

**LEARNER ANXIETY AND EFL LEARNING: A STUDY OF TERTIARY  
STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS IN TAIWAN**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated Taiwanese university students' and teachers' perceptions of foreign language anxiety in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. The main aims were: (a) to identify the situations, sources, effects of, and coping tactics for the anxiety of Taiwanese tertiary students and (b) to examine tertiary English teachers' perceptions of their students' anxiety and how they deal with it. An anxiety scale, the ELCAS, was first administered to English major and non-English major students to identify the ten most anxious students in each group for individual semi-structured interviews. English majors' teachers and those of non-English majors also had semi-structured interviews. The students' degree of anxiety was statistically analyzed and revealed by IBM SPSS 20. The interview data from students and teachers were transcribed verbatim, coded, categorized, and then thematized in order to obtain the patterns of their perceptions on the issues. The summarized findings are:

- The English major and non-major students were similar to each other in the situations, effects of, and coping strategies for anxiety, except for the sources of their anxiety.
- The students reported a number of strategies, but most of these only helped them cope with individual anxious situations, not the root causes of their anxiety.
- The English majors and their teachers had similar perceptions of anxiety in class although the latter revealed less specific situations than the former.

- The similarity was also quite high between the non-majors' and their teachers' perceptions of their anxiety. These teachers also reported relatively broader contexts than their students.
- Both groups of teachers employed quite diverse strategies for reducing students' anxiety. Their tactics demonstrated their attempts to address problems at their sources.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTS AND QUESTIONS

***'Emotions occur in response to events in the world and keep our brains focused on critical information, from the threat of physical harm to social opportunities. Emotions motivate us to shape our behaviors to gain what we desire and avoid what we fear' (Aamodt and Wang 2008: 100).***

### 1.0 Introduction

The meaning of anxiety given by the Cambridge online dictionary contains three key words—'uncomfortable', 'nervousness', and 'worry', which appear to indicate the negative features of anxiety. Anxiety itself, based on different situations, has been categorized into three different types—'trait', 'state', and 'situation-specific' (Horwitz et al. 2010: 96). Situation-specific anxiety is the one to which anxiety specific to language learning (language anxiety) belongs. That is, people feel anxious **only when** in the context of second/foreign language learning (MacIntyre 1999: 27). The reasons for language anxiety happening can range from personal matters to the surroundings, but one obvious cause is that learners may have difficulty fully expressing themselves properly in a non-native language (Horwitz et al. 1986: 128). Most studies on language anxiety have demonstrated its negative impacts on the language learning process and achievement (MacIntyre and Gregersen 2012: 103). Nevertheless, it is also true that language anxiety could play a facilitating role in learning, depending on the degree it is experienced and individuals' definitions of its facilitation and debilitation (Scovel

1991: 22). From the above, anxiety clearly has different facets when it comes to second/foreign language learning. Despite its influential characteristics in the context of language learning, successful learners' deeds were the focus of attention when researchers of second language acquisition (SLA) started to shift their attention to individual differences between language learners.

Scholars in SLA have found since the 1970s that there are always some students who can learn a language well no matter how they are taught in class. Therefore, the research focus in SLA has switched to emphasizing individual learner differences since then (Brown 2000: 123). Discussions of individual differences have been focused on aspects, such as learner beliefs, strategy selection and use, motivation, etc. Early research in the 1970s (Rubin 1975, Stern 1975, Naiman et al. 1978) attempted to look for the clues to being 'a good/successful language learner' by exploring learner differences. They then tried to generalize the learning patterns/features of successful learners and suggested that those who were poor at learning a language might take those as references when learning. Arguably speaking, whether an individual difference is good or bad largely depends on its perceived effectiveness or helpfulness for an individual's learning.

The research into individual differences is, in fact, quite dynamic. In particular, there are many studies looking at learner strategies or motivations, which are associated more with 'what helps learning'. With its negative connotations, language learning anxiety is, however, relatively less focused on. One reason may be related to the late

emergence of a definition of anxiety specific to language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) could be the first to justify the importance of anxiety in the field of SLA. They not only defined and conceptualized language anxiety, but also developed a language anxiety-specific questionnaire to examine learners' degrees of anxiety and its effects on their language attainment. Furthermore, Young (1991a) listed six major sources of language anxiety, which will be discussed in detail in the chapter of literature review. Following from the discussion of the sources, situations, and effects, researchers have only recently begun to probe into the ways in which learners cope with the feelings of anxiety in class. Moreover, there are even researchers, but still few, looking into teachers' perspectives of learners' anxiety in learning a foreign/second language. Nevertheless, more discussion of the latter two topics is still needed to develop a better understanding of it.

According to my search for language anxiety literature, I have found that most studies are written by western scholars and conducted in a quantitative way. In Taiwan, there seems to be relatively little research dealing with the issue of anxiety about language learning. Even though there is some work in this area, most of the subjects are students in primary or secondary schools rather than at universities (Kao and Craigie 2010: 50). Moreover, FLA related studies have been used to focus on one or two aspects of anxiety and therefore only give partial knowledge of it. Except for comparisons of anxiety levels, there is seemingly no research comparing and contrasting the perceptions of the various dimensions of anxiety of two different groups of people, e.g. English majors vs. non-majors or

students vs. teachers, as in the present study. In addition, since FLA literature has maintained its focus on learners, teachers' experiences of learner anxiety are scarcely researched, much less how they address the problem. Thus, the purpose of the study proposed here is to depict a thorough picture of Taiwanese tertiary students' foreign language anxiety in the context of the English (as a foreign language) classroom from both students' and teachers' perceptions. The specific aims in this study are (a) to identify the situations, sources, effects of, and coping tactics for the language anxiety of Taiwanese tertiary students and (b) to examine tertiary teachers' perceptions of their students' anxiety and the ways in which they deal with it. In line with the purpose and aims of this project, five research questions are proposed as follows:

1. When do Taiwanese tertiary students of English major and non-major feel anxious in their English class?
2. What are the sources of anxiety of the students in question?
3. What effect does feeling anxious have on the students in question?
4. How do the students cope with feelings of anxiety?
5. To what extent are teachers aware of students' anxiety and how do they deal with it?



### **1.1 English language education in Taiwan**

The possession of English ability has been emphasized in almost every walk of life in Taiwan, especially study and work (Chen and Hsieh 2011: 71). For instance, applicants to a university's non-English departments may be required to provide a certificate of English proficiency, or candidates for a non-English related job still need to be equipped with a certain level of English. Although English is recognized as a foreign language (EFL) in society, this appears to be more important than Taiwan's domestic languages in a sense. That is, the people's obsession with and the government's emphasis on (learning) English remain high, and an individual's English proficiency almost determines their competitiveness in different aspects of life. Several scholars even describe the phenomenon with such terms as 'English fever' (Krashen 2003: 1), 'national obsession' (Liu 2002: title), and 'whole nation movement' (Chern 2002 cited in Chen 2013: 158). This may be explained better from the profit generated by the English language teaching (ELT) industry in Taiwan. The market intelligence center's report in 2004 revealed that the ELT industry itself, based on the Ministry of Education's (MOE) estimations, made 20-25 billion New Taiwanese Dollar output value (approximately 42 million GBP) each year (Chen and Hsieh 2011: 71). Nevertheless, English learning in Taiwan was not officially part of the primary level of education until 2001.

Since martial law was lifted in 1987, the government has carried out a series of domestic reforms in the economy and education. Taiwan, as an island, always relies heavily on international trade with

other countries (Bureau of Foreign Trade 2015). Therefore, the nation has been enthusiastically attempting to become a member of different international organizations, and become sensitive to the phenomena of internationalization and globalization. Chang states that the government is fully aware that the English language has become the dominant language or a lingua franca in international communications. In order to strengthen the competitiveness of the country in the global market, enhancing the English proficiency levels of citizens is always at the top of the agenda for the State (2006: 3; Chen 2013: 158; Lin 2003: 2; Lee 2007: 95; Li 2012: 4). Therefore, English courses in Taiwan have now been set up at different levels of education from primary school to university.

The year 2001 was the turning point for Taiwan's English education because, before then, Taiwanese people, generally speaking, started learning English at the age of 13 in junior high school. This change is part of the reforms listed in the MOE's newly launched curriculum for primary and junior high education—'The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum for Elementary and Junior High Schools' (Chern 2010a: 1; MOE 2008a). With the pressures of globalization and citizens' expectations, people in Taiwan had been officially required to begin their English learning at Grade 5—the age of 11. In 2005, the government further lowered the age when English instruction should begin to Grade 3 (Chen 2013: 158-9; MOE 2008a). Primary students received two hour English lessons every week at most (Lee 2007: 120). Nevertheless, many cities have not fully followed the policy as the local education bureaus have the right to make (moderate)

adjustments, i.e. the starting grade and hours of instruction (Chang 2006: 5; Chern 2010a: 2; Lin 2003: 11). According to Dai (2011: 1), more than 75% of primary schools have now implemented English instruction from Grade 1 on, and learning hours range between one hour and three hours per week (p. 5). As the curriculum involves two phases of education, different emphases are put on the development of students' English ability relative to their respective levels of schooling. Nevertheless, the teachers still need to aim at improving students' four skills of English—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—along the journey. Primary school students are specifically given training in listening and speaking abilities with reading and writing interwoven opportunely. As described by Chang (2006),

In nature, English education in primary schools enhances students' interest through various kinds of fun activities like singing songs, playing games, and telling stories. In the aspect of ability cultivation, ideally speaking, the four skills [should] be equally emphasized. However, due to the constraints of the number of hours for teaching and of students in every class, most [of the instructions] can only focus on listening and speaking skills (pp. 8-9).

In other words, students at the primary stage are probably more skilled in listening and speaking than reading and writing in English.

Regarding the second phase (Grade 7-9), there are some alterations to the curriculum for English as a subject in junior high schools although the knowledge learnt in the first phase is regarded as the foundation. More precisely, the students need to spend three or

four hours learning English every week (Kaohsiung Municipal Jhong Jheng High school 2014). The teachers are asked to pay particular attention to strengthening students' practical abilities:

Apart from the continuation of instruction on the four skills, the emphasis is put more specifically on the practical ability to use English. [Students] can bring its instrumental function into play to absorb new knowledge (MOE 2008a: 1).

However, English education between Grade 7 and 9 has been long associated with being test-oriented and memorizing grammar and vocabulary. This consequence is believed to result from the high school entrance examination. Chang (2006) points out that most teachers consider their primary objective in teaching is to help their students achieve higher scores in the examination, which, therefore, shapes how they carry out their teaching (p. 9). In complete contrast to primary English education, students in junior high schools have to confront many different kinds and scales of tests and devote themselves mostly to reading, learning grammar, and memorizing vocabulary (Chang 2006: 9; Chen 2010: 51; Chen 2012: 166; Lee 2007: 100; Li 2012: 15). These dramatic changes have been claimed to cause the students, especially freshmen, problems of adapting to new learning requirements and focus (Chang *ibid.*).

After completing junior high school, students can choose to attend a 3-year general high school or vocational high school, both of which are generally called senior high school. English is still a compulsory subject in both schools. Based on the respective

curriculums from the MOE (2008b; 2009), students in the former have four hours of English lessons each week, whereas those in the latter have two hours of lessons per week. (One or two hours of elective courses may be additionally offered to students to strengthen their specific English abilities—either listening and speaking or reading and writing.) Aside from the four skills and practical ability, students of both schools need to train to acquire the ability of critical thinking in the English language. Nonetheless, the real instruction situation here is quite similar to or even more serious than that in junior high school as the students will be faced with the university entrance examination in three years. The results of English subject tests usually play an influential role in entering their ideal department and university. Chen (2010: 51) vividly describes and comments on this scenario:

It's even so in senior high school. About the course, reading becomes longer and there is more vocabulary, so teachers' teaching always embraces grammar instruction and question explication. Due to the entrance exam, teachers are afraid that if they do not teach these, their students will have difficulty answering questions in exams. Students are worried that if they do not memorize [grammar and vocabulary], they will get lower scores. Consequently, English lessons turn out to be a difficult and terrible grammar and vocabulary course.

It is argued that the modes of instruction in junior and senior high schools are contributing factors to the alarming situation that English competence in Taiwan is relatively inferior to other Asian countries (Li 2012: 15).

Almost all students will continue to study at a 4-year comprehensive or technological university at the age of 18. After they attend the university entrance examination(s), over 90% of the candidates can be recruited into one of the higher education institutions (Lin 2014). Tertiary students in Taiwan still have English classes (English for general purposes, EGP) to take as they are school-wide required courses (Her et al. 2013: 9). Ability grouping is usually applied to English courses at universities in Taiwan (Liu 2008: 219). Since higher education in Taiwan is academically autonomous, there is no curriculum planned by the MOE for it. Therefore, different universities have demonstrated quite diverse curriculum plans for their courses, such as the course credits awarded, what the course covers, and the number of hours of instruction (Chern 2010b: 253; Lee 2007: 98). In her investigation of 'general English programs at universities in Taiwan', Chern revealed that English courses alone last for at least one year or, at most, four years, and students need to spend between two and five hours with EGP every week. Regarding the coverage of the course, instead of the reading-translation approach of the 1990s,

[the course] has now emphasized the instructions of linguistic communication and practical application... Individual institutions have also...planned distinctive curricula according to students' abilities, and included multiple elective courses in order to meet students' needs for future employment and further education (p. 270).

Nevertheless, tertiary students have been discovered to have such problems like lack of motivation and poor English communicative ability. The former is attributed to the fact that course hours decrease and there is no pressure from the teachers any more (Chang 2006: 12). The latter is ascribed to the grammar- and vocabulary-focused instructions at high school level (Chen 2010: 55). Li (2012: 19) specifically points out the drawbacks of the current system:

The reason for gradual decrease in English proficiency of the current tertiary students is mainly that secondary school English education has considerably centered on test-oriented and grammar instructions. Some schools even give tests intensely every day during year 3 rather than enhance students' English ability via a meaningful instruction of "reading, listening, speaking, writing, and translating".

These are arguably believed to partly cause Taiwanese students' anxiety in speaking English in class. Additionally, in order to enhance tertiary students' English ability, universities were encouraged to establish a graduation threshold of English competency for their students by the MOE (2004) in the Main-axel Plans on Educational Administration (2005-2008). It is estimated that over 90% of the universities in Taiwan have now launched the policy (Her et al. 2013; Lin 2015). That is, the students have to achieve certain levels of English as one requirement for graduation. Because of academic autonomy at tertiary level, individual universities have formulated distinct benchmarks to be achieved within four years (Chern 2010b: 253). Departments at each university can set up different standards

for their own students. If students are at risk of failing to meet the requirement, they will be offered an English remedial course. A pass in this course is equal to that of a proficiency test. Furthermore, students are allowed to take various types of English proficiency tests recognized by their universities to satisfy the demand, i.e. a cross-reference of English proficiency equivalents is provided (Her et al. 2013: 8). A potential worry is that many English courses at universities could turn out to be test-oriented to cope with the MOE's inspection of teaching achievement and the establishment of the graduation threshold (Chern 2010b: 270).

## **1.2 Chinese culture: the four main elements**

Horwitz stresses the importance of culture in the issue of foreign language anxiety (2001: 119) although learners of L2 from different countries may share some similar characteristics in learning; culture itself, with its changeability, should not be taken as 'a universal explanation of any learning and communication behavior' in the classroom (Peng 2014: 31). Nonetheless, as far as my participants are concerned, reviewing traditional Chinese/Confucian (learning) culture may help me interpret some of their behaviors in the classroom. According to Peng (2014), Chinese people, culturally speaking, (1) 'show respect for the teacher', (2) 'learn through memorization', (3) 'have other-directed self', and (4) 'have face concerns' (p. 29). Her explanation of the four aspects is presented and commented on as follows.



Considering the first indicated by the above Chinese scholar, the teacher is seen as an authority and role model for students. S/he is a knowledge giver, whereas students are the receivers. Their learning is mainly through listening to the teacher's lessons attentively. Speaking in the class is allowed only when they are permitted to by the teacher (2014: 29-30). These phenomena are, however, dying out gradually in Taiwan's higher education. Of course, the students still have respect for their teachers, but the former are now more welcome to challenge the latter in terms of knowledge. Moreover, instead of listening to the lessons passively, students are also encouraged to share their ideas and opinions within the sessions. They are also granted the right by the institutions to evaluate their teachers' teaching quality at the end of the course. Generally speaking, many teachers and students interact with each other more like friends or relatives nowadays.

As to the second aspect, Peng points out that 'learning through memorization, imitation, and repetition rather than interaction is another marked feature of the Chinese culture of learning'. This way of learning is considered to be unhelpful for L2 acquisition as the development of SLA has to involve social interaction (2014: 30). Due to the high school and university entrance examinations, Taiwanese (English) education in secondary schools is still quite test-oriented. Critical thinking ability is, therefore, naturally less emphasized. That is, robotic memorization is one of the main strategies used by the students to tackle various subjects. Nevertheless, teachers at university encourage and train their students to think critically and share their thinking. Concerning English courses at university level,

communicative language teaching, emphasizing communication and interaction, is currently the major teaching method employed. With the above changes, although the habit of memorization may not be completely abandoned, university students seem to try to acquire knowledge or skills in manifold ways.

Additionally, the other-directed self indicates that Chinese people normally think from the view of collectivism rather than individualism, which is generally believed to be part of western culture. That is, 'an individual self is incomplete and needs to be understood in relation to the other party' (Sun 1991 cited in Peng 2014: 30-1). As clearly explained by Peng (2014),

other-directed self-construal often makes people inclined to endorse solidarity and social belongingness. Keeping a low profile is a crucial way to stay unified with the community because the philosophy derived from Taoism and Confucianism, *han su*, "being reserved and implicit" and *zhong yong*, "modesty" are, however, indiscernible, practiced in social life...This cultural trait may predispose individuals not to be assertive or display vastly different communication behavior in class (p. 31).

The above cultural concept is still quite apparent in Taiwanese social life, yet people, especially the younger generation, because of the influence of globalization, seem to start behaving differently. They are more individualistic or self-centered, e.g. their likes and dislikes are obvious and they follow their own will in making decisions or taking actions. Nevertheless, the attributes of harmony and modesty are basically still the norms within a group or a class. Therefore, even

though some students are willing to participate in every activity voluntarily, such as answering questions, they may not try to do so. As one of my teacher interviewees (ET02) said, they are afraid to be thought of as 'teacher's pet', i.e. the self in the Chinese context is considered to be 'other-oriented' (Peng, 2007: 251) and 'defined by the surrounding relations' (Gao, 1998: 164).

Lastly, face concern is inherent in both eastern and western cultures. However, it seems to be particularly emphasized in Chinese social life (Hu et al. 2010; Jones 2004). The term refers to the image one presents in public or to the public. More precisely, Gao and Ting-Toomy (1998: 53) define the term as 'an individual's claimed sense of positive image in a relational and network context'. Peng (2014) explains that Chinese people place great importance on face protection. They care about not only their behaviors in front of others, but also others' impression of them. Due to the other-directed self-construal, 'negative attitudes and evaluations from others can impinge on one's face and self-esteem' (p. 31) no matter whether he or she fails an easy task as a prestigious person or breaks societal ethics in a community. Nonetheless, not every situation causes concern about face for Chinese. The main situation for considering the effects on face is 'when there is unpleasant news to be broken' or 'when a difficult matter must be dealt with' (Hu et al. 2010: 109). There is no doubt that people, including students, would like to present a good or positive self-image when with others or their counterparts. I believe that embarrassment is one negative state which everyone tries to prevent from happening in most situations.

### **1.3 My (psychological) experience in learning EFL**

This section functions as a medium of positioning my role in this research. As an experienced EFL learner (and insider), I try to reflect on my learning experience and explain my anxiety in the different stages of this journey. I also expect this to further enhance other learners' perceptions of several potential factors which may influence their language acquisition. This review is considered to imperceptibly influence my approaches and viewpoints in the process of data collection and analysis.

I first learnt English in a supplementary school when in Grade five aged 12. At the beginning, I could not see the point of leaning English, so I did not put much effort into the English class and assigned homework. When my classmates were upgraded to the fourth level, my teacher asked me to stay in the same level since my proficiency was not high enough to acquire more difficult knowledge. Although my parents were angry at me, they tried to tell me that I should be attentive to the class as the tuition fees were expensive and acquiring English could lead me to a better future. Despite my failure in upgrading to another higher level class, after knowing my teacher's praise for my talent for pronunciation, I felt so encouraged that I endeavored to learn English, and finally fell in love with the language. Her positive comment did make me realize my own advantage and feel a sense of fulfillment and believe that I had the aptitude for learning English.

When in junior high school, I always got the highest score in English. I met an excellent English teacher in my second year. She was

passionate in her teaching, and quite cared about students. She gave students support and encouraged them not to give up English. Because of her, I made up my mind to take English more seriously in my life. I had felt quite positive in class over those years.

