

Language Anxiety and Motivation: Higher Education International Students' Experiences

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Research Week 2023



Language Anxiety and Motivation

- Language anxiety and motivation both impact students in different ways, either hindering or helping their language learning process.
- This research will investigate the factors that influence international students' language anxiety and motivation in a private university setting.



Language anxiety: Impact on language learners

- Language anxiety can hinder students' abilities to learn a second language, specifically with listening activities and grammatical understanding (Teimouri et al., 2019).
- Multiple factors can impact anxiety, such as educational setting, the language being learned, and the context of the education (Teimouri et al., 2019).
- Correlations have been found between language anxiety and lower language grades in school, implying that anxiety may exacerbate itself by hindering students' learning (Horwitz, 2002).
- Moreover, students' emotions and motivations can alter anxiety's effects on their learning (Teimouri, 2017).



Motivation: Impact on language learners

- Motivation comes in two forms: promotion-focus and prevention-focus self-regulation (Teimouri, 2017). Promotion-focus values developing skills and improving abilities, while prevention-focus values avoiding poor results.
- Prevention-focus has been found to be more effective in helping students to utilize anxiety, as students trying to avoid poor results are urged by their anxiety to work harder (Teimouri, 2017).
- Motivation can be impacted by a student's language goals, a student's goals that he perceives *should* be achieved, and even language learning experience (Dunn & Iwaniec, 2021).
- Aoyama and Takahashi (2020) found that learners with instrumental motivation for studying English were more willing to communicate, apparently suffering less anxiety. Reason for studying the language matters as well.



Research Question

How are international students enrolled at a private southwestern Virginian university affected by language anxiety and motivation in their English language development?



Participants

Participants will be 12 sophomores who are international students. Participants will be from a variety of countries to examine overlapping themes in their experiences.



Research Setting

Participants will be enrolled in a private university in southwest Virginia.



Data Collection Methods

- Participants will be individually interviewed and asked about their experiences with anxiety and motivation on campus. They will be asked to examine specific episodes that may have prompted language anxiety, as well as their reasons for learning English so that the researcher can examine motivation.
- Participants will also be involved in focus groups to discuss both anxiety and motivation. They will be prompted to compare and contrast anxiety experiences with other participants and compare and contrast motivation for learning English.
- Finally, participants will be asked to write about past and current experiences with anxiety on campus, specifically factors that could have influenced their nervousness with the language. They will also be asked to write about the reasons why they are studying English, and whether they are prevention-focused or promotion-focused.



Gap in the Literature

The literature generally focuses on foreign language students in other countries or in the U.S., and less on ESL students. While one of the articles did mention university students, it only looked at Japanese students, rather than examining international students of multiple ethnicities and nationalities to discuss the common features of their experiences.



Christian Worldview

- As Christians, we have a duty to continue learning with the minds God gave us.
- Language is a gift from God, and we should appreciate this gift and improve our skills to learn other languages.
- By discovering what helps or hinders language learners, we can facilitate their learning processes to achieve student mastery in a second language.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

—1 Corinthians 10:23-33



References

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