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Campbell, C. M., & Ortiz, J. A. (1991). Helping students overcome foreign language anxiety: A foreign language anxiety workshop. In E. K. Horwitz & D. J. Young (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp.153-168). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Daly, J. A. (1991). Understanding communication apprehension: An introduction for language educators. In E. K. Horwitz & D. J. Young (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 3-13). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Ely, C. (1986). An analysis of discomfort, risk taking, sociability, and motivation in the L2 classroom. *Language Learning*, 36, 1-25.
- Ganschow, L., & Sparks, R. L. (1996). Anxiety about foreign language learning among high school women. *The Modern Language Journal*, 80, 199-212.
- Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1992). A student's contributions to second language learning. Part I: Cognitive variables. *Language Teaching*, 25, 211-220.
- Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1994). A student's contributions to second language learning. Part II: Affective variables. *Language Teaching*, 26, 1-11.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125-132.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1988). *The measurement of anxiety and applications to second language learning: An annotated bibliography* (Research Bulletin No. 672). London, Ontario: The University of Western Ontario. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. FL017649).
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1989). Anxiety and second language learning: Toward a theoretical clarification. *Language Learning*, 39, 251-275.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning*, 41, 85-117.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1994). The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language Learning*, 44, 283-305.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1992). Reliability and validity of the Willingness to Communicate Scale. *Communication Quarterly*, 40, 16-25.
- Ohata, K. (2005). Potential sources of anxiety for Japanese learners of English: Preliminary case interviews with five Japanese college students in the U.S.. *TESL-EJ*, 9(3), 1 – 21.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bailey, P., & Daley, C. E. (2000). Cognitive, affective, personality, and demographic predictors of foreign language achievement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 94, 3-15.
- Price, M. L. (1988). Anxiety and the foreign language learner: Correlates of foreign language anxiety (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1988). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 50-02A, 0377.
- Samimy, K.K., & Tabuse, M. (1992). Affective variables and a less commonly taught language: A study in beginning Japanese classes. *Language Learning*, 42(3), 377-398.
- Shamas, A. (2006). *The use of computerized pronunciation practice in the reduction of foreign language classroom anxiety*. (Unpublished Ph.D thesis). The Florida State University, US.
- Spolsky, B. (1989). *Conditions for second language learning*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Von Wörde, R. A. (1998). An investigation of students' perceptions of foreign language anxiety (Doctoral dissertation, George Mason University, 1998). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59-03A, 0717.
- Woodrow, L. (2006). Anxiety and speaking English as a second language. *Regional Language Centre Journal*, 37(3), 308-328.
- Young, D. J. (1992). Language anxiety from the foreign language specialist's perspective: Interviews with Krashen, Omaggio Hadley, Terrell, and Rardin. *Foreign Language Annals*, 25, 157-172.