During senior high school, I was taught by an experienced English teacher. She was demanding, but made our learning in class as pleasant as possible. She believed that vocabulary and grammar were the two key factors which would influence a student's performance of English in the university entrance examination. Therefore, we were asked to memorize vocabulary and phrases through the sentences provided under them every day. We also had one grammar book which provided not only detailed usages of grammar rules, but also exercises at the end of every chapter. Apart from this, my teacher often gave us additional quizzes to help us acquire grammar. Many classmates were annoyed at learning grammar due to its complexity; however, I had a great time with it. Grammar, for me, was so interesting that I wanted to know more about it.

Additionally, we subscribed to an English magazine every month and one or two 'graded readers' every semester in order to strengthen our reading and writing skills. They were all regarded as the materials for our monthly examination. There was no doubt that we had English homework every day to foster our sensitivity to English language. Although the whole process looked heavy, my English ability, especially grammar, was impressively enhanced during these three years.

I also attended English speech contests at school every year. The

reasons for doing so were to cultivate my confidence on stage and to grasp the opportunity to practise English. We were given a topic to prepare for our own speech beforehand, but I often felt nervous before and during the contest because I was afraid to forget everything I had prepared. I tried to calm myself down by drinking water or taking a deep breath before my presentation. Nevertheless, I still sometimes forgot what I wanted to say in the middle of my speech. I stood there, embarrassed, and forced myself to remember the speech content, but the action did not seem helpful. At last, what I could do was to rely on my remaining memory and my own creativity to finish it. Despite my disadvantageous performance, I enjoyed doing this very much as the main purpose was 'to experience, not to win'.

After leaving high school, I became an English major student at university. People around me were from different backgrounds, and even some of them had once lived in an English-speaking country for years. Therefore, most of them could speak English fluently. As an English major student, I was expected to communicate with people and give presentations in English well. Interestingly, most English major students seemed to like commenting on people's English pronunciation and fluency. Those with the better sense of English grammar usually looked for and corrected people's grammatical errors or mistakes in private. I had to admit that I had done both. Nevertheless, what we had done was not to look down upon those who had lower English ability. Those reactions appeared to happen unconsciously, and we only wanted to make our classmates aware of their linguistic drawbacks.

Even though I seemed to have better English ability in my class, my fluency in speaking was a big problem. I always wanted to speak English as fluently and correctly as some other peers. I believed that this was what I should have been equipped with, and people around would evaluate my performance all the time. However, the more I cared about other people's judgments about the fluency and the correctness of my speech, the more I felt stuck in my speaking. Therefore, I would spend some time planning my sentences before speaking up. What was worse, I suddenly became quiet sometimes to hide my weaknesses and worries about other people's potential negative evaluations.

In order to abandon these burdens, I joined the English debating society of my university. Despite the fact that my stage fright had been gradually healed, I was often too nervous at the podium to recognize the noted arguments which my teammates and I developed. I thought that the time limit might be one of the causes and another was about the ineffective teamwork. Nonetheless, the obvious problems were still those mentioned above. I found that those worries had disturbed the development of my English speaking ability since I did not want to take any risks and only cared about something that was not helpful to the completion of my tasks. Thanks to studying in the UK, I am now used to speaking or using English in my daily life without anxiety.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Learning emotions appear to have been relatively less emphasized in SLA although anxiety itself may be the most discussed state among them. Based on the purpose and aims, research questions, and methodology, this study, therefore, attempts to make several contributions to this area of research.

First, the qualitative nature of this study helps to increase the volume of qualitative research into FLA. That is, the stories collected contribute to flavoring the figure-laden literature and improve people's understanding of the emotion itself.

Second, this study does not use the common way of data collection in FLA research—questionnaire or experiment. With the adoption of interview, my participants became active information providers or experience sharers. Consequently, the discussion in this research of different aspects of FLA was based on their own true experiences or perceptions in class. This can provide a relatively accurate, convincing, and vivid interpretation of the FLA related issues.

Third, as this research examined situations, sources, effects of and coping tactics for learner anxiety concurrently, its scope not only draws together the different threads of, but also gives a full account of FLA. There appears to be no study carried out in this manner.

Fourth, this study not merely revealed the components, but also tried to point out the significant ones of each aspect of anxiety investigated. This can provide a more direct, profound insight into the heart of the matters of Taiwanese tertiary learners' FLA and so



students and teachers can deal with these in particular when encountering anxiety related issues.

Fifth, the findings and discussions in this thesis could play an important role in (1) helping tertiary students gain a sound understanding of learning anxiety, (2) raising their sensitivity to the alteration of their emotions in the language classroom, and (3) equipping them with the ability to inspect their own emotional difficulties in learning an L2.

Sixth, the data collected from both English major and non-major students can provide a comprehensive insight into the concerns of university students from various disciplines about learning English in the formal instruction context. Teachers can then take this study as a reference when deciding whether it is necessary to implement different teaching approaches for the teaching of English majors as opposed to non-English majors. Meanwhile, since a placement system was applied to non-majors' rather than majors' classes, the findings can also more or less inform the instructors of what they should pay attention to when dealing with either group of students' learning emotions.

Seventh, the coping strategies for anxiety reported can provide information regarding university students' attitudes towards the arousal of anxiety in class and their ability to take effective action to address their negative learning emotions.

Eighth, the involvement of teacher participants in this study can also provide an in-depth look at tertiary EFL teachers' sensitivity to their students' emotional needs and the strategies they adopted to

deal with the latter's anxiety in classroom situations. Part of this study tried to examine the claim that there is often a gap between students and their teacher in the understanding of the former's learning concerns.

### **1.5 Chapter descriptions**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research study by first discussing individual differences research in SLA and identifying foreign language anxiety as the specific research topic. The purpose and aims of this study are addressed, followed by the five research questions listed above. The relevant background information also included brief introductions to English language education in Taiwan and the Chinese learning culture in general. This chapter then ends with statements of the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 first reviews the literature on general anxiety briefly, such as trait and state anxiety. The focus is then placed on foreign language anxiety itself. Its conceptualization, opposing arguments, sources, and effects are discussed in turn. A discussion of students' coping tactics for and teachers' perspectives of anxiety are also included at the end.

Chapter 3 starts with an introduction of the research philosophical stance of this study. I then discuss the research design adopted, the background of my participants (English major and non-major students and their teachers), and the research instruments for collecting data (questionnaire and semi-structured interview). In addition, the data

collection and analysis procedures are explained in detail so that they can be replicated. Importantly, the ethical issues encountered are also described within the methodology.

Chapters 4 and 5 respectively present the findings of the interviews which I conducted with students and teachers. I report all the themes of each aspect of anxiety and present the significant ones in tables. They are then divided into several sections according to the four aspects of anxiety: situation, source, effect, and coping strategy. Each main section introduces the significant themes, discussing each with a figure containing the theme and its sub-themes, quotes from interviewees, and commentaries for certain excerpts.

Chapter 6 discusses and interprets the qualitative research findings according to the research questions. Specifically, significant themes evolving from each aspect generated from respective groups of students' and students' and teachers' interviews are compared to discover similarities and any differences to identify and focus on matters arising for further discussion.

Chapter 7, as the final chapter, concludes the whole thesis with a summary of the key findings, and then discusses the contributions and the limitations of this study. I also suggest some theoretical implications for tertiary students and teachers of EFL in Taiwan. Some suggestions for future research are also presented.

## CHAPTER 2 LITTERATURE REVIEW

### **2.0 Introduction**

Language anxiety (LA) is a psychological state that may be easily ignored by foreign language teachers in a language classroom if the manifestations of students' anxiety are not 'obvious physical symptoms' (Ohata 2005: 146). Teachers are likely to only focus on how to motivate or help students to learn a foreign language well. However, they may not recognize that students' anxiety levels about language learning can play an important role in the learning context in terms of their potential negative effects on language learning or performance (Gardner et al. 1992; Young 1991b). Due to its multidimensional characteristics (Liu and Jackson 2008), the research on language anxiety has extended its focus from situations (e.g. Horwitz et al. 1986) to sources (e.g. Young 1991a) and effects (e.g. MacIntyre and Gardner 1994). More recently, some researchers (e.g. Kondo and Yang 2004) have also looked at how students themselves cope with their own anxieties about L2 learning. In the meantime, teachers' perspectives/perceptions about their students' language anxieties have also drawn scholars' attention (e.g. Ohata 2005) to understand whether teachers recognize that there is an issue and/or have offered students any support. In the following sections, such issues as situation, source, and effect will be explained in detail to present a clear picture of what constitutes language anxiety.

## **2.1 Concepts of anxiety**

According to Spielberger (1983: 1), 'anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system'. Anxiety, generally speaking, describes a human's worry about or fear of certain objects (in a setting). Specifically, there are three types of anxiety: trait, state, and situation-specific anxieties (Horwitz et al. 2010: 96). Anxiety associated with a particular situation or context can be further categorized as either debilitating or facilitating anxiety.

Trait anxiety is the psychological state of a person's apprehension in any situation. As mentioned by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a: 87), high trait anxiety can make those with it become worried in many different situations. State anxiety 'is a blend of the trait and situational approaches' (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991a: 90), but its focus is on the anxiety itself, not the situation. In particular, 'state anxiety is the transient, moment-to-moment experience of anxiety as an emotional reaction to the current situation' (Dörnyei 2005: 198), such as before giving a performance. As for situation-specific anxiety, anxiety about a particular situation is the main concern, e.g. language anxiety in a language learning classroom, that is to say, 'a person may be nervous in one situation but not in others [another]' (Chen 2007: 12). Importantly, the concept of 'situation anxiety' can be quite broad (e.g. 'shyness') or narrow (e.g. 'stage fright'); hence, the context should be clearly clarified when conducting research (MacIntyre and Gardener 1991a: 91). The context investigated in this study is Taiwanese students' anxiety about learning activities and situations in their

university English language classrooms.

Although anxiety suggests debilitating emotions, these are not always considered to have a negative effect on an individual's language performance. Scovel (1991) discussed Kleinmann's (1977) study and suggested that anxiety should not merely be classified as 'either high or low amounts'. Kleinmann investigated the influence of 'facilitating' and 'debilitating' anxiety on the learning of English (identified by Oxford (1999) as 'Helpful' and 'Harmful', respectively) in his study. His results showed that students with facilitating anxiety were, in fact, able to use English structures that they may have preferred to avoid in their language. However, those with debilitating anxiety probably would not attempt to use certain structures due to their syntactical differences from their own language. Apparently, those with facilitating anxiety were more willing to take risks, which plays an important role in the language learning process and ultimate language ability and achievement (Cervantes 2013: 433).

From above, facilitating anxiety is 'an increase...which results in improved results', while debilitating anxiety is 'an increase...which leads to poor performance' (Young 1991b: 58). As Scovel (1991: 22) suggests,

A good performance...depends on enough anxiety to arouse the neuromuscular system to optimal levels of performance, but, at the same time, not so much that the complex neuromuscular systems underlying these skills are disrupted.

In other words, whether anxiety functions positively or has a negative

effect on the learning process depends on the strength of the emotion itself aroused and the results produced by it.

According to Jones (2004: 31), both facilitating and debilitating anxiety are possible in the same learners, but it seems that debilitating anxiety is relatively more common. Nonetheless, Horwitz (2014) stresses that facilitating anxiety is a dangerous idea as it may give language teachers an excuse to make students more anxious. She (1990, cited in Oxford 1999: 60-1) argues that only simple learning tasks—rather than complex ones like language learning—can benefit from anxiety. That is, those dealing with difficult tasks may not be able to tolerate highly negative emotions because the inherent difficulties in the process are probably already anxiety-provoking. The relationship between anxiety and learning performance is hence generally reported as negative (Horwitz 2008: 9; MacIntyre and Gregersen 2012: 103).

## **2.2 Conceptualization of foreign language anxiety (FLA)**

Students' anxiety has been a critical issue in the field of education and language learning. Since the 1960s and 70s, anxiety about foreign language learning has started to attract scholars' attention, for some learners appear to have 'feelings of apprehension, tension, and even fear' when it comes to learning foreign languages (Ortega 2009: 200). The two approaches to this issue are discussed below.

The earlier approach to this topic seems to ignore language related issues, e.g. learners need to communicate in a non-native language while learning it and that the process of learning a language

is different from learning other subjects. Difficulties or negative experiences encountered in the learning process may contribute to feelings of anxiety about learning the language. Some researchers thought, at first, that a learner's anxiety trait influenced his/her language learning, i.e. it was 'a manifestation of other more general types of anxiety' (Horwitz and Young 1991: 1). Therefore, they attempted to study how general anxieties interacted with language learning. During the process, different anxiety measures were employed to see whether anxiety did affect a language learner's learning achievement. Unfortunately, various results were produced and led to no solid conclusions about this relationship. One example, usually mentioned by researchers (e.g. MacIntyre 1999; Scovel 1991), is the project carried out by Chastain in 1975, which reported quite different results on the correlations of anxiety—positive, negative and null—with three languages: French, German and Spanish. The relationship was therefore difficult to interpret since anxiety facilitated, debilitated, and had no effect on language performance within the same study at the same time (MacIntyre 1999: 26).

The reasons behind these mixed results are that various types of anxiety measures (Chastain: test anxiety and trait anxiety scales) were used and no clear definition of language anxiety was proposed in the research to interpret the role it plays in L2 learning (Horwitz et al. 1986; Horwitz 1986; Price, 1991; Scovel 1991; Young, 1991a). This complex situation in terms of the above findings, definition, and measurement indicates how 'anxiety itself is neither a simple nor well-understood psychological construct' (Scovel 1991: 17).



The later approach connects anxiety directly to language development or the learning process (in the classroom). This suggests that FLA is a type of anxiety only experienced in language learning and/or use. That is, those who have FLA only feel anxious when in language learning situations. In more specific terms, it relates to a language learner's 'feelings of worry and negative, fear-related emotions associated with learning or using a language that is not an individual's mother tongue' (MacIntyre and Gregersen 2012: 103) and 'is especially relevant in a classroom where self-repression takes place' (Gregersen and MacIntyre 2014: 3). MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) and MacIntyre (1999) specifically describe the process of formation of FLA. Encountering difficulties is common at the start of language learning. When learners begin to feel anxious about those experiences, state anxiety will be generated in them. If this anxiety keeps occurring, they will then associate it with the L2. The link between anxiety and the L2 develops so-called foreign language anxiety (p. 272; p. 30-1).

From this viewpoint, FLA appears to be thought of as different and distinct from other more general anxieties. In order to validate this claim, Horwitz (1986) examined the relationship between foreign language anxiety and general anxieties (communication apprehension, fear of negative apprehension, test anxiety, and trait anxiety). The results showed that foreign language anxiety significantly (positively) correlated only with test anxiety (moderately) and trait anxiety (weakly). That is, foreign language anxiety is apparently distinguishable from general anxieties even though some variance may be shared between them (Horwitz et al. 2010: 97). Moreover,

MacIntyre and Gardner conducted a factor analysis on a number of anxiety scales in 1989 and 1991. The results from both studies showed that language (communicative) anxiety was one of the factors identified and the only factor, rather than general anxiety factors, which negatively correlated with foreign language performance, i.e. the higher the anxiety, the worse the performance. These findings seemingly suggest that the anxiety involved in learning or using a non-native language is different from general anxieties where the language used is not the main factor.

Although language anxiety was shown to be unique and different from other anxieties, an appropriate anxiety scale specific to foreign language learning was still the major concern. According to MacIntyre (1999), the earliest language anxiety related scale appeared in Gardner et al.'s Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for language learning. Through their examinations of the correlation between AMTB and foreign language performance, they reported that language anxiety truly had a negative effect on learning achievement. Despite this promising finding, AMTB remains a measuring tool mainly used to discover a language learner's attitude and motivation rather than his/her anxiety level in a language learning context. Horwitz et al. therefore developed a specific language anxiety scale in 1986—Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)—in order to infuse new insights into this area, recognized as 'a turning point in language anxiety research' (MacIntyre and Gregersen 2012: 105).

Horwitz and her associates (1986) combined the above two approaches and theoretically proposed three related anxieties to

foreign language anxiety itself in accordance with its focus on 'performance evaluation within an academic and social context' (p.127). These are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Despite the fact that these fears have been borrowed from a general context and transferred into a specific language learning context, FLA has become recognized as a unique type of anxiety, i.e. 'a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process' (1986: 128).

The first, communication apprehension, is concerned with 'interpersonal communications'. Horwitz et al. (1986: 127) define it as 'difficulty in speaking in dyads or groups or in public, or in listening to or learning a spoken message' in the target language. Simply put, people are worried about whether they can understand someone speaking the foreign language or make themselves understood in that language. One of Price's (1991) participants explained that '...it's [her French] not really fluent enough to carry on anything meaningful. I feel extremely uncomfortable speaking'.

In a foreign language classroom, the teacher normally asks his/her students to communicate with one another in the target language to both enhance their speaking ability and create an authentic language environment. There is no doubt that they also have opportunities to give presentations in the target language individually or in groups. Although these activities are common in the language learning context, some learners still feel anxious about or when carrying them out.

In her study on anxiety levels in relation to certain class activities in Spanish lessons, Young (1990) found that activities with 'high self-exposure' were rated relatively higher on the anxiety scale and four out of the five reported as causing high anxiety were speaking-focused activities— 'presenting a prepared dialog', 'making an oral presentation or skit', 'speaking', and 'role-playing a situation spontaneously' at the front of the class (p. 547). Therefore, she concluded that students experienced higher anxiety in speaking the target language, and performing at the front of the class was a major source [situation] of anxiety. Similarly, Chinese tertiary learners of English in Liu's (2006) study got especially uncomfortable when called on to answer questions or speak and when giving presentations. These findings support Gregersen and MacIntyre's (2014: 4) argument that 'speaking was [is] the skill that seemed[/s] to generate the most worry and concern in language learners'. Because people are not using their mother tongue to communicate or make a presentation, they may be worried about whether they can fully understand others or make themselves understood in the target language (Aida 1994: 157). In other words, it is a struggle for language learners to achieve the same level of fluency in the L2 as in their L1.

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that those having difficulty presenting individually or speaking in groups are likely to 'experience even greater difficulty speaking in a foreign language class where they have little control of the communicative situations and their performance is constantly monitored' (Horwitz et al. 1986: 127). As a result, highly apprehensive learners may keep silent in class or, more

seriously, be absent from class to avoid the anxiety-making situations.

Testing is always a part of classroom activity (Aida 1994: 157) since it is one of the most direct ways for teachers to find out how well students have learnt from their teaching. Due to the fact that some students frequently expect themselves to fail language tests, it is not surprising that they are often too worried or nervous to remember the answers to questions when taking tests. Based on this, Horwitz et al. (1986) suggest that test anxiety is also one of the factors of FLA, the definition of which is 'a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure, unrealistic demands on self, and perfectionism about language test results' (pp. 127-128). Furthermore, test anxiety can be understood from two dimensions—'emotionality' and 'cognitive test anxiety'/'worry' (Cassady and Johnson 2002: 271-272). People with the former have negative physiological reactions to testing contexts, such as increased heart rate and nausea. Those with the latter have task-irrelevant, self-related concerns, e.g. feeling unprepared for tests or lower confidence in performance. This has a more debilitating impact on performance as a result of cognitive distraction.

Zeidner (1998: 52-56) elaborates further on the definition of test anxiety above by categorizing test anxious students into six types. They are

- Deficit study and test-taking skills:

Some learners use inefficient strategies to address their study and tests so that they have difficult time in taking these, and the result is normally negative.

- Anxiety blockage and retrieval problems:

Although some students are well-prepared, their inability to bear stress prevents them from retrieving knowledge acquired during test taking. Therefore, the outcome is poor.

- Acceptance of failure:

An individual always fails to prepare well for and in tests, so they become used to disadvantageous results, with their acceptance of low academic ability. Whenever taking tests, they cannot help thinking that failure is definite.

- Avoidance of failure:

These students endeavor to prepare for tests to maximize the possibility of success and minimize that of failure as this symbolizes their low ability. Nevertheless, this tension could accumulate and negatively influence their preparation for and performance in the test.

- Self-handicapping:

Some students intend to attribute their poor performance in a test to their anxiety during test taking, making less effort for preparation, or avoiding evaluative situations rather than intelligence.

- Perfectionism:

This type of students requires themselves to reach high or unrealistic standards from themselves or others and do not allow their performance or test score to be less than perfect. This demand normally makes them too anxious to perform well in the context.

Importantly, Horwitz et al. remind us that oral tests may potentially arouse test anxiety and communication apprehension at the same time. However, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989; 1991c) argued that FLA should not include test anxiety as it is linked to general anxiety in factor analysis. Even though this is the case, the scholars above did not compare the items in a general test anxiety scale with those in FLCAS because these are specific to the language learning context. Moreover, it is reasonable to associate test anxiety with foreign language (classroom) anxiety due to the fact that there are always tests or quizzes taking place in a language classroom. In the light of these concerns, it seems too early to exclude test anxiety from FLA factors.

