

**Comparing English Language Learner Anxiety
Amongst Compulsory and Mandatory Beginner Korean EFL Learners:
A Qualitative and Quantitative Pilot Study**

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I

Foreign language learner anxiety can have serious debilitating consequences to language students. It can be a permanent hindrance that limits or even halts language learning progression. It can be hard to control for even the self aware. Do students enrolled in mandatory vs. voluntary language classes have a different level of anxiety at the beginner level? This is what my hypothesis attempts to gain a better outlook upon using both FLCAS Likert scale surveys (quantitative results) and several one on one interviews (qualitative results).

II

Anxiety is a feeling that affects almost everyone at some point. Anxiety is one of the most prominent emotions; foreign language learner anxiety is a situation specific type of anxiety. The feeling of helplessness it creates can be devastating for a student of a 2nd language. Learning English for a Korean student can be seen in many different lights. Do some students think learning a 2nd language like English is a waste of time? Does students stress about learning English entrench itself because it is obligatory in all Korean schools? Most Korean students seem to have a self realization that learning English is important for their future and this in itself seems to lead to high levels of anxiety which can both debilitating, yet can also be facilitative. All teachers have had the common situation of students who hide away and hardly answer, are they merely nervous or unmotivated?

III

Language Anxiety is multi faceted construct (Matsuda et al, 2001). Anxiety can come in three forms.

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- 1- Personality trait anxiety – a person’s psychological innate anxiety.
- 2- State anxiety – experienced at a particular moment.
- 3- Situational Anxiety-an anxiety brought on by a situational context. Foreign language anxiety is a situational anxiety.

Anxiety can be debilitating (negative) or facilitative (positive). For my research I will test two survey two groups of forty Korean EFL students (total of eighty students). Group 1 is in mandatory beginner EFL classes. Group 2 is of a similar skill level, but in voluntary EFL classes. Group 1 must take the class as a prerequisite to graduation. Group 2 has many various reasons for attending class—reasons like personal growth, job skills, travel, making foreign friends etc... I plan to test the differences between group 1 and Group 2. I expect to have only a marginal degree of difference since both groups are low level students, but I am curious as to the degree of difference in anxiety levels, particularly I want to see whose anxiety score will be higher; motivated voluntary students, or students who must take course and thereby have varying degrees of motivation. It is my hope that by examining the research findings some quantitative implications for language teachers can be found.

The second part of this study will involve two students from group 1 and group 2 (a total of four interviews) who will be interviewed to get a more qualitative and in-depth outlook. All students were made aware of the research through translated consent forms, and all students were kept anonymous to help gain more accurate and authentic data.

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Keywords:

Foreign language learner anxiety,

Situational Anxiety

Debilitative anxiety

Facilitative anxiety

Quantitative

Qualitative

Foreign Language Anxiety Scale was designed (FLCAS).

T-Test

Variance

Likert scale

Extensive Reading and Listening: Why, What and How?

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Oronzo Venturoso is an English instructor from the United States of America (born in New York and studied in San Francisco). He has worked in South Korea as an English Instructor for six years. He has spent the last five years working at Chonnam National University. He graduated in 2004 with a Bachelor of Arts degree from San Francisco State University in History (focusing on European history and classics) and is finishing a Masters degree from Chonnam National University in South Korea in English Education. He possesses certificates in CBEST and TESOL. His hobbies include manual photography, history, museum studies, folklore, political science, historical linguistics, and zoology.