The third, fear of negative evaluation, is 'apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively' (Watson and Friend 1969 cited in Horwitz et al. 1986: 128). Within a language classroom, the teacher is the only fluent speaker who continuously assesses his/her students' language performance; peers are also likely to be or regarded as evaluators, whose comments or reactions can touch students' nerves (*ibid.*). A language learner may thus be concerned about how other people evaluate their language ability and/or performance when using the target language in the learning context.

As Price's (1991) anxious students of foreign languages at the University of Texas at Austin responded, having to speak the target language in front of their peers was their greatest source of anxiety

[one of the serious anxiety situations] since they were all afraid of 'being laughed at by the others' or 'making a fool of themselves in public'. Similar to the above, most of Young's (1990: 545) high school and university learners of Spanish agreed with the statement that 'they would be more willing to volunteer answers if they weren't afraid of saying wrong things' in their questionnaire. These activities apparently require the learners to expose themselves to public scrutiny, i.e. 'conspicuousness' (Daly 1991: 9) or 'high self-exposure' (Young 1990: 547). It seems reasonable to infer that dislike of (high) self-exposure suggests concerns about others' reactions and/or fear of negative evaluation from others because listeners may also be judging how well they (can) perform or express themselves in their limited L2.

Furthermore, Williams and Andrade (2008) discovered that the most often reported language anxiety by their Japanese university students of English was 'fear of making a bad impression' and 'receiving negative evaluation' from their peers/teachers. In Kitano's (2001) quantitative study of the relationships between anxiety and fear of negative evaluation and self-rating speaking ability of American university students of Japanese, it was found that fear of negative evaluation also positively and significantly correlated with degree of language anxiety, i.e. the higher, the stronger. Apart from communication apprehension and test anxiety, language learners with these fears and worries may give others the idea of their being too 'concerned with the "appearance" of their communication attempts' (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002: 563).



As mentioned above, Horwitz and her associates (1986) and Horwitz (1986) filled gaps in the literature by not only conceptualizing FLA, but also developing a FLA scale, the FLCAS. The items for the FLCAS were collected from students' reflections on their anxiety experiences, learning skill counselors' experiences with anxious language learners, the authors' experiences with their anxious students, and previous instruments used in different studies. The scale consists of 33 items with positive and negative statements, e.g. 'I feel confident when I speak in the foreign language class' or 'I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class'. Under each statement, a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, was utilized to measure the anxiety level in a foreign language classroom.

The above scale is generally employed to examine the anxiety level of second/foreign language learners in the classroom context due to its high reliability and validity (c.f. Sparks and Ganschow 2007: they argued that what FLCAS measures is a learner's language ability rather than their anxiety level). FLCAS reliability and validity has been widely examined in the context of both eastern and western languages and a variety of populations, and the results indicate that the FLCAS does achieve its purpose of measuring anxiety level in different situations. According to Horwitz (1986), the questionnaires collected from 108 American university learners of modern languages revealed that the internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .93, and test-retest reliability in an eight week period was  $r = .83$ ,  $p = .001$ .

As most studies put their focus on western languages (e.g. Spanish and French), Aida (1994) attempted to re-examine Horwitz et al.'s FLCAS in a non-western language with students of Japanese at the University of Texas, Austin. Her report revealed similar results to Horwitz et al.'s in internal consistency and test-retest reliability (over one semester) tests—.94 and  $r = .80, p < .01$ . This shows that FLCAS can be employed to test the anxiety level of learners of non-western languages. In addition, the FLCAS has been used to measure the stability of anxiety across different languages.

In their project, Rodriguez and Abreu (2003) recruited 110 Venezuelan students who were simultaneously learning English and French from two western universities in Venezuela since this sampling made sure that the students had the same learning status, and they were randomly placed in the two language classes. The participants' anxious feelings—the FLA construct—directly proved to be stable across both languages. The FLCAS used here also indicated its high internal consistency reliability (.90) and moderate construct validity ( $r = .44, p = .001$ ).

#### 2.2.1 Language coding deficits/differences hypothesis (LCDH): another approach to FLA

From the discussion above, foreign language anxiety is considered a contributing factor to poor language achievement. Other scholars, however, argue that anxiety is a consequence of poor language learning. A significant difference between these two, apart from the cause-or-effect dispute, is that the former considers language

learning anxiety to be a complicated construct, whereas the latter appears to attribute anxiety only to cognitive deficit. The main ideas of these arguments are detailed below.

Sparks and his colleagues (e.g. 1991; 1999) have proposed the Language Coding Deficits/Differences Hypothesis (LCDH) and addressed the roles of affective variables in language learning, such as language anxiety, from a different perspective. They suggest that language anxiety may be the consequence of difficulty with foreign language learning, mainly caused by the learner's poor native language skills, especially phonological and syntactic aspects (1991: 10). To put it another way, they emphasize the effect of the cognitive deficit on foreign language attainment, but dismiss the possibility of affective factors like anxiety as the cause of learning difficulties. The study below explains how the scholars above supported their hypotheses/arguments.

Ganschow et al. (1994) divided their students of Spanish in an American university into three groups: low, average, and high anxiety levels. They compared their native language ability, foreign language aptitude, and some demographic variables and examined the correlations between the variables involved. Generally speaking, low-anxiety students got higher scores than high-anxiety ones in L1 ability and FL aptitude. When the participants were grouped into two (high and low) by their phonological results in L1 measures to compare their foreign language grades, the results clearly showed that the 'high' group indeed got higher grades than the 'low' group, i.e. L1 phonological ability appears to influence foreign language

achievement. In addition, they asked their high and low anxiety students to reflect on their attitude towards learning English. Forty out of 101 in the high anxiety group considered it easy to learn, whereas 61 considered it difficult. For low anxiety students, 59 out of 73 found it easy, while 14 found it difficult. The researchers suggested that the 61 students were more likely to be highly anxious due to L1 (English) learning difficulties, which influenced their L2 (Spanish) learning.

Although the study did not directly indicate that anxiety was a consequence of poor foreign language skills, it did suggest that L1 ability possibly affects foreign language performance. Nevertheless, the researchers appear to have tried to examine the relationships between these factors and did not demonstrate their interactional development process. That is, they failed to explain how anxiety turns out to be 'consequence' and why anxiety has no further effect on an individual's language learning.

In relation to anxiety-as-a-cause argument, the above hypothesis apparently seems to (1) only consider the cognitive aspect of language development, (2) attribute the formation of anxiety to only one factor, (3) ignore the effect of negative emotions on language learning, and (4) take no account of the fact that emotions fluctuate over time. Its developers arguably oversimplify the complexity of human emotions and the process of language learning, and disregard learners' experiences within the learning context. Most importantly, 'emotions occur in response to events in the world' (Aamodt and Want 2008: 100), which indicates that emotions cannot be separated from human experience on any occasion.

This hypothesis has also been rejected by main scholars of language anxiety, Horwitz (2000) and MacIntyre (1995). Horwitz argues that the hypothesis fails to explain why many advanced/successful language learners still experience anxiety in class, and too many people, including top university students, have reported experiencing language anxiety (p.97). In addition, MacIntyre also pinpoints the lack of taking 'social factors' (e.g. classroom interaction) and 'additional cognitive factors' (e.g. amount of effort involved) in second/foreign language learning into consideration (p. 95-96).

Despite Sparks et al.'s proposal of LCDH, not much research in the area of second/foreign language anxiety has considered this hypothesis as an explanation for poor learning outcomes. In the light of the reflections on the hypothesis, this study adopts the stance that anxiety is a cause, and can influence language achievement. Nevertheless, this is not to say that their view or stance is without merit. As Horwitz mentioned,

researchers associated with the topic of foreign language anxiety have never questioned the possibility that some people are anxious about learning and using a second language because they have subtle, or even substantial, cognitive or first language disability or both. It is my task to establish that some people are anxious about language learning independent of processing deficits and that such anxiety reactions can interfere with language learning (2000: 256).

Chen and Cheng (2004), on concluding their study of the relationship between FLA and learning difficulties (with 1187 Taiwanese university students of English), came to the same view as Horwitz, but their conclusion, based on the relationship between the factors in FLSI-C (Foreign Language Screening Instrument for Colleges) and FLCAS, appeared to be too weak to support Sparks et al.'s hypothesis since their general 'developmental history of learning problems' factor rather than 'Chinese learning history' factor strongly predicted their students' language anxiety. Notwithstanding the other anxiety-predicting items were 'English learning history' and 'classroom learning characteristics', it seems more reasonable that these two sources of anxiety indirectly affect students' current English learning.

As their students had been learning English for years, their situation may be better explained from MacIntyre and Gardner's point of view, i.e. that anxiety (or other affective variables) leads to poor English outcomes, which, in turn, aggravate the level of anxiety (see 1991a: 110). That is, the students had felt more or less anxious about learning English beforehand and acknowledged the consequent negative effect on their learning outcomes. Since they had upgraded to the university level and confronted more advanced English tasks, their previous learning experience and the level of difficulty of tasks made them comparatively more anxious later on. Furthermore, 'classroom learning characteristics' has been perceived as one of the sources of language anxiety proposed by Young (1991a) above. Importantly, the researchers did not manage to clearly indicate that

their participants did have difficulty in learning Chinese at their early age. Based on the above discussion, the predicted anxiety can thus only be regarded as an accumulative effect produced by previous learning experiences.

### **2.3 What are the sources of FLA?**

Foreign Language anxiety itself is not an emerging area of study, and most research projects have focused on its effects rather than its sources. As mentioned by researchers (e.g. Gkonou 2012; Kitano 2001; Yan and Horwitz 2008), what particular sources (and effects) are is unclear, partly because some investigations into learner anxiety only concentrated on one or few factors in their examination of their relationship to learner anxiety. Nevertheless, it is still worth referring to some existing literature to have a broad idea about the currently identified sources of language anxiety. Indeed, these sources can be quite diverse, and range from 'highly personal like self-esteem to procedural like classroom activities and methods' (Oxford 1999: 62).

Specifically, Young's (1991a: 427) review of the literature reveals six potential sources of language learner anxiety as follows: (1) personal and interpersonal anxieties, (2) learner beliefs about language learning, (3) instructor beliefs about language teaching, (4) instructor-learner interactions, (5) classroom procedures, and (6) language testing. Aside from these causes, Daly (1991: 9-10) also suggests that learners are likely to experience anxiety in situations of evaluation, novelty, ambiguity, conspicuousness, and prior experience. (Because these causes are associated with classroom learning, it is

arguable that students may also have some of these concerns in other classes.) These are discussed in the following sections.

### *Personal and interpersonal anxieties*

Personal and interpersonal anxieties, put simply, are concerned with how one views his/her own self and how worried one is about the risk of negative evaluation from others in a foreign language context. The most common situation is where anxious learners negatively evaluate their own self-concepts concerning different aspects of language learning, i.e. exhibit low self-esteem (Bailey et al. 2000; Gkonou 2012; Horwitz et al. 1986; Kitano 2001; Liu and Jackson 2008; Onwuegbuzie et al. 1997; Onwuegbuzie et al. 1999; Price 1991; Yan & Horwitz 2008; Young 1990). Specifically, 'a person can have high or low self-esteem and not a high or low self-concept, because the self-esteem is the resulting evaluation of the perceived self-concept [via one's senses of confidence and worthiness]' (Rubio 2014: 43). In other words, when people do not appreciate who/what they are, either 'negative behaviors' or 'overachieving performances' could be the consequence of having low self-esteem (see *ibid.*: 45-6).

Self-efficacy is another important self found to have a negative relationship to language anxiety. When individuals face a task thinking that they are unable to complete it, anxiety can instantly flare up in them. In her study of Taiwanese tertiary English learners' beliefs and anxiety, Cheng (2001) discovered a strong negative correlation between English self-efficacy and anxiety, i.e. the higher the former is, the lower the latter will be and vice versa. Gkonou's (2012) diary study



which investigated the causes of language anxiety of Greek adult learners of English also revealed that low self-confidence and -efficacy are two major sources of learner anxiety. That is, whether or not an individual has self-belief can affect their psychological response to the context. As Bandura (1997) states, perceived self-efficacy can impact on one's actions to take, diligence, determination, 'resilience to adversity', 'thought patterns', emotions, and attainments (p. 3).

There are four contributors to the formation of self-efficacy—(1) 'enactive mastery experience', (2) 'vicarious experience', (3) 'verbal persuasion', and (4) 'physiological and affective states'. The details of these factors are as follows: (1) the level of (difficult) success is the most significant key to the establishment of self-efficacy. That is, one's efficacy will remain constant when he/she can cope with difficulties to be successful on every occasion, (2) one's similar others, considering age, level, and ability (Mills 2014: 8), are regarded as an indicator of his/her success. For example, when similar peers can do certain activities well, an individual will think that s/he can also do them well, (3) faith in them received from significant others, especially teachers (Mills 2014: 8), can boost the individual's belief in his/her capability of completing a task, and (4) when an individual's physiological and affective states react negatively to a task, s/he may think that the reason is an inability to handle it well, and, in turn, their efficacy could decrease (Bandura 1997: 80-106). From the above, the learners themselves as well as others (in-/out-side the classroom) are both likely to contribute to learner self-efficacy. Self-efficacy seems to require individual perseverance and effort and/or influential others'

encouragement during class participation or certain activities or tasks.

With regard to self-confidence, according to Sampasivam and Clément (2014), it is generally reported that highly self-confident learners had such characteristics as 'experiencing little anxiety when speaking English in class', 'perceiving themselves as being relatively competent in their English abilities', 'having positive attitudes towards their English class', and 'showing motivation and desire to learn English' (p. 24). In other words, the level of self-confidence can significantly influence that of learning affect and the emotions of a learner. It is little wonder that the above positive features tend to be immediately associated with lower levels of anxiety, e.g. highly motivated learners normally feel less anxious in the language classroom (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011: 110; Liu 2012; Liu and Zhang 2013).

Similar to Daly's (1991) 'novelty' and 'ambiguity', an individual's emotional non-acceptance of the ambiguities encountered in learning a language could also increase their levels of learning anxiety. Dewaele and Ip (2013) showed that Hong Kong learners' English ambiguity tolerance and anxiety (and self-rated proficiency and anxiety) not only correlated with, but also predicted each other significantly and negatively, i.e. high tolerance <--> low anxiety.

Additionally, many learners/students maybe define or examine their ability through comparison or competition with other classmates. When perceiving themselves as falling behind or that others perform better, they probably start to doubt their ability in the foreign language. In other words, the pressure could originate from feelings of

inadequacy in terms of their proficiency and/or compares to competent peers. For example, 'I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do' (Horwitz et al. 1986: 130). In their grounded theory-based research with Chinese university students, Yan and Horwitz indeed found that 'Comparison with Peers' directly contributed to the formation of 'Foreign Language Anxiety' (2008: 170). Most of Price's (1991) interviewees believed that 'their language skills were weaker than those of the other students' (p. 106). Kitano (2001), investigating the relationship between self-perceived speaking ability and second language (Japanese in this case) anxiety, reported that learners felt more anxious when they perceived their ability inferior to their peers' and native speakers'. Young (1991a) concluded that those associating themselves with poor ability in a foreign or second language at the very beginning are most likely to suffer from language anxiety or other kinds of anxiety.

In addition, in line with the concept of face above (see Section 1.3), Dörnyei (2007 b: 723) and Jones (2004: 35) believe that the threat to face is inherent in the language classroom since learners must continuously attempt to deal with communication or interaction in the target language—'a severely restricted language code'. That is, learners are likely to risk exposing their weaknesses or making fools of themselves when using the language. Specifically, face concern 'makes it hard for learners to endure the negative evaluation from their peers that may come as a result of their mistakes or social awkwardness' (Jones 2004: 36). It is claimed by Peng (2014: 31) that its influence is especially apparent on the communication behavior of

learners. Arguably, there is little doubt that cultural emphasis on the maintenance of a positive image can increase the sensitivity of those immersed in that culture and concerned about losing face. As explained by Liu (2001),

Growing up in such a collective culture, Asian students tend to care more about their *Mianzi* as their public image, and they tend to withdraw whenever they feel a threat to their *Mianzi*. Refraining from speaking up in class is therefore one of the strategies [instant reactions] Asian students employ [have] to save face, or maintain their *Mianzi* (p. 204).

#### *Learner beliefs about language learning*

Learner beliefs about language learning also play an important role in language anxiety. Beliefs are possibly connected with students' previous experiences of language learning, cultural backgrounds, or life experiences. Importantly, what they believe about language acquisition may influence how they implement and treat their learning (Horwitz 1987). If their beliefs cannot lead to successful L2 learning, negative emotions may result from their disappointment. It is therefore necessary to take students' beliefs into consideration in discussing the sources of learner affect or emotions. As mentioned in Price's (1991) interview study with highly anxious students, many believed that their language ability/performance was poorer than their peers', and that others looked down on them. Moreover, all the students held the belief that a special aptitude was required in order to learn a language (Cheng 2001), which they did not possess. Learners, especially Asian students, often think that they should not speak up

until they know the answer to the question asked by their teacher, which would maintain their face and prevent embarrassment in class (c.f. Horwitz 1988; Jones 2004).

In addition, Horwitz (1988)'s Texas university students of French, German, and Spanish also had the following beliefs: (1) some languages are comparatively easier to learn, (2) learning a language is only about translation between languages, (3) it is important to speak with a native-like accent, (4) It only takes few years to learn a language if one hour a day is devoted to learning, and (5) It takes children less effort to learn a language than adults. Horwitz et al. (2010: 103) and Young (1991a: 428) point out that some beliefs are too unrealistic to lead to a pleasant learning experience. Take the belief of the importance of native-like pronunciation for example, learners may end up frustrated or depressed as they find it nearly impossible for them to achieve. That is, 'when those expectations are not met, these students may develop negative feelings about their personal ability as a language learner' (Horwitz et al. 2010: 103). Horwitz (1987: 126), thus, suggests:

Since student beliefs about language learning are often based on limited knowledge and/or experience, the teacher's most effective course may well be to confront erroneous beliefs with new information. This procedure has been very helpful in my work with groups of anxious language learners.

### *Instructor beliefs about language teaching*

The ways in which language teachers conduct their classes are, to a large extent, based on their beliefs about language teaching. It is likely that their teaching beliefs do not correspond with their students' needs or styles of learning. The learners may feel forced to accept the unproductive modes of instruction if that happens, which undoubtedly creates an unpleasant learning environment. When the teacher attempts to exert full control in the classroom, i.e. a small social context, the students are likely to be learning under pressure. As Young (1991a) mentioned, there are four teacher beliefs which possibly engender learners' anxious feelings: (1) 'I' should act as a corrector whenever 'my' students commit any error, (2) 'I' cannot let 'my' students work in pairs, which will put the classroom out of control, (3) 'I' should be the only one who teaches and talks in the classroom, and (4) 'I' am more like a 'drill sergeant' than a 'facilitator'. From the above, how a language instructor treats the social context can have a strong influence on learners (p. 428). Apparently, teaching beliefs comprising excessive constraints and potential unfriendliness usually have no positive effect on learners' psychological states of learning. Language teachers and their students should therefore reach an agreement on issues, such as what makes an environment ideal for language learning, in order to maintain a 'win-win' situation.

### *Instructor-learner interactions*

There are usually opportunities for the teacher and students to interact with each other in class, especially when the former

comments on the performance of the latter. Error correction may be the most critical and controversial source of language anxiety associated with instructor-learner interactions (Young 1991a: 428-429). Generally speaking, if a language teacher aggressively picks on every error or mistake a student makes in class or always criticizes their performance in activities, it is likely that the student could develop reactions of avoidance, fear, and self-doubt in a language class. One of Price's (1991) interviewees described how her teacher kept correcting her strong native accent when learning French, which made her extremely anxious. During their collection of data on anxious situations for learners, Horwitz et al. (1986) found a few students' reflections that their language teacher's potentially harsh way of error correction was one of their sources of anxiety.

On the other hand, it is interesting to see that Young's (1990) subjects agreed that it was necessary to have some error correction, although they were still worried about making errors. Similarly, some of Koch and Terrell's (1991) participants thought that errors should be immediately corrected. On the surface, the two sets of results seem to contradict each other. However, it could be the methods of error correction, rather than the correction itself, that accounts for students' affective fluctuations in language learning. Hence, 'how to correct', 'when to correct', and 'how often to correct' are possibly the three main questions to take into consideration when correcting students' errors (Young 1991a: 429). Moreover, students may be more encouraged if the teacher gives more positive than negative comments on their performances in class.

### *Classroom procedures*

Anxiety about language learning can also be engendered by the procedures that a language classroom adopts. The design and implementation of classroom procedures are usually derived from the course purpose, the teacher's teaching beliefs/styles, the teaching methods, or the number, levels and ages of students in the class. Young (1991a: 429) proposes that the procedures as a source of anxiety mainly relates to students having to speak in front of others. It is also worth mentioning that learner anxiety is aroused no matter what task they are asked to do in front of the class since 'write your work on the board' is rated as a moderately anxious task (Young 1990: 547).

The way a student is called on to respond to a question can also be anxiety-provoking. The more unpredictable the calling-on is, the more anxious the students will be (William & Andrade 2008) as every individual has an equal chance of being the next one picked on. Furthermore, Koch and Terrell examined the affective reactions of their students who were taught Spanish through the Natural Approach at the university of California, Irvine, to activities and techniques within the teaching method. This teaching method was considered to have a positive effect on learners' anxious feelings. They reported that a few students still regarded certain activities as anxiety-producing, even though most participants considered them to have engendered more comfortable feelings (1991). Based on all these results, a language teacher should adopt a more considerate teaching approach and arrange his/her classroom activities in accordance with their



students' needs in relation to not only knowledge, but also the affective domain as best s/he can.

### *Language testing*

Language testing in a language classroom is a further source of language anxiety. There is almost no doubt that tests or examinations in themselves are frightening enough for candidates, partly because they need to be completed within a time frame and test results usually reflect their academic performance for the course. The components of a test, such as test types, test materials, familiarity with question types, and the magnitude of a test, all have the potential to influence a learner's affect in language learning. In their study of attitudes toward language tests, Madsen et al. (1991, cited in Young, 1991a) discovered that different types or formats of test could lead learners to different degrees of anxiety. In other words, some were particularly anxiety-provoking for language learners. In addition, students normally spend much time practising and reviewing the testing materials or question types they have experienced in class. If their teacher unexpectedly gives an 'unfamiliar' test to the students, they are very likely to struggle and feel upset about the test or themselves (p. 429). Arguably, students' anxiety can also be comparatively higher when taking a test for upgrading, or which otherwise might have a great effect on their future learning.

### *The five characteristics of anxiety-provoking situations*

Daly (1991: 11-2) listed five characteristics of anxiety-evoking situations in his article on communication apprehension based on his own and previous research findings. These are 'evaluation', 'novelty', 'ambiguity', 'conspicuousness', 'prior experience'. In other words, the perceptions of being alone, lacking support from others, and having no control over situations are all possible causes of anxiety in a given situation. A description of each characteristic is below:

- Evaluation:

The feelings of being evaluated in a setting positively correlates with the level of (language) anxiety. The perception that their performance in an L2 is being judged can cause anxiety.

- Novelty:

Anxiety can be engendered when individuals are faced with new situations or people in a setting. When language learners feel familiar with 'the language itself and its culture, people, and literature', their anxiety levels will decrease.

- Ambiguity:

It is normal for people to feel anxious when they have no control over their surroundings. That is, they have no idea what they should do or what is going to happen next in a situation. 'This often happens in second language learning'.

- Conspicuousness:

People can feel anxious if they are the focus of attention in a setting. Situations like speaking on stage, making mistakes or showing incompetency in an activity are likely to cause anxiety in

language learners in the classroom.

- Prior experience:

If someone has always had a negative experience of certain situations or with certain people in a particular setting, they can become anxious about repeating the negative experience when faced with the same situation or people again. People with positive language learning experiences tend to feel less anxious about learning another language or learning the same language at a more advanced level.

It is arguable that one situation can have all these characteristics at the same time, and these may have a stronger influence on the emotions in the context of learning an L2 than in daily life situations as communicating in the L2 needs risk-taking and can be problematic. Therefore, FLA research, including this study, should carefully examine situations which learners find anxiety-provoking to infer the possible causes. For example, speaking L2 on stage can make learners feel conspicuous, and it can be novel for some of them. The presenters may well feel that they are being evaluated on their performances. They are probably unsure how to give a proper presentation in a non-native language. Previous experiences in presenting in their L1 or L2 could have an impact on their feelings about carrying out the activity.

Considering Young's review and the studies cited above, there is little in the literature investigating the sources of anxiety thoroughly, that is to say, most research only discusses a 'one-to-one' relationship. It becomes arguable (1) which factor should receive attention, and (2)

that the understanding of the sources of anxiety could be inadequate. Moreover, many studies used questionnaires or scales to examine the relationship between anxiety and other factors of individual differences. Without the ability to prompt and/or probe, little detailed information was gleaned from learners' responses to a questionnaire. Therefore, a qualitative approach was adopted to make a full inquiry into the above issue and, importantly, to collect participants' actual and detailed responses.

### 2.3.1 Factors associated with FLA

Although anxiety sources have not yet been fully researched, some variables may function in a similar way to the sources mentioned above in telling the story of language anxiety. Scholars (e.g. Onwuegbuzie et al. 1997; 1999) have adopted so many variables to investigate their relationships to language anxiety that they can categorize people who are relatively more likely to become anxious. The variables mostly come from people's demographic information, their experience of the foreign language, or previous academic information. Moreover, some researchers (e.g. Gregersen and Horwitz 2002) attempted to explore the relationships between personality and language anxiety itself. A few results changed from study to study, but there is still an identifiable pattern that can predict a link between the variables and learner anxiety.

In contrast to many researchers who only looked at one-to-one relationships, Onwuegbuzie et al. (1997; 1999) tried to build up a fuller picture of learner anxiety and its associated variables. They

tested more than ten variables, such as gender, age, academic achievement, prior history of visiting countries, and perceived self-worth, many of which relate to their views of different aspects of themselves. Arguably, this probably indicates the influence of an individual's self-perceptions on their emotions when learning (or vice versa). In their study, they recruited 210 university students in different years learning French, Spanish, German, and Japanese respectively at a mid-southern university in the US. They established that there was no statistical difference in the degrees of anxiety among the students of different languages. Therefore, all their responses were examined together. Through a setwise regression analysis, they found that highly anxious learners could be predicted if they had at least one of these characteristics:

female, older, high academic achiever, had never visited a foreign country, had not taken any high school foreign language courses, had low expectations of their overall average for their current language course, had a negative perception of their intellectual ability, had a negative perception of their scholastic competence, had a negative perception of their appearance, had a negative perception of their self-worth, did not like cooperative learning, did not value competitive learning, and had an internal academic locus of control (1997: 6; 1999: 227).

It is apparent that most of these carried a learner's negative self-disapproval, that is, anxious students normally give themselves no credit in various situations. Some of these predictors, related to negative self-perceptions and competitiveness, appeared to be echoes

of the first source of language anxiety mentioned earlier—personal and interpersonal anxiety.

In considering 'did not like cooperative learning', although there was no significant relationship revealed between learner anxiety and attitudes towards cooperative learning, Duxbury and Tsai (2010) still discovered that their Taiwanese university subjects' anxiety was higher as cooperative learning practice was frequently used, which seemed to be partially attributable to its being uncustomary to the learners. Arguably, other reasons could also be because the teacher's grouping means that some students need to work with peers whom they do not know or like or that only a few group members deal with the group task, i.e. the workload is unbalanced. These are several common problems when it comes to working in groups. It can, furthermore, be inferred from the above predictor that people with introverted personalities are comparatively more likely to feel anxious in a foreign language classroom, a social context. However, Liu's (2006) subjects felt relatively at ease when working in pairs and doing group discussions. It is arguable that cooperative learning or working in groups per se is beneficial for individual learning, but the social interaction within the group could be the context where problems occur.

In terms of age, Horwitz et al. (1986) explain the reasons why older people are more likely to be anxious. Since adults normally regard themselves as 'intelligent', 'socially-adept', and 'sensitive to different social-cultural mores', they should be able to communicate in their native language properly. By contrast, when it comes to

communicating in an L2, it becomes another story. This requires their risk taking, and problems can happen anytime due to 'uncertain or even unknown linguistic and socio-cultural standards' (p.128). Moreover,

Because complex and non-spontaneous mental operations are required in order to communicate at all, any performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual's self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic (ibid.).

In other words, L2 learners, especially older ones, may have difficulty using the second language in authentic communication because of the immaturity of their second language ability, which consequently results in foreign/second language anxiety (Gregersen and MacIntyre 2014: 2; ibid.). With the considerations in mind, it is little wonder that adult learners probably have face concerns and/or are fearful of others' negative judgments, both of which have the potential to trigger anxiety in them if they make mistakes or perform badly in class.

Because language learners are often classified into different levels of proficiency, it is interesting to understand whether the language anxiety of students changes with an increase in their language proficiency. Advanced learners, due to their higher proficiency, should feel less anxious in class (Woodrow 2012: 194), but it seems from the study results below that language competence alone may not accurately indicate an individual's level of anxiety. That is, the conditions in the class, such as peer interaction and lesson contents,

are likely to influence the association between anxiety and proficiency levels. Several researchers have shown that there was no significant difference in the degree of anxiety of students at different levels of proficiency (Liu 2006; Onwueguzie et al. 1999; Saito and Samimy 1996). However, when the means of anxiety are looked into by proficiency level, learners at each level did declare different degrees of anxiety. Among Liu's Chinese university students, low-level ones demonstrated the highest anxiety, advanced the lowest, and intermediate moderate. This finding supports Horwitz et al.'s (2010) argument that 'although anxiety is typically associated with beginning [lower-level] language learners, it has been identified in learners at all levels' (p. 100). Moreover, in Saito and Samimy's study with students of Japanese at the University of Texas, the advanced group was the most anxious, whereas the intermediate group was the least anxious. By contrast, the most anxious students in Onwueguzie et al.'s study were in the intermediate group, while the least anxious were in the advanced group. The inconsistency of these results may be attributable to the design of the questionnaires used, classroom learning content, and foreign languages tested.

There were only five items in Saito and Samimy's questionnaire related to language anxiety; however, Onwueguzie et al. utilized the FLCAS, specifically designed to test language anxiety. In addition, Saito and Samimy explained their results from the perspective of the participants' classroom learning content. Since beginning and intermediate groups had similar classroom activities (speaking and listening), the anxiety level dropped when the level of familiarity with



the training content increased in this group. On the other hand, the advanced class focused on writing and reading. The students had to accommodate a dramatic change in skills to be learnt and lost the opportunity to practise speaking. Therefore, they became quite uneasy at this stage of change (p. 245). In terms of Onwueguzie et al.'s study, there was no information about their students' course content, so no way to explain their situation from this perspective. With regard to the languages examined, Saito and Samimy only tested Japanese, while Onwueguzie et al. included French, German, Spanish, and Japanese. It may be reasonable to claim that the findings from the latter research study are more convincing since they employed a questionnaire specific to language anxiety, and also involved students of different foreign languages in the study.

'Ability grouping' seems to also give an insight into the degree of learner anxiety. One advantage of this may be that learning with people with the same level of proficiency makes learners, especially lower level ones, less worried about falling behind. Liu (2008) investigated Taiwanese university students' (N=582) and English teachers' (N=34) attitudes towards ability grouping and its effects on learning via a questionnaire. According to the results considering affective features, both the students and teachers mostly agreed that placement helps decrease pressure and anxiety and increase the confidence and motivation of the learners. Furthermore, unlike high achievers, lower ones strongly supported the above statement. The researcher cited Kulik's (1992) discovery to explain the advanced students' case:

They may become less satisfied with themselves and experience a slight decline in the perception of their ability and self-confidence. Their academic self-concept is likely to decrease due to higher expectations from their teachers and more competition from other counterparts (p. 241).

That is, when an (advanced) learner's higher self is challenged in a seemingly competitive environment, anxiety about learning could also result.

Similarly, Su (2010) researched Taiwanese tertiary students' perceptions of 'English placement practice and instruction'. She collected 452 questionnaires in total. The findings of the first part of her survey also supported Liu's in terms of anxiety. Nevertheless, such states as motivation and willingness to communicate were only agreed by a relatively small population. There was, furthermore, no significant difference in the means between low, intermediate, and high course levels regarding the effect of easing anxiety, which suggests that students at different levels all benefit from ability grouping for anxiety mitigation.

The inconsistent results between these two studies may be attributable to such aspects as different student-teacher interaction or curriculum content, which were not identified by the researchers themselves. Nevertheless, from the perspective of questionnaire design, Liu's scale did not include neutral attitude and so her students needed to make meaningful choices. With a neutral choice in her scale, Su did find that around 50 percent of the population selected 'no opinion' on nearly half of the statements. This points to the problem

that people tend to choose the neutral item if there is one in a questionnaire or scale. Although the current research also uses a questionnaire with a Likert scale as a research tool, the scale provides five levels of anxiety for participants to indicate their emotional experiences in different situations. This requires the participants to select an item where appropriate, and each item carries its own meaning. Of course, this design also corresponds to the purpose of this study— examining students' anxiety levels.

Gender is often a focus of interest in different disciplines, including language acquisition, since males and females are quite different from each other in not only their outward appearances but also their minds. Although Onwuegbuzie et al. (1997) reported that highly anxious people tended to be female and Park and French (2013) that Korean university female students felt much more anxious than male ones of English, different results have been revealed in the literature. Gender itself may play a less important role in learner anxiety than other factors like prior learning experiences and interactions with others involved in class.

In Kitano's (2001) article, only males' data demonstrated a negative and significant correlation between SR-CDs (Self-Rating Can-Do scale) and Japanese anxiety. That is, only male individuals became more anxious as they perceived themselves as incompetent in Japanese tasks. Additionally, Campbell's (1999) study of language anxiety of students of modern languages (between 18 and 21 years of age) at the Defense Language Institute in San Francisco found that a significant difference in anxiety level appeared in the male group. She

successively evaluated students' anxiety before starting an intensive language course (survey 1) and after two weeks (survey 2). The statistical result of survey 2 between men's and women's data revealed that males were comparatively more anxious than females. In comparing surveys 1 and 2, only males' anxiety level significantly increased within the two weeks. It was speculated that other potential variables, such as 'teacher differences' or 'teaching methodology', may have had an influence, but there was no clear clue as to the reasons for the finding—a deficiency, perhaps, due to the use of quantitative methods, which offer no opportunity to probe and prompt participants' responses. It was also suggested that 'detecting the effect of one specific variable on the subjects would require further research' (p. 200) because of the complicatedness of a learning environment. Interestingly, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) and Dewaele and Ip (2013) found no significant difference between men's and women's levels of English anxiety in Japanese university students and in Hong Kong secondary school students (aged between 16 and 20).

Whether the student has spent time in a foreign country can also affect language learning anxiety. Broadly speaking, those who had been to the country where the target language was spoken had comparatively low anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Aida 1994; Matsuda and Gobel 2004). The reason was thought to be likely related to the experience of exposure to the language, culture and people in the country (Aida, p. 163). This seems to suggest that the purpose of visiting and the length of staying in the country are questions which need to be asked and answered when exploring the

connection between anxiety and overseas experience where the target language is spoken, although such experience could also become an emotional burden for the learner.

In contrast, people in Kitano's (2001) project who had spent some time in Japan were comparatively more likely to get anxious as they felt negatively evaluated in the language classroom, although there was also a (smaller) significant correlation between anxiety level and fear of negative evaluation in 'had spent no time in Japan' group. With their strong fear of negative evaluation, those who had been to Japan were conscious of their image as experienced people and thought that they were expected to perform better than the others who had never been there (ibid., p. 558).

Furthermore, Saito and Samimy (1996) discovered an interesting finding in the correlation with language class anxiety. The longer the intermediate students had stayed in Japan, the higher their level of anxiety was. They explained that those students were less anxious at the beginning level since they had experienced the language and culture. However, when they moved to intermediate level, the advantage of their overseas experience might slip away if other peers who had never been abroad caught up with or surpassed them. This situation may have caused students to experience anxiety (p. 247). Arguably, this result was not valid enough since they investigated different students at different course levels, rather than the same students over time. It is difficult to know, therefore, whether the current elementary level students would experience the same situation on reaching the higher level. Moreover, if 'length of time in

Japan' is one of the keys to these students' anxiety level, then the correlation at the elementary level should be (negatively) significant. Yet, that is not the story at all.

In addition to those mentioned above, scholars also have tried to look for other traits and affective factors within language anxiety. By contrast to research using scales, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) examined the relationship between anxiety and perfectionism by conducting an experiment and looking into specific aspects of L2 related perfection. Without adopting a general perfection scale, their study arguably revealed more reliable and valid findings because the measures were specific to second/foreign language learning.

They interviewed the four most anxious and the four least anxious Chilean university students of English about their opinions of their videotaped oral performance. The purpose of this research was mainly to discover what could be further exploited from the perspective of perfectionism in language learning. They invited their participants to comment on their performance, which was audio-recorded and rated by three experienced researchers in terms of 'high personal performance standards and procrastination', 'fear of negative evaluation', and 'error consciousness' as indices of perfectionism.

As the result demonstrated, the most anxious students were rated comparatively high in frequency for each item above. Interestingly, the raters tried to rank the eight students' anxiety levels, and obtained 92 % consistency with FLCAS. The anxious students not only avoided or delayed their foreign language learning, but attempted to avoid the topic related to their videotaped performance.

Learners with perfectionist attitudes apparently neither wanted to expose themselves to nor be reminded of (their) poor or undesirable L2 learning experiences. In addition, they mentioned how peers would negatively evaluate them, and negatively compared themselves with others. As perfectionists, they paid attention to errors and 'lamented' them (ibid.: 566-7), that is to say, they did not allow their image or class performances to be negative or flawed.

As anxious learners may avoid any situations that they think might possibly embarrass them or reveal their inability, some researchers have tried to associate language anxiety with risk-taking, sociability, or willingness to communicate. These learner differences indicate that the process of language learning must involve 'interaction'. It is thus reasonable to infer that when not participating in an interaction-based practice, an individual may experience anxiety. Of course, a learner could easily become anxious or be highly anxious in class if they are unsociable and quiet and do not take risks in their daily life.

Ely (1986) statistically examined the numerical data from his 75 participants, who were university students of Spanish in northern California. In the regression model, Language Class Discomfort (language anxiety) significantly negatively predicted their Language Class Sociability and Language Class Risk-taking. In other words, students with high anxiety levels would have difficulty socializing and taking risks in the foreign language classroom, which can, in turn, influenced their classroom participation, especially for those who were fearful of taking risks. Similarly, Liu and Jackson (2008) tested the

correlation between unwillingness to communicate and English language anxiety in their Chinese university students. Their statistical results indicated a positive relationship between the two. The quieter the students stayed in class, the more anxious they were. They also found the correlations between that and sociability and risk-taking to be negatively significant. Again, a strong negative relationship was revealed in the correlation between foreign language anxiety and these two variables. Therefore, when language learners sit quietly or procrastinate about responding, their teacher may reasonably speculate that they are experiencing language anxiety.

## **2.4 What effect does FLA have on language learning?**

The above review has referred to some effects correlating with language anxiety. No matter what area of learning is influenced, language anxiety, generally speaking, has been shown to play a negative role in language learning. It has manifested not only in poor performance, but also in non-verbal behaviors. Hence, there are still a number of phenomena which could identify language anxiety or other learning difficulties. Following on from the sources of anxiety, its influence on achievement, (social) behavior, and cognition is discussed below.

### **2.4.1 FLA and achievement**

Achievement here includes students' self-perceived language performance, course final grades, and outcome measures. Before some related research findings are discussed, the relationships



between FLA and these results may be inferred from the literature above. The most obvious clue is that language anxiety was negatively associated with sociability, risk-taking, and willingness to communicate. As Horwitz et al. (1986) state, 'second language communication entails risk-taking and is necessarily problematic' (p. 128), which suggests that making progress in the L2 requires constant efforts to try to use the language as necessary. More precisely, Ely's (1986) Level 1 students' oral correctness was positively predicted by classroom participation. Hence, 'the problem of anxiety...represent[s] serious impediments to the development of second language fluency as well as performance' (Horwitz et al. 1986: 127), which results in low proficiency and course grades (Gregersen and MacIntyre 2014: 3; cf. Park and French 2013).

Anxious individuals are more likely to conceive of their language grade as lower, and their actual final grades are probably poorer than those of less or non-anxious learners. The former seem to have low self-confidence in their performance (Sampasivam and Clément 2014: 24); the latter shows what the accumulative effects of anxiety can be on language acquisition. Aida (1994) recruited 96 students of Japanese at the University of Texas at Austin and examined the relationship between their FLCAS results and course grades. The correlation between the two variables was reported as being significantly negative. In other words, the more anxious a student was in the Japanese class, the poorer their Japanese grades were. In a similar way, Saito and Samimy's project in 1996 obtained the result that language class anxiety significantly predicted the final grades of

intermediate and advanced students of Japanese. The anxious students were most likely to receive low final grades.

In addition, Onwuegbuzie et al. reported from their study in 1999 that the strongest correlation was between foreign language anxiety and 'expected final foreign language course average', which also provided the best predictor of FLA. In view of these results, the students' degree of anxiety was higher as their expectation of poor course averages increased. Moreover, those who anticipated receiving poor course grades probably experienced FLA in the classroom.

Although the above correlation analysis cannot tell the casual relationship between foreign language anxiety and the self-perceived or real academic result, the direction of the effect could be explained in either way. It is consequently reasonable to claim a recursive relationship between the two. It is also worth noting that high-anxiety learners probably underestimate their language attainment, whereas their low-anxiety counterparts are perhaps overoptimistic and overestimate their capability (Gregersen 2003; MacIntyre et al. 1997). From these studies, foreign language anxiety certainly has a close relationship to both individuals' expected and actual final course grades.

Not only are the above course grades, but production outcome is also connected with foreign language anxiety. A number of studies about production performance have revealed its being influenced by language anxiety in a negative way (Woodrow 2006). (It is undeniable that language production involves cognitive processing, that is to say, anxiety inhibits cognition processes from functioning well.) Although

some researchers statistically examined this relationship, some did this by conducting an experiment. It is especially important for those adopting the experimental approach to ensure that the participants' anxiety is aroused in the experimental context as this is the key to a valid examination of the effects of anxiety on production. The present study is not experimental and the participants are university learners of English, therefore the above problem is not relevant.

For instance, Young (1991b) examined the relationship between language anxiety and production performance with university students and prospective teachers of French, Spanish, and German. She found that the correlation between anxiety measures and an oral proficiency interview (conversation-based) presented a significant negative relationship, indicating that performance is poorer as the anxiety level increases. However, the significant association disappeared when the effect of the variable of participants' ability was controlled for. The results indicated that her subjects' ability rather than anxiety might be the main factor influencing the oral interview results. It was argued that the subjects' anxiety was not strong enough to inhibit their production since the oral test was not officially administered and had no 'repercussions' for the majors and prospective teachers. Young suggested conducting the same research under the condition of the official administration of an oral interview test, which would likely be more anxiety-evoking to uncover the effect. The study below followed this suggestion and had a different result from the one above.

In her 1992 project with French learners studying at

Southwestern, Phillips looked at intermediate students of French and the effect of foreign language anxiety on their oral examination performance, which contributed to 10 % of the students' total course grade. According to the result, there was a significant negative correlation between anxiety and the oral test score, which also stayed the same even after students' written examination averages were accounted for. In detail, highly anxious students' production was found to have such characteristics as less content, shorter communication units, and fewer dependent clauses and target structures. Although Young's and Phillips' reports may not be compared directly because of the subjects' backgrounds and the formality of their oral tests, Phillips' results indirectly suggest possible anxiety arousal from a formal examination. Furthermore, Phillips' study is more appropriate to illustrate the relationship between anxiety and oral performance within the classroom context as her participants were university students, and the test results were regarded as part of their course grade (Horwitz 2001: 118). This points out that a simulated context needs to be designed as similarly to the real one as possible so that the effect on the participants is similar and the results relevant.

In contrast, Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) attempted to investigate the effect of anxiety on English speech production of young adult Spanish speakers in a special way. In order to elaborate on the impacts, they ensured that some participants were anxious and some were not and attempted to compare the production results of anxious and non-anxious participants. They randomly assigned highly proficient students and less proficient students to two opposing

groups to experience either anxiety or comfortable conditions. They were then asked to describe three pictures in their respective contexts from three perspectives: the elements in the picture, the actual events in the picture, and imaging what will happen next. After that, they needed to complete a questionnaire (MAACL) to evaluate the effectiveness of the two conditions. The results demonstrated that students in the anxious atmosphere responded more descriptively than the other group in the comfortable context. Furthermore, the questionnaire findings significantly positively correlated with the experimental conditions, which explained the success of the anxiety arousal. They argued that those who were constantly stressed by assessment in the ESL classroom probably perceived the anxiety situation as credible and authentic, despite its artificiality. In other words, they successfully replicated the atmosphere of a real language classroom. On the basis of these findings, language anxiety indeed has a potentially powerful impact on second/foreign language achievement.

#### 2.4.2 FLA and relevant behavior

Generally speaking, human beings are able to control their own acts and behavior to deliver their intentions. However, acts and behavior may also activate themselves without conscious human control. To be precise, psychological states, such as (language) anxiety, are often likely to manifest themselves in subconscious behavior (Gregersen 2007). Therefore, it is not surprising that researchers have noticed changes in human behavior due to the

arousal of anxiety in language classrooms. Nevertheless, not much research has examined the effect of anxiety on language learners' verbal/nonverbal behavior, maybe partly because the findings do not provide an insight into the effect on language development and there is no clear definition of anxiety related behavior.

Horwitz et al. (1986) found some behavior associated with anxiety, also cited in or supported by other literature, during her collection of FLCAS items. Anxiety arousal influences not only external behavior, but also physiological (and cognitive) functions. According to their descriptions, anxious language learners are likely to (1) have difficulty 'concentrating, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitations', (2) skip their classes or defer the submission of their assignments, (3) freeze up in role-play activities, (4) have difficulty identifying the sounds and structures of and understanding the information of a target language message, (5) suddenly forget the details of the knowledge being tested, (6) answer questions incorrectly, but, in fact, know the appropriate responses, (7) overstudy to avoid making errors in their future performance, (8) choose the seat in the last row of the classroom for avoidance (pp. 126-130), or even resort to 'dropping out of language learning' (Dewaele and Thirtle 2009; Gregersen and MacIntyre 2014: 3). Although anxious individuals can display quite different behaviors, those mentioned above could be promising indexes for language instructors to detect who is anxious in their classroom.

Different from the above, Gregerson (2005) conducted an observation study to look into the manifestation of language anxiety in

anxious and non-anxious learners' facial and bodily expressions. From this comparison, different behavioral manifestations of anxiety were easily identified in the two groups. She first separated beginner students of French into high and low anxiety groups from FLCAS scores. The students then attended a 4 to 7 minute oral examination, videotaped for the purpose of observation. The videos were then viewed by three trained raters to analyze the frequency and duration of some specific nonverbal behaviors. The analytical results from the raters were quite similar to one another, with 91 % consistency.

It can be predicted that anxious students will have stiffer facial expressions and appear physically more constrained than the non-anxious ones. Based on their analysis, highly anxious learners tended to

maintain more tense facial muscles, limiting the movement of the brow. They blinked more, smiled less, and had more limited eye contact with the teacher, sometimes even closing their eyes completely...sat upright in their chairs, or leaned slightly backwards; their bodies were tense and were generally maintained in a closed-body position with their arms and legs crossed. When they did move their upper limbs, it was not to gesture naturally, but to adjust clothing, scratch the face, stroke their hair, or play with a pen. Feet were in constant motion, jiggling and tapping. Unlike their non-anxious counterparts who actively participated with immediacy behaviors such as positive head nods, the anxious learners did not (p. 393).

This anxiety-related behavior notwithstanding, some issues may require discussion to decide whether to use nonverbal cues as

indicators of anxiety. Some language learners have not yet fully developed their target language communication skills, therefore it would be difficult for them to describe their feelings in the L2 (p.389). Arguably, the types of teacher may play an important role here. This situation would not happen if the teacher speaks the same L1 as the learners. Compared to verbal communication behaviors, nonverbal channels show true feelings and emotions since they are subconsciously controlled (p.389), so can be a better indicator.

On the other hand, nonverbal behavior has its own limitations as evidence of anxiety: (1) one behavior may be interpreted differently by different people, (2) certain behaviors may be strongly connected to the local culture and context (also mentioned by Oxford and Ehrman 1993: 194), (3) the nature of relationships may influence behaviors, (4) certain behavior may be idiosyncratic (pp. 394-5), and (5) it could be, in my view, difficult to tell the level of anxiety from the external behaviors. Considering the fifth point, a scale is still needed in the current research to understand learners' anxiety levels. Nonetheless, it is a promising start for looking at different anxious and non-anxious learners' nonverbal behaviors. If more research can be conducted from this perspective, then the repeated behavior patterns to help teachers identify language anxiety or relevant emotions and offer support to those who are anxious in the target language classroom. In order to avoid the above concerns, this research investigates the effect of anxiety on nonverbal behaviors directly from the views of anxious students and the teachers.



#### 2.4.3 FLA and cognitive processing

MacIntyre and Gardner are the two major scholars who have devoted their research to examining the effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in language learning (1987; 1989; 1991b; 1991c; 1994). Instead of only achievement, they attempted to reveal the specific effects of anxiety on each stage of learning, which may remind teachers and learners to foster a positive atmosphere from the outset. Their inspiration for conducting their studies possibly came from Krashen's (1985) concept of the 'affective filter' in second language learning and Steinberg and Horwitz's (1986) suggestion for a new research direction. Krashen (1985) holds that language input may not successfully proceed into the cognitive system if the affective filter lowers and becomes a block. In other words, a learner may not be able to fully take in what s/he has newly encountered when in a negative state mode, such as anxiety. Steinberg and Horwitz found that most language anxiety research only employed general measures/course grades to explore the effects of language anxiety on language achievement. It has, however, been suggested that the more 'subtle effects', such as on individual language skills or cognitive functioning, should be explored in order to truly understand the interaction between anxiety and target language learning, i.e. from the beginning to the end.

In their studies about the effects of anxiety on the cognitive processing of foreign language learning, MacIntyre and Gardner referred to Eysenck's (1979) and Tobias' (1979) explanation of how anxiety could interfere with a person's cognitive functioning system in

learning. Eysenck argues that anxious people have difficulty fully concentrating on dealing with a given task and therefore fail to perform it well:

Worry and other task-irrelevant cognitive activities associated with anxiety always impair the quality of performance. The major reason for this is that the task-irrelevant information involved in worry and cognitive self-concern competes with task-relevant information for space in the processing system (p. 364).

Furthermore, Tobias proposes a model demonstrating the effects of anxiety on instruction-based learning. He divides the whole learning process into three stages—input (preprocessing), processing, and output (post-processing)—to look into the impacts of anxiety on each stage of learning.

Based on the work of Eysenck and Tobias, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) then suggest how anxiety affects the three stages of language learning. The input stage illustrates a learner's intake of new information encountered. To be specific, 'external stimuli are encountered and internal representations are made; attention, concentration, and encoding occur'. Once anxiety is aroused and impedes a learner's ability to take in new information, the impediment will have further impacts on the processing and output stages since only a little information can be used. At the processing stage, a learner attempts to carry out the 'organization, storage, and assimilation of the material' in their memory. Speed and accuracy hence become two important indicators here, considering the internalization of the items

from the input stage. When a learner confronts anxiety evocation at the processing stage, it may take him/her more time to learn and understand material, especially in difficult tasks. The output stage is concerned with whether a learner has the ability to utilize the learnt knowledge to perform properly. Production is heavily dependent on the preparation in the previous stages when it comes to 'organization of the output' and speed of retrieving items. A learner may forget the knowledge required to address the current task due to anxiety, but is able to recall that when the situation finishes (pp. 286-7).

As the above explains, each (language learning) stage is likely to be influenced by the arousal of anxiety (Zheng 2008). In order to elaborate the effects, MacIntyre and Gardner conducted the very first study in 1994 looking into the effects of language anxiety on all the three stages of the cognitive process of language learning. They also developed a questionnaire (IOPAS: Input, Processing, and Output Anxiety Scales) specific to each stage, as one of the measures, to examine the subtle effects on each stage. Within the research, all the participants were English native speakers and enrolled in the first year credit French course at a monolingual Canadian university. The students were invited to fill in language anxiety scales, and their course grades were collected as well. After that, they had to complete several tasks respectively designed for each of the stages. It should be noted that some tasks had to be done in both French and English. Although each stage scale result could be correlated with other stage tasks, only 'one to one' relationships were discussed and emphasized, e.g. the results of input scale on input tasks.

The result demonstrated that the final grade significantly negatively correlated with the IOPAS, which may be indicative of the cumulative effects of French learning over the year (p. 294). Moreover, it was reported that each stage scale was indeed associated with some of its representative performance measures. Interestingly, language anxiety did influence the time spent on the identification of French words in the input stage, i.e. the higher, the slower. As far as 'Pair Association Learning Test 1' in the processing stage was concerned, anxious learners again spent longer preparing for and taking the measure, but their scores were lower. (Due to the fact that the outcome of pairing concerned itself with the production of French, they identified the score with a measure of the output stage.) However, no significant correlation was found between anxiety and study time, test time, and score in Test 2. This may indicate that anxious students could compensate for their poor outcome performance by extra time spent on learning. That is, the extra time spent can help them properly internalize the knowledge for the future use as output/production.

In terms of the output stage, a significant association only happened between language anxiety and tasks in French rather than English (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991c). In the self-description task, i.e. self-introduction, anxious learners tended to speak less, with a foreign accent, with a lack of fluency, and with less complexity in sentences. They also produced less consistent descriptions between their English and French versions, which was thought to be due to inadequate vocabulary. What caused this inadequacy were such effects of anxiety as difficulty in retrieving the appropriate items or

possessing too limited vocabulary (p. 299-300). On the other hand, it is surprising that there was no significant correlation between 'Depth' (use of superficial vs. more personal items) and output anxiety, which seems to contrast with Steinberg and Horwitz's (1986) results. Importantly, 'Accent', as one of the criteria of output performance, appears to be inappropriate here. Based on the Critical Period Hypothesis, L2 learners over a certain (disputable) age, especially adult learners, are generally less likely to acquire a native-like accent. From this point of view, the effects of anxiety on accent should be questioned in this study. Considering the effects of anxiety on the individual stages, the anxious learners had two characteristics: (1) 'a smaller base of second language knowledge' and (2) 'difficulty demonstrating the knowledge' they possessed; thus, 'the potential effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in second language appear pervasive and may be subtle' (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994: 301).

From the literature on the effects of anxiety, the participants seemed to only have little opportunity to reflect on the effects of anxiety on their learning and performances in class. In other words, the researchers mostly collected, analyzed, and interpreted responses given 'passively' by the learners. Considering the limitations of non-verbal behaviors, one direct solution to this may be to ask participants to describe how they feel when anxious in a given situation, which could provide solid answers to the question. Moreover, due to difficulty in conducting experiments and because cognitive processing is a mental operation, participants' expression of their

perceived effects can provide the researcher with a straightforward insight into the cognitive consequences of FLA and participants with an opportunity to reflect on their learning conditions. Therefore, this study asked participants questions and to share their perceptions of the manifestations of anxiety with me.

## **2.5 Learners' coping tactics for FLA**

As the literature has shown so far, language anxiety has been discussed and researched from different aspects, such as its causes and effects. There seem to be few studies investigating how students deal with their anxiety inside (or outside) the classroom, i.e. coping strategies for language anxiety (Kondo and Yang 2004; Marwan 2007). As anxiety has been shown to have a negative impact on L2 learning, coping with the emotion by employing strategies becomes important if learners want to enhance their ability in the target language. This argument was also indicated in and supported by Oxford's (1990) theory of language learning strategies, one of which is about affective management—*affective strategies*. Affective strategies consist of 'lowering your anxiety', 'encouraging yourself', and 'taking your emotional temperature'. Although these strategies seem to be interrelated, only the first of Oxford's categories, containing three specific strategies, apparently indicates the coping tactics for anxiety. The number of strategies therefore needs to be further explored and extended, which is one aim of this research. The following studies demonstrate what has been done so far in terms of the issue of students' or learners' strategies for coping with their anxiety.

Kondo and Yang (2004), due to the scarcity of literature on students' coping tactics for language anxiety, decided to explore what strategies were utilized to deal with learning anxiety and their relationships to learners' degree of anxiety. The researchers recruited 209 students (93 females; 106 males) enrolled in basic English courses at two universities in Japan. The participants were aged between 18 and 37, averaging 21.1 years. They first needed to complete an English anxiety scale (ELCAS). After one week, they were asked to write down the strategies they had used to tackle their anxiety in English classes from junior high school to university. Because seven students were absent from this phase, their ELCAS results were discarded.

Based on the students' reports, 373 coping tactics were identified. However, owing to some repetition, the 373 strategies were then reduced to 70. Five categories of strategies finally emerged from the 70 ones: 'preparation', 'relaxation', 'positive thinking', 'peer seeking', and 'resignation'. 'Preparation' was the most commonly reported of the five, whereas 'peer seeking' the least (c.f. Marwan 2007; Wei 2013). Moreover, there were no significant relationships between the use of the five strategies and the levels of anxiety. Since the participants were asked to recall their strategy use between junior high school and university, it could be argued that the focus was unclear and the differences invisible concerning the use of coping strategies at different educational levels, although one of their aims here was to develop a typology of anxiety coping tactics.

In his study of 2007, Marwan attempted to understand

Indonesian students' foreign [second] language anxiety by quantitatively analyzing two valid sets of questionnaires from 76 students (males: 38; females: 38) taking lower and upper immediate level English courses (lower: 40; upper: 36) at an Indonesian university. One of the major issues investigated was what strategies were used by students to cope with their anxiety about learning English in class.

With hierarchical cluster analysis on the questionnaire data, there were five strategies revealed, i.e. 'preparation', 'relaxation', 'positive thinking', 'peer seeking', and 'resignation'. Of these strategies, 'peer seeking' was commonly employed, whereas 'resignation' was unpopular (c.f. Kondo and Yang 2004; Wei 2013). As far as gender is concerned, neither males nor females seemed inclined towards the 'resignation' strategy. The number of female students using the other four strategies were all larger than those of male ones. Regarding the levels of the classes, the lower intermediate students used the strategies more than the upper ones; however, 'resignation' again was not considered by either group as a coping strategy for their anxiety in class.

Although several types of strategies were revealed from the students' questionnaire data, the close-ended form of the questionnaire may have limited responses and our understanding of their strategy use, especially the number and diversity, as they were only presented with a limited number of strategies. Compared with Kondo and Ying's (2004) 70 strategies, only 15 were included in Marwan's questionnaire.



A number of semi-structured individual interviews were carried out by Wei in 2013 to explore what strategies Chinese university students employed to cope with their anxiety in their English classroom. 25 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students were recruited from five universities for ethnic groups in Guizhou Province, China.

Based on his analysis of the interview data, five major coping strategies were identified, i.e. 'preparation', 'help/peer seeking', 'relaxation', 'resignation', and 'positive thinking'. 'Preparation' and 'help/peer seeking' were the two strategies most adopted to deal with the problem of anxiety in class, but 'problem solving' was the least mentioned and so was not regarded as a strategy commonly used by the students (c.f. Kondo and Ying 2004; Marwan 2007).

It is interesting that Wei took 'ethnic group' as a variable when looking at the issue of coping strategy use, but he did not clarify the reason for doing this in his research. Compared with the above two studies, students from different places seem to employ similar coping strategies for anxiety. These tactics appear to suggest that they do not (1) know how to deal with their anxiety, (2) develop effective strategies, and/or (3) care about anxiety arousal because most of the strategies may only help them in the anxious situations encountered, not escape from their sources of anxiety. It could therefore be argued that ethnic group has little influence on students' strategy use; however, this claim should be examined by more studies to see whether it has a role in the issue of anxiety.

In the light of the above, the current study focuses on a particular research population—university learners of English as a foreign

language in Taiwan. Because the participants in these studies were asked to directly reflect on their coping strategies, it was assumed that they could only provide a general list of strategies used when feeling anxious. This drawback could be overcome if they recalled their anxious situations first and then their coping tactics, which is the method used for collecting data from this study's participants so that the association between anxious situations and then coping strategies could be effectively formed. Due to the limitations of questionnaires mentioned above, a qualitative method was employed to investigate the students' strategies for mitigating their anxiety.

## **2.6 Teacher's perspectives of FLA in class**

Learners themselves have been always the major concern in SLA research since individual differences were found to have a huge impact on success in second/foreign language learning. However, learning in class involves the interaction between teachers and students. If there is no proper, tacit understanding in their classroom interactions, the learning environment may become so learner-unfriendly as to hinder their learning. As Horwitz (2008: 11) points out, 'teacher support and understanding are particularly important'. It is also suggested by Oxford and Ehrman that 'to provide the most effective instruction possible, teachers of a second language (L2) should learn to identify and comprehend significant individual differences in their students', one of which is learner anxiety (1993: 188). Therefore, some scholars, especially those interested in foreign language anxiety (e.g. Gregerson 2007; Liu 2012; Ohata 2005; Trang

et al. 2013), have also started to look at learner affect/emotion from language teachers' perspectives. Although the literature of teachers' viewpoints/perceptions about learner anxiety has emerged only slowly and in a scattered way, it is still worth mentioning and discussing some recent relevant studies to see what has been discovered so far.

Ohata conducted several interviews in 2005 with seven English (FL/SL) teachers studying on an MA TESOL course at an American university. They came from different countries, with different years of teaching experience in secondary school, university, or private institutions. The main purposes of his study were to investigate teachers' perspectives on language anxiety and whether there is a gap between teachers' understandings of the issue and students' affective needs in the learning context.

According to the results, his participants believed that anxiety can have an influence on students' learning, considering its negative impact on language performance and learning processes. They did not deny its positive aspect, but how facilitative it was could depend on factors like individual differences (c.f. Liu 2012; Tang et al. 2013). It was difficult for them to say which language skill was more anxiety-provoking. Language testing was, however, the prominent one. Additionally, they recognized their students' anxiety only when manifestations of anxiety were physically obvious, which shows the limitation of observation. When it comes to alleviating students' anxiety, two main coping strategies were mentioned: (1) making the learning environment comfortable and (2) encouraging student

participation during instruction. These two corresponded to the teacher participants' beliefs about teaching and the role of teachers. Nevertheless, according to some of them, the effectiveness of these strategies was unknown. The findings on the whole were found consistent with the literature on language anxiety.

However, due to the teachers' varying levels of teaching experiences, there is no telling exactly what the education levels of the students discussed were, although most of the teachers involved in the study taught English in high school. It is also debatable whether comparison by referring to previous findings can, in fact, help an understanding of the issue about the existence or non-existence of the discrepancies between teachers' and students' viewpoints on anxiety since students' data were not collected in Ohara's study.

Following her study of the nonverbal behavior of anxious and non-anxious students in 2005, Gregerson (2007) examined teachers' capacity for decoding the nonverbal behavior (body language) indicating foreign language anxiety. She argued that 'accurately receiving and processing, or decoding, nonverbal expressions of emotions' are the keys to effective classroom interaction and teacher/student relationships. Therefore, she invited 31 teachers and teacher trainees enrolled in either language learning and teaching related seminars or courses to observe a videotape of a French oral test of seven anxious and non-anxious students. The participants had different years of teaching experience from zero to 11 years. The video sound was turned off, so only the learners' body language was the focus. They were first asked to judge the students' anxiety status

using their own criteria (which they had to note down) based on their body language. After that, they watched the same videotape again, but this time made their judgment according to a given list of criteria elaborating anxious behaviors.

Through her comparison between the results from these two observations, it was revealed that the decoding accuracy was significantly higher after the criteria were given, although they were able to detect the students at the two extreme ends of anxiety in their first observation. There were three factors found from the notes which caused the observers uncertainty about making judgments: (1) the 'lack of specificity of body language, (2) 'the assignment of various meanings to the same cue', and (3) 'idiosyncratic elements of individual behavior'. Gregersen finally pointed out limitations to her study that the observers may have achieved higher accuracy in decoding anxiety if they had been provided with a full range of nonverbal behaviors which they were likely to experience in a real classroom.

A study conducted by Liu in 2012 also investigated teachers' perspectives/perceptions of foreign language anxiety and their own roles in managing the emotion in class. She interviewed eight native and non-native English teachers from two private universities in northern Taiwan. The number of years of teaching experience of these teachers varied from five to 40 years. Liu aimed to understand the roles of anxiety in students' learning, the causes of anxiety, and self perceived roles in managing anxiety.

From the eight interviews, she found similar responses to those in

Ohata's (2005) and Tang et al.'s (2013) studies (discussed in this section) that anxiety is considered to play both negative and positive roles in students' English learning. Liu's participants believed that although anxiety had negative impacts on the learning process, a level of anxiety—'challenge or appropriate worry'—is so necessary to push students to work harder (c.f. Horwitz 2014). As for the causes, the teacher participants identified the seven most common anxiety-provoking factors, such as 'lack of confidence in speaking', 'low English proficiency', 'low self-esteem', and 'lack of preparation'. Regarding their self-perceived roles in managing students' anxiety, six roles were revealed from teachers' responses to the question, e.g. 'anxiety observer', 'friendly relationship builder', and 'learner responsibility developer'.

Notwithstanding these valuable findings, the interpretation of the first question seems problematic. Specifically, when Liu dealt with the role of anxiety, she directly dichotomized it into two types—negative and positive—even though her participants seemed to take both stances at the same time according to the extracts presented. This dichotomous categorization of anxiety could be misleading and not reflect the participants' real perceptions of anxiety itself.

In respect to the lack of literature of the comparison and contrast between language teachers' and learners' awareness of and attitudes towards foreign language anxiety, Trang et al. (2013) researched these issues in an attempt to compensate for the gaps. 419 non-English major student and 8 English teacher participants were recruited from a public university in Vietnam. The students, aged

between 18 and 21, were learning English in a Basic English Level 2 course; the teachers were those who taught English to the student participants, with their years of teaching experience ranging from two to 19 years. The students filled in the FLCAS, Generalized Belief Measure (GBM), and Generalized Attitude Measure (GAM). Then, six students from each high, intermediate, and low anxiety levels were interviewed; 49 autobiographies were produced by anxious students. The teachers, on the other hand, completed the GRM and GAM and participated in an interview only.

The statistical result of the FLCAS demonstrated a mean score of 108.26 out of 165, which was significantly higher than those in most of the literature. The students and the teachers were mostly conscious of the anxiety about English (as a foreign language) learning. Compared with the latter's perceptions, the learners, however, thought that the number of anxious students and the degrees of anxiety were relatively large and high. Furthermore, with regard to the issue of attitudes toward anxiety, both groups of participants perceived anxiety as a natural feeling when learning a foreign language. Nearly half of the students held an apparent negative attitude towards anxiety. By contrast, all the teachers thought that anxiety could both facilitate and debilitate students' learning (depending on the level of anxiety).

These teachers' attitudes towards anxiety echoed Ohata's (2005) participants' and Liu's (2012) participants' views in terms of its being good or bad. Teachers and students are quite different in their general perceptions of and perspectives on foreign language anxiety (c.f. Ohata 2005). This may cause such problems as teachers not being

able to support their students emotionally as a result, which can have a huge negative impact on the students' learning in class. Nevertheless, the contrast above arguably cannot fully explain teachers' ability to observe or sensitivity to subtle aspects of their students' anxiety because the student and teacher participants were not limited to only answering questions specifically based on the current conditions in their classrooms.

Considering the literature discussed above, FLA researchers have only started to explore teachers' perception of anxiety, that is to say, they have not gone deeper into the instructors' perspectives of the subtle aspects of FLA. Moreover, although Ohata (2005) and Trang et al. (2013) tried to examine teachers' sensitivity to learner anxiety, their conclusions might not be convincing enough due to the arguments above. In order to reexamine the issue and solve these problems, this study also collected data from the student participants' teachers. In particular, I asked both students and teachers to discuss their perceptions of different aspects of anxiety in their current classes, and then compared and contrasted their respective discoveries. How teachers deal with students' anxiety was also investigated due to the paucity of relevant literature and because this may also provide an insight into teachers' sensitivity to students' emotional problems.



## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter reviewed the literature specific to foreign language anxiety. I first discussed the concepts of different types of anxiety. I introduced how the definition and scale of anxiety specific to language learning was established. The argument that foreign language anxiety is a consequence rather than the source of poor learning outcomes was also explained, followed by a review of the sources, effects of and coping strategies for anxiety. This chapter ended with a review of language teachers' perspectives of anxiety. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter starts with the philosophical stances of the research informing this study and then presents the research design. The research participants, instruments, procedures, data analyses, and ethical considerations are then described in succession.

### 3.1 Research philosophical stance of this study

The decisions made about methodology and method tend to be influenced by a researcher's philosophical considerations of his/her piece of research. There are two considerations needing to be dealt with and discussed about their own natures. These are ontology and epistemology.

Ontology is about 'one's view of [the nature of] reality and being', i.e. the study of 'what is' (Crotty 1998; Wellington 2000; Bryman 2001; Mack 2010). In particular, it is defined as 'claims or assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up, and how these units interact with each other' (Blaikie 2000: 8). Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge—'what we mean when we say we know something' (Mack 2010: 5), or '*how we know what we know*' (Crotty 1998: 8). Porta and Keating (2008: 22) have referred to knowledge as '*propositional* knowledge', which characterizes the requirement of reasons for 'saying that something is so and can potentially convince others'. That is, the reasoning of a worldview is based on the evidence

generated by a certain method.

A foreign language classroom not only belongs to the teacher, but also to the students as learners. In that classroom, there are plenty of language activities and tasks taking place. Since every learner has a different degree of tolerance for various situations in the classroom, different individuals are likely to have different psychological reactions towards these situations, e.g. *anxiety about speaking English in front of the class*.

In order to acquire the language, learners are normally required to use the target language in the classroom to tackle various types of tasks, such as group discussion or individual presentations, to familiarize themselves with it. Through the interaction in the context, individuals may sort out what they like/dislike and their ability to control the situations. On the other hand, their reactions to the activities in the classroom may also potentially be related to their own individual differences or life experiences, such as motivation and degree of exposure. It is undeniable that humans respond to events in the world through their emotions (Aamodt and Wang 2008: 100).

The manifestations of emotions could be quite different in individuals, but, considering their connection with the bodily functions, they could be more or less the same. How each person treats their emotions is probably different as long as they can alleviate or remain them. For the teacher, students' emotions may be valuable indicators of their learning conditions in the classroom. Of course, individual teachers are likely to have different observations on or levels of sensitivity to students' learning and emotions in the learning context.

These descriptions of my worldview of language classroom learning, especially learner emotions, indicate the different dimensions or natures of the world, which may need to be understood through distinct approaches. The two philosophical stances involved are post-positivism and (social-) constructivism. Post-positivism embraces the notions of objectivity and changeability. It believes that 'the world works according to fixed laws of causes and effects'; hence its social realities can be objectively studied and disclosed by the examination of theories about these laws (being either rejected or accepted) through scientific measures (Muijs 2004: 4). Nevertheless, it is also believed that absolute truth does not exist, and the appearance of truth should (can only) be depicted to as great an extent as possible (Chen 2002: 19; Muijs 2004: 5-6). That is, 'observation is fallible and theory revisable' in research (Hartas 2010: 38).

This belief, therefore, allows for the researchers' values to get involved in conducting their studies and interpreting their results (Hartas 2010: 38; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009: 5) as their complete detachment from the world they are looking at is impossible (Muijs 2004: 4). Furthermore, post-positivists argue that the knowledge of natural sciences cannot be completely transposed to that of social and behavioral sciences (Muijs 2004: 5; Mack 2010: 7). They thus propose hypotheses and/or theories, test them by statistically analyzing their numerical data (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009: 5), and then attempt to generalize their findings to a similar population at the end of their project (Richards et al. 2012: 23)—quantitative approach.

Social-constructivism is, in contrast, associated with subjectivity. It emphasizes that the meanings of realities are diversified and constructed during the process of social interaction. To be specific, constructivists assume that (1) every individual has his/her own understanding of their experiences in the world so that a multiplicity of meanings is no surprise, (2) the meanings are shaped by 'interactions with others' and 'historical and the cultural norms' of the individuals (Cresswell 2009: 8), and (3) social truths do not exist until they are constructed by individuals' interactions with the world (Hartas 2010: 44). In the light of these assumptions, each participant's description of their own experiences becomes the researcher's major stake in his/her project.

In order for an in-depth exploration of their experiences, such methods as interviews (semi-/un-structured), case studies, narratives, and action research are commonly conducted (ibid.). Data generated are often narrative in nature; they are analyzed in inductive and iterative ways, such as thematic analysis (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009: 6). The researcher then interprets the findings in line with their own 'personal, cultural, and historical experiences' (Chen 2002: 22; Cresswell 2009: 8). As Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011: 40) sum up, 'in this form of inquiry, research is shaped "from the bottom up"—from individual perspectives to broad patterns and, ultimately, to broad understandings'—qualitative approach.

Apparently, each of the philosophical stances advocates their own distinctive worldviews and approaches to understanding these. Because post-positivists believe in objectivity, whereas

social-constructivists subjectivity, it has been claimed that they were unlikely to be compatible within a single project (Johnson and Christensen 2004: 30). Under these circumstances, a more feasible philosophical stance is needed to help me establish the methodological foundation of this study.

Like my worldview described above, pragmatism, characterized by diversity, allows the above two worldviews to coexist in a context of social reality. Specifically, it is a research paradigm that advocates 'practicality' and 'plurality'. Pragmatism is defined as 'a deconstructive paradigm that debunks concepts such as "truth" and "reality" and focuses instead on 'what works' as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation' (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003: 713). That is, pragmatists hold the view towards the world that truth is multifarious and confirmed in the here and now when verified; therefore, the research questions determine the research approaches to be used and research findings are continually re-examined in the light of new ones to either retain or reject the previous results (Hartas 2010: 41). In short, 'what is important is not abstract philosophy but what works in practice' (Johnson and Christensen 2004: 30).

Pragmatists apparently hold a practical view of truths in the world and therefore it is necessary to take the problem solving oriented approach to realize the world. That is,

pragmatism rejects the either/or choices associated with the paradigm wars, advocates for the use of mixed methods in research, and acknowledges that the values of the researcher play a large role in the interpretation of results' (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003: 713).

The researcher especially pays attention to the formulation of research questions, and then attempts to combine and employ different approaches in order to solve the problems. The data collected can contain numbers and/or narratives, which are analyzed in statistical and/or thematic ways. Both types of findings are normally integrated to inform the answers to the research questions.

In addition, it has been suggested that there is not such a big difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches, i.e. 'a research method from one research strategy is viewed as capable of being pressed into the service of another' (Bryman 2004: 454); the confrontation itself does not merely ignore the fact that methods are manifold nowadays, but also brings less merits to those who conduct research (Chen 2002: 634). Greene and Caracelli (2003) even contend that 'in actual research paradigms do not matter that much and therefore the philosophical discussions about paradigm compatibility have little relevance to empirical research' (cited in Dörnyei 2007a: 168). In other words, solving problems becomes a top priority, and different methods are likely to be used as long as they are helpful in a study.

'Mixed methods' is a more recently developed approach, but it has been maturely developed and pervasively employed in studies within the social sciences. According to Dörnyei (2007a: 163), mixed

methods research involves 'the collection or/and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with some attempts to integrate the two approaches at one or more stages of the research process'. It is further pointed out by Hashemi (2012: 206) that 'high-quality mixed research requires high degrees of integration at different stages of the study; that is, while forming research questions, during sampling, data collection and analysis, while making interpretations, and drawing conclusions'.

Despite this, some scholars (e.g. Greene et al. 1989; Johnson and Christenson 2004; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2006 2009) have proposed various typologies of mixed methods, so researchers can follow one or other of the designs to meet the needs of their research. 'The Methods-Strands Matrix' below, developed by Teddlie and Tashakkori, illustrates the operation of single and mixed methods and suggests several possible designs for mixed methods research. The vertical axis refers to the three core research approaches—quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The horizontal axis refers to the number of strands or phases in the whole process from conceptualization (e.g. research purposes and questions), experiential (e.g. methodological and analytical operations) to inferential stages (e.g. interpretation of results).



Table 3.1 The methods-strands matrix

<i>Design Type</i>	<i>Monostrand Designs</i>	<i>Multistrand Designs</i>
Monomethod designs	<b>Cell 1</b> Monomethod monostrand designs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Traditional QUAN designs</li> <li>2. Traditional QUAL designs</li> </ol>	<b>Cell 2</b> Monomethod multistrand designs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parallel monomethod <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. QUAN + QUAN</li> <li>b. QUAL + QUAL</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Sequential monomethod <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. QUAN → QUAN</li> <li>b. QUAL → QUAL</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Mixed methods designs	<b>Cell 3</b> Quasi-mixed monostrand designs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monostrand conversion design</li> </ol>	<b>Cell 4</b> Mixed methods multistrand designs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parallel mixed designs</li> <li>2. Sequential mixed designs</li> <li>3. Conversion mixed designs</li> <li>4. Multilevel mixed designs</li> <li>5. Fully integrated mixed designs</li> </ol> Quasi-mixed multistrand designs (designs mixed at the experiential stage only, including the parallel quasi-mixed design)

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006: 15-6; 2009: 144-5)

This typology not merely brings together different ideas for forming a typology specific to mixed methods, but also demonstrates the differences between a mono-method approach and mixed methods approach. A researcher can, thus, benefit from a clearer picture of the methodological framework of his/her own project to help position him-/herself within the research and make the appropriate judgments throughout the process of conducting their research (this study: see Section 3.2).

As mentioned above, there are a number of mixed ways that researchers can choose to help answer their complicated research questions. However, it is important to have a good understanding of the functions involved in the practice which can be brought into play on the issues studied. Greene and her colleagues proposed five major

functions of mixed methods research in 1989—triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion—from their reviewing relevant theoretical and empirical literature.

Triangulation is characterized by the independent and simultaneous use of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the same phenomenon in order for validity or trustworthiness. As for complementarity, the researcher studies overlapping phenomena or different aspects of a single phenomenon, with the findings from one method elaborated, enhanced, or illustrated by those from another. When it comes to development, the assessment of the same or similar phenomena is involved. That is, the design of the second method, such as sample selection, instrument development, or analysis application, relies on the results from the first method. Initiation refers to looking for discrepancies or contradictions between the findings from quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study in order to find new insight into certain phenomena. Lastly, with regard to expansion, the combination can also aim to increase the scope and breadth of a project where quantitative and qualitative methods are separately employed to examine various inquiry components. According to them, expansion is the most frequently used and initiation is the least (pp. 266-270). The mixed-methods design adopted is associated with development and expansion, the statements of which are explained in Section 3.2.

### **3.2 Sequential quasi-mixed multi-strand design**

The current study adopts 'pragmatism' as the foundation of its research methodology, which considers 'what works' as the top priority. Therefore, for the research inquiries of this study, I adopted one of the mixed methods designs—a sequential quasi-mixed multistrand design—to try to find the answers to these questions.

A dispute has been often raised over whether a study is truly mixed methods-based when multiple methods are used. According to the definition given earlier, integration across stages seems to play an important role in making the distinction. Nevertheless, there is one kind of mixing that only takes place at the data collection stage, e.g. sampling, which is now recognized a mixed methods design—quasi-mixed designs—due to its appearance in literature and prevalence (the parallel design in particular) in research practice (Teddle and Tashakkori 2006: 17; 2009: 146). Quasi-mixed designs are 'designs in which two types of [quantitative and qualitative] data are collected and analyzed, but there is little or no integration of findings and inferences from the study' (Teddle and Tashakkori 2010: 25). Concerning the design used here, the results of a quantitative method informed the selection of the sample recruited for another phase of the data collection using a qualitative method, but the findings from these two strands do not combine to answer the research questions.

As far as this study is concerned, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were undertaken to research tertiary students' and teachers' perceptions about English (as a foreign language) classroom

anxiety in Taiwan. The inquiry about students' degrees of anxiety, which indicates the amounts or the numbers, could only be answered by an anxiety scale, the results of which served as the basis for the next sample selection. The rest—the sources, situations, effects of, and coping tactics for anxiety—are more like WHAT questions, so there is no doubt that abundant explanations and experience sharing from selected students and certain teachers are required; hence, (semi-structured) interviews with them were employed to help respond to the questions. Because these two distinctive sets of data addressed different aspects of anxiety, there was no integration of the findings and the inferences at the end.

### **3.3 Data collection**

This project employed a sequential quasi-mixed multi-strand design aiming to identify different aspects of English learning anxiety of Taiwanese tertiary students and examine their English teachers' perceptions about their students' anxiety and their ways of dealing with it. In order to have a detailed picture of this research, such components of the design as student and teacher participants, questionnaire and interview instruments, the implementation procedures, the analysis methods, and the ethical issues are consecutively introduced and discussed in the following sections.

#### **3.3.1 Student participants for questionnaire**

The participants were second year students from various departments enrolled in the EGP (English for general purposes) course

at a university in southern Taiwan. Although the first year students also had to take the same course for freshmen, I did not think of recruiting them as the participants for this study. Considering they had only started to experience university life, they might have needed time to accustom themselves to the new environment, especially the teaching and learning. In order to minimize the interference of the adaptation related factors in students' experience of learning English at university, the second year learners were chosen to provide answers to the research questions about Taiwanese university learners' FLA. Since the third and fourth year students' courses focused on ESP (English for specific purposes), they were excluded from consideration.

Regarding the curriculum arrangement, the Department of Foreign Language Instructions organized the 'University English for Sophomores (大二英文)' for students from all the departments, except those from the English department. This course offered training in the four English language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The English course for students of the English department, which was divided into an English Listening and Conversation II course (英語聽力與會話二) and an English Reading and Writing II course (英文閱讀與寫作二), was however organized by the Department of English alone. The English course was compulsory and took five hours per week throughout the academic year. Moreover, the students taking the University English course were grouped into different levels of classes (7 groups from Level 2 to Level 8), according to their test results from a domestic English proficiency test for university students—CSEPT.

However, the English major students stayed in their own original classes although they were also required to take the test. They were divided into two classes randomly for the English Reading and Writing course.

In order to simplify the seven groups into Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced for analytical convenience, the non-English major students in Levels 2, 3 and 4 were assigned to Elementary, Levels 5 and 6 to Intermediate, and Levels 7 and 8 to Advanced. The English major students were asked to provide their recent CSEPT results for the purpose of grouping them into these three categories. The full marks of the test were 360. English majors were required to achieve 260, whereas non-English majors needed 240 in order to graduate. Consequently, the participants who had the requirement for English majors were assigned to the advanced group (Levels 7 and 8:  $270 \leq$ ). Those whose scores were close to 260 and 240 belonged to the intermediate group (Levels 5 and 6:  $210 \leq \sim < 270$ ). Those far below this range then went to the elementary group (Levels 2, 3, and 4:  $< 210$ ). This grouping was approved by the progressive decrease in anxiety levels of these groups, i.e. lowest at Elementary > Intermediate > Advanced (see Section 3.3.3.3), which reflects Horwitz et al.'s (2010) argument on Page 60. All the students were also divided into two big groups—English majors and Non-English majors—in order that a comparison could be made between them.

The students (English major and non-English major students) were invited to fill in the revised FLCAS (ELCAS) to examine their

levels of anxiety in the classroom. The total number of questionnaires administered was 706 and 649 were returned, giving a 91% return rate. The 649 questionnaires were then assessed in accordance with such criteria for discarding as (1) uncompleted questionnaires, (2) questionnaires containing contradictory responses, (3) questionnaires with discernible regular patterns of responses, and (4) questionnaires without the CSEPT result provided. 318 valid questionnaires were finally selected for analysis.

Of the 318 participants, 61 (19.18%) were male and 257 (80.82%) were female. Because it was their second year at university, most were between 19 and 20 years old. In terms of major, there were 100 students (31.45%) allocated to the English major group and 218 (68.55%) to the non-English major group. As for level of English, 112 (35.22%) students went to Elementary, 124 (38.99%) to Intermediate, and 82 (25.79%) to Advanced. Specifically, the table below presents the distribution of number of people by gender, major, and level of English in each cell.

Table 3.2 Population distribution by gender, major, and level of English

	<b>English Majors (N= 100)</b>		<b>Non-English Majors (N= 218)</b>	
	<b>Male (N= 19)</b>	<b>Female (N= 81)</b>	<b>Male (N= 42)</b>	<b>Female (N= 179)</b>
<b>Elementary (N= 112)</b>	1	12	17	82
<b>Intermediate (N= 124)</b>	9	35	14	66
<b>Advanced (N= 82)</b>	9	34	11	28

Concerning their experience with native speakers or in English-speaking countries, only 52 (16.35%) students had been to English-speaking countries for purposes, such as study tours, travelling, or residence. The number of students who once studied in an English-speaking country was even less—only 6 (1.89%). Many students (254, 79.87%) answered 'Yes' to the question: 'Have you ever been taught by native-speaking English teachers?'

With regard to their learning experience, the students had learned English for 3 (N=2) to 30 (N=1) years by the time of the survey, with the length averaging 10.86 years (SD=2.80). In addition, the time which they spent practising English after school in a typical week varied from zero (N=19) to 25 (N=1) hours; the average time for practising was 3.71 hours per week (SD=3.40).

In terms of the participants' expected average score in English at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, more than half of the participants (N=169, 53.14%) anticipated that their average score would be between 71 and 80, whereas eight (2.52%) thought that theirs would be 60 or below. No one selected '90 or above'. 45.60% of the students (N=145) reported their preference for working in a small group, while 8.49% (N=27) liked to work alone. In addition, the time they spent in the self-access English learning center in a typical week shifted between zero and ten hours; the average was .92 hour per week (SD=1.84).

According to the table below, the students, on average, tended to consider themselves to have aptitude for learning English, care about making mistakes, be unwilling to speak in class, and have poorer



English ability than others. Nevertheless, they seemed uncertain whether they had confidence in their own English competence and belief in completing classroom tasks even though the mean of the former was below and that of the latter above 3.

Table 3.3 The mean levels of students' agreement on the learning situations

<b>Learning situations</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
I feel confident in my English ability.	2.94	.99
I have the aptitude for learning English.	3.53	.87
I care about almost every mistake I make when using English.	3.57	.90
I have the ability to perform most activities in my English class well.	3.15	.85
My English ability is, generally speaking, better than my classmates	2.58	.86
I would prefer to listen rather than speak in my English class.	3.48	1.05

Note. The level of agreement ranges between 1 and 5.

#### 3.3.1.1 Student participants interviewed

In order to investigate the participants' degrees of anxiety, their total scores on the ELCAS were divided by 60—the total number of items in the questionnaire—as suggested by Horwitz (2008: 235). She (ibid.) also described how the divided scores should be interpreted: (1)

a score below 3 means 'not very [no/little] anxious', (2) a score around 3 'slightly [moderately] anxious', and (3) a score near 4 and above 'fairly [very] anxious' (also see Liu 2006).

The possible total score on the ELCAS ranges from 60 and 300 on account of the design of the questionnaire. As far as the 318 students' ELCAS results were concerned, the mean total score was 158.33 (SD=38.17), with a minimum score of 71 (N=1) and a maximum of 266 (N=1). 158.33 divided by 60 approximately equals 2.64 (SD=.64), that is to say, the students in general were considered moderately or mildly anxious in their EFL classroom. As far as major is concerned, on average, the non-English majors reported higher degrees of anxiety (M=2.69, SD=.65) than the English majors (M=2.53, SD=.59).

As this study attempts to draw a multidimensional picture and, at the same time, tackle the specific issues related to FLA, it became crucial to find those having profound experiences with and impressions of FLA for follow-up interviews and being thus able to share detailed and rich information and stories with me. The 10 most anxious students from each of the two groups (English majors and Non-English majors) were, therefore, selected according to their anxiety level rank in their group and invited to a further interview. Nevertheless, the actual number of students interviewed was 21, consisting of 10 from the former and 11 from the latter. It is worth noting that, due to some refusals to participate, not all these students were in the top ten most anxious learners. Concerning the sampling of the English majors, the rankings of the interviewees' anxiety levels were between the top 3 and top 15, with one in 19<sup>th</sup> position. The

non-majors were located between the number 1 place and the top 14, with one at 17.

Although large amounts of data were collected, a few of them were discarded because the information provided either contained numbers of short responses or could not answer my research questions. The number of interviews finally used to answer the research questions was 16—eight from each group. The participants' demographic information including their gender, level of English, and degree of anxiety is shown in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 below. For the sake of confidentiality, a pseudonym was given to each participant interviewed.

Table 3.4 English majors' demographic information

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Level of English</b>	<b>Degree of Anxiety</b>
ENG01	Female	Intermediate	3.57
ENG02	Female	Elementary	3.28
ENG03	Female	Elementary	3.23
ENG04	Male	Intermediate	3.52
ENG06	Female	Elementary	3.22
ENG07	Female	Advanced	3.77
ENG08	Female	Intermediate	3.93
ENG09	Female	Intermediate	3.03

Note. The highest degree of anxiety is 5; the lowest is 1.

Table 3.5 Non-English majors' demographic information

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Level of English</b>	<b>Degree of Anxiety</b>
NE01	Female	Elementary	4.03
NE04	Female	Elementary	4.43
NE05	Female	Elementary	4.02
NE06	Female	Advanced	3.93
NE07	Female	Elementary	3.80
NE08	Male	Elementary	4.17
NE09	Female	Elementary	4.05
NE11	Female	Advanced	3.77

Note. The highest degree of anxiety is 5; the lowest is 1.

### 3.3.2 Teacher participants interviewed

In order to compare students' and teachers' perceptions, I also invited the anxious students' teachers to participate in my research. 12 novice and experienced EFL teachers, five from the Department of English (English majors' teachers) and seven from the Department of Foreign Language Instructions (non-English majors' teachers), were interviewed. These teachers were all currently teaching English to non-English major students, whereas three of the five English majors' teachers had only taught English to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year cohorts the previous year or the year before. This arrangement was because there were only three big classes for English major students, and, unfortunately, only two of the teachers agreed to be interviewed.

Of the 12 transcripts, one set of data from a non-English majors' teacher was discarded as she claimed that there were no anxious students in her class throughout the whole interview. The majority were female. The 11 interviewees were all native-Chinese speaking

teachers, although one had grown up in North America, and had taught English for some years (years of teaching ranged from 2 to 31). Most had a master's or doctoral degree in TESOL or relevant subjects from universities in English-speaking countries. The detailed demographic information follows below:

Table 3.6 Demographic information of English majors' teachers

Pseudonym	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Education	Highest Qualification	Study Place
ET01	Female	5	PhD	TESOL	USA
ET02*	Male	7	PhD	TESOL	USA
ET03**	Female	31	MA	Linguistics	USA
ET04**	Female	2	PhD	English Literature	UK
ET05**	Female	30	MA	TESOL	USA

\*This Taiwanese teacher grew up in North America.

\*\* These teachers were not currently teaching English majors English.

Table 3.7 Demographic information of non-English majors' teachers

Pseudonym	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Education	Highest Qualification	Study Place
NET02	Female	6	MA	TESL	USA
NET03	Female	8	MA	TESOL	USA
NET04	Female	14	MA	TESOL	Taiwan
NET06	Female	17	MA	Education	Hong Kong
NET07	Female	28	PhD	Linguistics	New Zealand
NET08	Female	25	PhD	Language and Literacy	USA

### 3.3.3 Self-reported questionnaire

Questionnaires are frequently utilized in the research of social sciences, applied linguistics (Dörnyei 2007a: 102), and second language research (Mackey & Gass 2005: 92). The instrument 'allow[s] researchers to gather the information that learners are able to report about themselves', such as learner beliefs, motivation, or reactions to the learning and classroom procedures (ibid.: 92-3). Questionnaires, according to Brown (2001: 6), are 'any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers'.

Both closed and open-ended items can be used in a questionnaire. In terms of closed items, researchers develop answers for the respondents to choose from, whereas open-ended ones allow respondents to write down any answers they think are appropriate. The former have a higher possibility of achieving a 'uniformity of measurement and therefore reliability'. Undoubtedly, this kind of data can be easily quantified and analyzed. On the other hand, open-ended questions create the space for the respondents to voice their own thoughts and ideas, which makes the data more unexpected and insightful (Mackey & Gass 2005: 93). Based on the possible kinds of item, quantitative or qualitative data and analysis are all possible from one questionnaire, which potentially provides the findings with a diversity of perspectives.

Apart from the above advantage, Dörnyei (2007a: 101) states the reasons for the prevalence of questionnaires as being 'easy to

construct', 'versatile', and 'capable of gathering a large amount of information...readily processible'. Furthermore, Mackey and Gass (2005: 96) add 'flexibility' as another merit—for example, they can be administered by email or in person. However, some limitations should be kept in mind. Ill-constructed questionnaires may influence the degree of reliability and validity of the data (Dörnyei 2007a: 115). Since further probing is impossible and little time is devoted to questionnaires, the descriptions (data) can be thin and superficial (Bryman 2001: 130; *ibid.*). Moreover, the respondents may only have limited literacy in the second language so that the questionnaires become incomprehensible (Bryman 2001: 131; Mackey & Gass 2005: 96).

The questionnaire employed here is an anxiety scale. Because the amount of anxiety is usually vague if expressed in words like 'slightly', qualitative methods, such as interview or observation, normally cannot inform the researcher of participants' specific levels of anxiety. However, a scale with numbers on it can solve this problem by giving concrete, corresponding meanings to those abstract expressions. Considering the participants are adult learners, they were not expected to have difficulty specifying their anxiety levels in each given context. Furthermore, the scale was to help me quickly gather the information and learn about the students' anxiety levels in order to recruit anxious students from large cohorts of learners for follow-up interviews.

The questionnaire, FLCAS, adopted in this study originates from the work of Horwitz et al. (1986). As mentioned in the literature

review, their questionnaire has not only proved reliable and valid, but also been widely used for investigating learners' degrees of anxiety. Nevertheless, in order to include as many authentic classroom situations as possible and reflect students' anxiety levels in each and as a whole, FLCAS was slightly redesigned by omitting six out of its 33 items not indicating classroom activities/situations, i.e. 'It would not bother me to take more foreign language classes', 'During language class, I find myself think about things that have nothing to do with the course', 'I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am', 'I do not understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes', 'I do not feel pressure to prepare very well for language class', and 'I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do'. The retained items were highlighted in the ELCAS (see Appendix 2). Additionally, 21 extra items were also created and added on the basis of Horwitz et al.'s FLA theory, personal overseas and domestic learning experiences, and a preliminary list of anxious situations as described in Hsu's (2004) dissertation concerning junior high school students' foreign language anxiety, EFL learning motivation, and strategy use in Taiwan.

The demographic information section was developed according to the variables associated or correlated with the anxiety of learners of foreign languages in the literature, such as gender, learning experiences, and level of English. Furthermore, the cover page of the questionnaire provided the participants with an introduction to the project, their right to withdraw, the confidentiality of their responses, and reminders/instructions about how to complete the questionnaire.



FLCAS was replaced by ELCAS (English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) as the title of the questionnaire, for the target foreign language was English in practice. This replacement of wording was also applied to the items in the scale.

### 3.3.3.1 Piloting of the questionnaire

Following its redesign, a pilot study was conducted with six Chinese and Taiwanese subjects who had graduated from their universities only one or two years before in order to refine the questionnaire. The importance of piloting is emphasized since it is 'the single most effective strategy to minimize problems' [of instruments] (Muijs 2004: 51). There are two types of pilot objectives for questionnaires: (1) focusing on 'coverage', 'format', and others' 'feedbacks on the items' and/or (2) focusing on reducing redundant items through statistical analysis of the data from the pilot (Cohen et al. 2011: 402). This questionnaire was an extended version of the FLCAS and I had difficulty finding more than 30 Taiwanese university cohorts for my pilot when in the UK to test reliability or process the relevant statistical analysis; consequently, the first kind of pilot was implemented to test the viability of the questionnaire design and to evaluate the usefulness of the outcomes. Six friends of mine were invited to fill in the questionnaire, sequentially interviewed to see whether (1) they had difficulty understanding the introduction, instructions, and items inside, (2) the items addressing anxious situations had fully covered every possible aspect concerning the situations and activities in a general English classroom, and (3) the

scales from strongly disagree to strongly agree truly reflected their degrees of anxiety about each situation. According to their comments and feedback, some changes were made to the questionnaire design: (1) the introduction was made more transparent, (2) the Likert scale as used by Horwitz et al. (1986) had the neutral position removed and incorporated a 5 point scale focusing on the degree of anxiety, (3) adverbs in questionnaire items indicating degree or frequency were removed in order not to influence the participants' responding to the questions (Dörnyei 2003: 54), and (4) 12 items were added under the multi-item approach (ibid.: 32-35). Finally, the ELCAS was translated from English to Chinese to prevent student participants from misunderstanding the statements; two native Chinese speakers were invited to examine the accuracy of the translation. Their approval ensured the effectiveness of the scale.

Although there seemed few amendments to the original design, it is important to elaborate the inclusions in the revised questionnaire to avoid people's confusion.

### 3.3.3.2 Questionnaire used in the main study: ELCAS

The revised ELCAS (see Appendix 2) mainly assessed English (as a foreign language) learners' learning anxiety in the language classroom. It was composed of four parts: the cover page, participant's biographical information, a list of anxiety-provoking situations, and participant's contact information.

Like the pilot version, the cover page introduction is in the form of a letter and a list of instructions and reminders. The introduction gives

participants brief information about the researcher, his current study, the aims of this study, the importance of the questionnaire, the participants' rights, the benefits to the participation, and the researcher's contact information. These remarks were an 'appetizer' to open the potential participants' minds when filling in the questionnaire. The instructions and reminders gave them a flavor of the type of questions involved, how many questions there were in each part, how long it would take to complete, and data protection.

The second part gathers biographical information, such as gender, level of English class, overseas and domestic learning experience, and attitude towards English learning conditions (self-perceptions about learning English). Although these variables were to be examined in terms of their relationships to learner anxiety itself, they were considered likely to provide valuable insights into learner anxiety and learning history or experience specific to current Taiwanese tertiary students of English. Some examples of the items are as follows:

Table 3.8 Revised ELCAS: examples of items of biographical information

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Example</b>
Gender	- What gender are you? [ ] Male [ ] Female
Level of Class	- What group are you in now concerning your English course? .....
Overseas and domestic learning experience	- Have you ever visited an English-speaking country? (including travelling and study tour) [ ] Yes, for how long? ..... [ ] No - How much time do you spend practicing English after school in a typical week? .....hour(s)

Attitude towards learning condition	<b>Agreement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
	<b>Statement</b>					
	I feel confident in my English ability.					
	I have the aptitude for learning English.					

Following the biographical information, a list of anxiety-inducing language learning related situations was listed on the left, with a Likert scale from 1 to 5 on the right. This scale aimed to detect English learners' degree of anxiety in their English classroom. There are three underlying constructs of anxiety involved in the 60 items: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. In order to encourage the participants to read carefully when responding, a number of positively worded items—Items 8, 13, 16, 17, 27, 31, 35, 38, 40, 44, 48, 54, and 56—were interwoven into the scale (Dörnyei 2003: 55-56). A set of contradictory items (Items 1 and 17) were also designed for the same purpose. The 5-point Likert scale from 1: not at all to 5: extremely was next to each item to measure the participants' levels of anxiety in their English classroom. Possible scores on the ELCAS are in the range 60 to 300—the higher the score, the more anxious the learner. Some examples extracted from the

scale are presented below for reference:

Table 3.9 Example of the anxiety scale

Item	Example					
Positively worded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- I am at ease during tests in my English class.</li><li>- I feel calm when I respond to my teacher's questions in English.</li></ul>					
Contradictory	1. I feel unsure of myself when I am speaking in my English class. 17. I feel confident when I speak in my English class.					
Finalized	<b>Anxiety Levels</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Anxiety Situations</b>	<b>Not At All</b>	<b>Slightly</b>	<b>Moderately</b>	<b>Very</b>	<b>Extremely</b>
	I feel nervous when I speak to my teacher in English.					
	I feel nervous when I make mistakes in English class.					

The final part asks participants to provide their contact information. This was needed for the invitation to a follow-up interview. They had no obligation to leave their personal contact information, although they had been told the reason for its request. The requested information included their name, either Chinese or English, department and class, and either E-mail address or mobile phone number.

### 3.3.3.3 Reliability and Validity of the revised ELCAS

Although the ELCAS basically reflects the same design concepts as the FLCAS, its reliability and validity need to be re-examined (Seliger and Shohamy 1989: 192) to confirm that the scores from the former are 'free from errors of measurement', and it 'measures what it has been designed to measure' (Dörnyei 2003: 110). Through Cronbach's alpha coefficient test, its internal consistency was .968, without any item discarded. This illustrated high reliability of the ELCAS. Compared with other scholars' reliability test on their FLCAS, the ELCAS had a similar test result to the FLCAS:

Table 3.10 Reliability of the ELCAS and the FLCAS in four studies

	<b>Present study</b>	<b>Horwitz et al. 1986</b>	<b>Aida 1994</b>	<b>Chu 2008</b>
<b>Sample size</b>	318	108	96	364
<b>Student status</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	1 <sup>st</sup> year	1 <sup>st</sup> year	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year
<b>Language</b>	English	Spanish	Japanese	English
<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	.97	.93	.94	.92

Note. The participants were all tertiary students.

Based on Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLA theory, the ELCAS items could be further categorized into three sub-themes—communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. The table below demonstrates the corresponding items to the three anxieties.

Table 3.11 The Corresponding items to the sub-anxieties

<b>Sub-scale</b>	<b>Corresponding items</b>
Communication apprehension (CA)	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28, 29, 31, 35, 41, 44, 48, 54
Fear of negative Evaluation (FNE)	2, 3, 12, 16, 18, 19, 25, 27, 30, 32, 34, 37, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 51, 52, 58, 60
Test anxiety (TA)	8, 10, 11, 15, 20, 24, 33, 36, 38, 39, 47, 49, 50, 53, 55, 56, 57, 59

The same statistical test was implemented on these to examine their reliabilities. The results showed that they were all highly reliable at .93 (CA), .93 (FNE), and .89 (TA).

Condensing the validity issue, the ELCAS has content validity and predictive validity. The former focuses on 'whether or not the content of the manifest variables [items of the ELCAS] are right to measure the latent concepts [learner anxiety] that we are trying to measure' (Muijs 2004: 66). In the pilot study, five of the six interviewees were asked whether the items included most of the possible situations or activities in the classroom. Four out of five agreed on their being representative of the context of an English classroom. The same question was posed again in some interviews with the main participants; their responses were in agreement with the pilot interviewees'. Furthermore, the added items were developed and designed in line with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) definitions of foreign language anxiety. Predictive validity examines 'whether the instrument you are using predicts the outcomes you would

theoretically expect it too' (Muijs 2004: 67). Analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) revealed that the levels of class group had a significant effect on degrees of anxiety,  $F(2, 315) = 9.09, p < 0.001$ . A Post hoc analysis showed that only the difference between the elementary ( $M = 2.80, SD = .68$ ) and the advanced classes ( $M = 2.42, SD = .61$ ) was significant at  $p < 0.001$ . The intermediate class group ( $M = 2.63, SD = .57$ ) did not differ significantly from any of the other groups. Since the level of class was established from students' CSEPT results, it could be that people with low English attainment tend to be more anxious than those with higher English proficiency. This result echoed a number of scholars' findings that there was a significant negative relationship between degrees of anxiety and English scores (e.g. Aida 1994; Horwitz 1986; Saito and Samimy 1996).

#### 3.3.4 Semi-structured interview

The interview is suggested to be the most frequently conducted method in qualitative inquiries and in various 'applied linguistic contexts for diverse purposes' (Dörnyei 2007a: 134). In view of the research topic investigated, using interviews as a method would better enable me to learn the details of different aspects of FLA. As mentioned by Wellington (2000), the interview is comparatively more convenient and effective than other methods, such as observation and documents, since its conductors can (1) prompt and investigate unobservable things (see Patton 1990: 278), e.g., 'feelings, thoughts, and intentions' (ibid.), (2) probe an interviewee's 'thoughts, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings, and perspectives', and (3)



obtain his/her 'versions and account of situations' (p. 71). An interview is often conceived of as a daily conversation. However, Cohen et al. (2011) give some arguments against this claim:

It [interview] has...questions being asked by the interviewer...the responses must be as explicit and often as detailed as possible...the interview is a constructed and usually a specifically planned event...; therefore, the researcher has an obligation to set up, and abide by, the different 'rules of the game' in an interview (p. 409).

Other than the advantages above, interviews can replace other modes of data collection not preferred by the subjects who, for instance, may feel relatively comfortable in speaking and can, therefore, possibly provide more information in the format of a conversation. The language used in interviews can also be switched to the subjects' native language if necessary, which may enhance the quality and quantity of the data provided (Mackey and Gass 2005: 173-4). In this study, the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese to prevent communication difficulties which can occur in a non-native language like English.

In terms of disadvantages, arranging and conducting an interview is time-consuming. The interviewer also needs to be equipped with good communication skills to make the interview go smoothly. Since anonymity is not possible here, the respondents may attempt to behave differently in front of the interviewer. Shy interviewees are also more likely to provide inadequate data, whereas others may produce data unhelpful to the study (Dörnyei 2007a: 143-4). Mackey

and Gass (2005) also mention the potential problem whereby an interviewee provides some 'regarded-as-desirable' responses during the interview to please the interviewer (p. 174). Arguably speaking, some warm-up questions may ease the interviewee gradually into the interview, giving them time to familiarize themselves with the surroundings and the topic under discussion.

Research interviews are of three different types: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (see Mackey & Gass, 2005: 173). The structured is more like a written questionnaire and the unstructured is not organized beforehand, so the semi-structured format was chosen in my research. A semi-structured interview combines features of both structured and the unstructured. The interviewer has to develop an interview guide/protocol with open-ended questions and put the questions to his/her respondents more or less in the same way at each interview. S/he also has the freedom to prompt and probe to elicit more information from his/her interviewees. These properties make the data collection process far more flexible and secure than from the structured interview.

With the above characteristics of semi-structured interviews, I could not only follow prepared guidelines to prevent me from digressing, but also go deeper to explore my subjects' interpretations of related experiences of anxiety, such as its sources, effects, and management. As there are different aspects of anxiety to discuss in the interview, the protocol could remind me of what had been addressed and what had not. Moreover, I had immersed myself in the literature on foreign language anxiety in order to prepare the

questions for the semi-structured interviews. As Dörnyei (2007a) points out, semi-structured interviews are suitable for researchers who have 'a good enough overview of the phenomena or domain in question' and can 'develop broad questions about the topic in advance' (p. 136). I thus felt that I had the ability to react flexibly to issues arising during the interviews. Importantly, as a novice researcher, it was less challenging and more successful to conduct a semi-structured interview than an unstructured one.

The second phase of this study involved two sets of semi-structured interviews conducted respectively with student participants and teacher participants. The former were asked mainly about their experiences of learning anxiety in their university English classroom, i.e. the situations, sources, effects of and coping strategies for their English learning anxiety. The latter, however, were invited to discuss their awareness of their students' anxiety in class and how they reacted to it. Two interview protocols were therefore created in line with the research aims. The development of the student's interview guide was based not merely on the previous literature addressing the relevant aspects of foreign language learner anxiety, but also the interview questions in Price's (1991) study of highly anxious students' subjective experiences of foreign language anxiety. As to the guide for teachers, some questions relating to the research aims in the student's guide were adopted in order to examine each teacher's consciousness of their students' situations, sources, and effects of anxiety, but reframed to fit the specific context. As his study in 2005 focuses on EFL/ESL teachers' perspectives on language

anxiety, Ohata's (2005) interview questions were also consulted to develop an interview protocol for teacher participants. These two interview protocols were then commented on by my supervisors and translated from English to Chinese since the participants are all native Chinese speakers.

In order to ensure that the protocols were helpful for achieving the above aims, two Chinese colleagues were invited to participate in my pilot study. One who had no teaching experience and graduated recently from university was interviewed with the questions for student participants; the other having been a university English teacher in China for many years helped examine the questions for teacher participants. Apart from the purpose already mentioned, this pilot was also used to check whether (1) the questions were sequentially appropriate, (2) new questions were needed, (3) some questions were redundant, (4) the recorder being used worked well, and (5) the questions were easy to understand. According to these processes and the recordings, only a few parts were modified. In particular, the wording of some questions was adapted to use more spoken Chinese expressions. Two Chinese and one Taiwanese were invited to read through the revised interview protocols. The two Chinese colleagues had participated in the pilot; the Taiwanese was a friend studying for her master's in Taiwan. After their help, I was ready for my main interviews in Taiwan. The protocols were thought of as guidance, and were not assumed to preclude any unpredictable situations. However, with the protocol to hand, I could make adjustments, as necessary, but still kept myself on the right track.

Simply put, the interview and interview questions themselves were flexible to an extent.

The student's interview protocol mainly tackled the situations, sources, effects of, and coping strategies for English learning anxiety (see Appendix 4). The questions were organized from 'general' to 'specific' (Chen 2002: 259). The participants were first asked about their English learning experiences in general as warm-up questions in order to build up a relaxing atmosphere, e.g. 'How do you feel about learning English?'. Next, some questions about their perspectives on the relationship between social variables, such as English proficiency and overseas experience, and learning anxiety or emotions in the learning context were put in an attempt to arouse their awareness of and lead them into the theme of this interview. For example, 'In terms of English language proficiency level, who do you think may get anxious more easily? Why?'. These questions were a strategy for establishing the rapport between me and my interviewees and releasing their presumed potential resistance to sharing their own stories with me. Then, they were led to the major questions about situations, sources, effects of and coping strategies for their learning anxiety in the university English classroom—'When you feel anxious in the learning context, do you do anything to make yourself feel better?', for example.

The teacher's interview protocol aimed to investigate to what extent the English teachers were aware of their students' anxiety and whether they helped alleviate it (see Appendix 6). The organization of the teachers' questions was the same as that of the students'. They

shared their teaching experiences, discussed their views towards the factors, and responded to the primary questions about university students' English learning anxiety in class. The examples are as follows: (1) warm-up: 'Except for tertiary students, have you ever taught learners of English in other education levels?', (2) factor: 'What English level of learners would you expect to see more evidence of anxious feelings?', and (3) core: 'Where do you think tertiary students' anxiety about learning English comes from?'.

### 3.3.5 Research procedure: questionnaire

The questionnaire data collection lasted for about five weeks from the middle of December in 2011 to the middle of January in 2012. There were 31 classes in total distributed over the seven levels of groups. Eight classes were in Level 5 and only one class in Level 8. The rest had four or five classes each. On the other hand, there were only three big classes in the English department. Due to the huge number of classes and working alone, I first adopted a cluster sampling strategy and randomly selected three classes from each level. However, in the English department, all three classes were accessed. A strategy of convenience sampling was then employed for administering the scale to the students in order to discover the learners' anxiety levels and find the most anxious students for follow-up interviews.

In order not to deprive teachers and students of teaching and learning, I suggested that the students be allowed to take the questionnaires home and return them in the following class. I also

appealed to the teachers for help administering the questionnaires to their students since the English classes at each level were all allocated in the same time slots. Nevertheless, the above suggestions were negotiable, depending on conditions at the time. Three different ways of administration and collection were eventually used: (1) I myself administered the questionnaires and collected them back right afterwards in the same class, (2) The teacher him-/herself administered the questionnaires and collected them back right afterwards in class, and (3) The teacher administered the questionnaires and told their students to take them home and complete them and their returning them was no duty.

As I had presumed that I might not be able to administer the questionnaires myself, I made preparations for this. I bought B5 Manilla envelopes and transparent file pockets for the questionnaires. I then attached two sheets of paper to each Manilla envelope. One reminded the teachers of what they needed to notice when they administered and collected back the questionnaires; the other was a short letter containing information about my research and my questionnaire and an invitation to participate in my research in case I did not distribute the questionnaires in person, so I needed the teacher to read that out for me to the participants. Furthermore, because the research information sheet, consent form (Appendix 1), and questionnaire had to be given to the students, I put all three documents together in the file pockets to save distribution time. That is, each pocket carried a research information sheet, two consent forms, and one questionnaire. The number of pockets needed in one

envelope related to the teachers' reports of the number of students in their class. Before the procedure, I sent some envelopes to the teachers who wanted to help me administer the questionnaires, and told them where to put the packages or that I could collect them from their offices.

As mentioned above, the questionnaires were either distributed by me in person or the teachers themselves. The place where the participants filled in the questionnaires was their own classroom or at home. The population in each class varied from 20 to 50 people. A ball pen was given as a gift to each student filling in the questionnaire. Before taking part, the students were introduced to the research briefly and required to read through the information sheet and sign the consent form. Then, they were encouraged to also read through the introduction and reminders on the first page of their questionnaires to make sure they understood how to complete the task. There were three parts in total to which they needed to respond: (1) demographic information, (2) anxiety scale, and (3) contact information. It took them approximately 20 minutes to complete their questionnaires. Once they had finished, they were asked to put their consent forms and questionnaires back into their file pockets and returned their pockets to the administrator. The pockets were then put into the envelope for the convenience of collection.

### 3.3.6 Research procedure: student interview

With the rationale described in Section 3.3.1.1, an extreme (or deviant) case sampling strategy was employed to recruit the target



population for the second phase of data collection. According to the students' mean score of anxiety, 20 of the most anxious students were purposively selected to be interviewed. They were all contacted and asked whether they were willing to take part in an interview. If someone declined to participate, I would contact the next one on the list. Nevertheless, most of the contacted students were supportive of my research. Those who could attend my interview also confirmed when they were available and where to meet in the university so that the appointments could be scheduled.

The interview data collection took place between late April 2012 and the middle of June 2012. I conducted the interviews in Chinese with each of the students in person in either the common area of European Union Center or outside the Office of International Programs on campus. Before the interviews started, the participants read through the research information sheet and the consent form. If they had no questions about the research and the interview itself, they needed to sign the consent form in order to participate. In addition, the participants were told that a gift had been prepared for them to show appreciation of their help, which might strengthen their motive to participate. Importantly, I reemphasized that the interview would be recorded and the data generated protected and used for the current research only. I then started off with warm-up questions and questions about the relationships between the factors and anxiety, and then the main questions eliciting their own stories of learning anxiety in their English classes. The length of each interview averaged approximately one hour and 40 minutes. At the end, each participant

was given 100NTD (approximately 2 GBP) as an incentive payment. I also informed the interviewees that I would need to contact them again to ask for their help checking whether the transcriptions of their interviews were correct.

### 3.3.7 Research procedure: teacher interview

In order to understand teachers' perceptions of the current students' FLA, a strategy of homogeneous sampling was adopted to recruit the students' teachers to share their related experiences. The teacher participants were mainly the instructors of the students interviewed and some were randomly invited. They were contacted and asked whether they were willing to take part in the interview. Fortunately, they were all very supportive and immediately confirmed the time and the place. Interviews with the teachers occurred in May and June 2012. They were each interviewed in Chinese individually by me in their own office or the common area outside the department office. The collection procedure in the teachers' interviews was carried out in much the same way as the students' interviews. They needed to read through the research information sheet and sign the consent form (see Appendix 5). If they had any questions, they could bring them up before the interview started. They were also informed of the approximate length of the interview and that the interview would be recorded electronically. I then started with the warm-up questions and questions about the relationships between the factors and anxiety, going on to the major questions about their experiences of addressing their students' learning anxiety in the classroom. The procedure took

approximately one hour on average for each participant. The participants were given a box of English tea bags as an incentive when finished. I further informed the interviewees that I would need to contact them again to ask for their help checking whether the transcriptions of their interviews were correct.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The introduction to how the data—questionnaire and interviews—was analyzed is presented in the following two sub-sections.

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaire data analysis**

The ELCAS examined the students' degrees of learning anxiety in their English classroom, the results of which was employed to recruit the target students to be my interviewees. In order to analyze the questionnaire data, the participants' responses were first coded in numerical form. Then, the numerical codes of the positively-worded items were reversed from 1 to 5, 2 to 4, 3 to 3, 4 to 2, and 5 to 1. A database was finally created in the IBM SPSS 20 for statistical analysis. Two types of statistical analyses were used:

- (1) Cronbach's Alpha was computed to estimate the reliability of the ELCAS.
- (2) 'Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, maximum, minimum, and percentages of the variables, were computed and used to summarize the FLCAS [ELCAS] responses' (Wong 2005).

### 3.4.2 Interview data analysis

Before the interview data were analyzed, I sent the typed transcripts back to the individual interviewees—the students and the teachers—for a look in order to confirm that they had no problem with the transcribed contents.

The interview data were analyzed exclusively qualitatively since they aimed at exploring the situations, sources, effects of, and coping tactics for English learning anxiety the students had experienced and employed and what their teachers had been aware of and done to alleviate their students' anxiety in class. As the interviews were recorded on an audio recorder, I first transcribed the recordings verbatim to preserve every bit of information related to my research questions, and also to gain a general picture of what I had got from the process. Then, the Word files of the transcriptions were uploaded to the NVivo 10 software for the convenience of data coding.

I printed out and read through each transcript once. The second time I read through the transcripts with the questions in my protocol, and bracketed the lines which responded to the question on the hard copy to have them coded. I then coded the lines in the NVivo. When one description was coded, I ticked the bracket to remind myself of the progress of my work. If the lines related to one of the other questions, I allocated them the exact question number as a reminder and coded them later on. Furthermore, one description could be assigned to two codes if it appeared to fit two contexts. The codes were presented in the form of a sentence, enabling me to recall the original lines or descriptions more effectively. When I had finished coding the

non-English major students' transcripts, the list of codes generated from them was used as a reference to code the English major students' interview data. However, new codes were added once the existing codes were inadequate to reflect certain descriptions in the latter. The transcripts of the teacher interviewees also went through the same coding process as those of the student ones.

After coding was done, four sets of coding frames—two students' and two teachers' (English majors and non-English majors)—were developed to demonstrate what had been found from this further data processing. Firstly, I printed out the lists of codes underneath the questions directly related to my research questions. I then opened an Excel file and put 'category', 'code', and 'frequency' as the headings of my coding frames at the top of the spreadsheets. I attempted to treat every code as a category at the beginning and did the 'matching game'. Specifically, codes were typed in one by one, during which I started to match the codes by their features and ticked the ones addressed. If a certain code could not be assigned to a group, it was kept apart first to see whether it fitted into any of the following codes. In addition, one code could be distributed over two or more categories given that it apparently fitted more than one context. A number of chunks of codes were shown in the spreadsheet; each chunk was given a name illustrating the commonality of the codes involved. The categories of the preceding sets of coding frames were referred to while I was dealing with codes in different groups, except for the English majors. New categories were added when necessary. Finally, I re-examined the codes in each category to see whether they were in the right place

or needed to be re-categorized.

Although the codes were grouped into different categories, the latter were more like subthemes which could be further categorized into major themes, reflecting the true picture of the participants' experiences of anxiety. The themes were developed in much the same way as the categories. No category was shown a second time underneath another theme because (1) themes were thought to have their own exclusive properties, (2) the quality of each category was clear, and (3) it would make the work never-ending if the same was applied for establishing themes.

In order to enhance validity, the categorizations of codes and sub-themes were both examined by my supervisor as the third party. She agreed with my classifications of the items although a few amendments were suggested and made after the inspection.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

This research project was approved by the School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator at the University of Nottingham in November 2011. This approval also included the appropriateness of my research information sheet and participation consent forms for teachers and students. No CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check was needed since the participants were all over 18 years old. Although educational research has been thought to cause little harm to its participants (Johnson and Christensen 2004: 111), the British Educational Research Association (BERA) has issued/revised ethical guidelines for educational research since 2004. In order to avoid

ethical misconduct, the guidelines are to be consulted in case ethically disputable issues arose.

Before conducting my research in the research site, I contacted the directors of the Department of English and the Department of Foreign Language Instructions via e-mail to obtain their permission to enter and contact their teachers and students for my fieldwork. After their approval, I approached the teachers of the target classes for their permission to access their students for the collection of my questionnaire data and interview data.

As mentioned above, teacher and student participants were both given the research information sheet to read and a consent form to sign before their participation. The research information sheet was sectioned into (1) aims of this project, (2) number of people being involved, (3) procedures for this study, (4) risks of participation, (5) benefits of participation, (6) confidentiality, and (7) the right to participation. As for the consent form for the questionnaire, the students reconfirmed their understandings of this project, their participation, the right to withdraw, confidentiality/anonymity, data protection, and the channel of complaint. Due to the need for the second phase interview, the students were encouraged, rather than forced, to leave their contact information at the end of questionnaire. They were told the reason for filling in this part and promised confidentiality and its being used for this research only. The statements in the consent form for the student interviews were the same as those for questionnaire, except for 'I will be audio-taped during interview'. In terms of the teachers' interviews, they were also

given a research information sheet and a consent form before the interview started. Their consent form was the same as the one presented to the students. Both the teachers and students were again promised anonymity when excerpts from their data were displayed in the report of my findings.

### **3.6 Summary**

This chapter presented the research methodology of this study. Under pragmatism, a quasi-mixed method design was used for this research. The participants were university students and teachers of English in Taiwan. Student participants first filled in a scale, and some of the most anxious were then selected for interview. The teachers were interviewed to examine their sensitivity to students' anxiety in the classroom. The questionnaire data were statistically analyzed to select the target population. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, categorized, and thematized to finalize the answers to the research questions. The ethical issues which arose were also discussed to show my conduct towards the participants and the study. Chapter 4 reports the findings from the students' interviews.



## CHAPTER 4 INTERVIEW FINDINGS: STUDENTS

### **4.0 Introduction**

Previously in Section 3.4.2 of Chapter 3, I explained how the themes generated from my interview data were arrived at in detail, i.e. the procedure from coding and categorizing to thematizing. The lists of themes are presented either in the appendices or in this chapter to (1) reveal the complete picture of the outcomes and (2) illustrate what has been focused on in this report. Appendices 7 and 8 show the intact versions of themes generated from the English majors' and non-English majors' data respectively.

Due to the prescribed scope of this thesis and the number of (sub-) themes generated by the research, not all the themes that emerged are described and discussed in this chapter. The selection or rejection of themes is important to the issue of 'what matters here'. Thus, the selection process was based on three considerations: (1) the number of codes contained in a theme, (2) the literature reviewed, and (3) the diversity of findings.

With regard to the first consideration, the number of codes in a theme can be said to demonstrate the strength of the students' impressions of and reflections on a connected series of situations, i.e. the more, the stronger. In terms of the second consideration, the literature provides the researcher with not only important background knowledge, but also the potential contrast between the previous and current findings. Lastly, consideration of the interesting and less discussed or unexpected comments/themes may help depict a picture

which, despite the difficulties mentioned above, still draws people's attention to and gives them different insights into learner anxiety. In the light of these three conditions, I aim to account for and explore the students' major concerns about their own anxiety in the English language classroom with appropriate breadth and depth. (In terms of the individual groups' classroom learning, the most essential theme of each aspect of anxiety is highlighted in yellow in the table below.) Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 below are the abridged versions of the original lists of themes above.

Table 4.1 Reduced themes from English majors' data

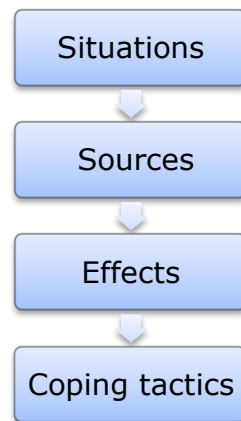
<b>Aspects</b> (of anxiety)	Situation	Source	Effect	Coping strategy
<b>Themes</b>	1. Exposure in class	1. Concern about peers' judgments	1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance	1. Relaxation techniques
	2. Learning in class: unpredictability	2. Negative self-Perception of L2 learning	2. Poor speaking performance	2. Gaining support from others
	3. Working with others different from me	3. Individual differences: learning behaviors	3. Self-disapproving thoughts	3. Readiness for activities
			4. Being propelled to work harder	

Table 4.2 Reduced themes from non-English majors' data

<b>Aspects</b> (of anxiety)	Situation	Source	Effect	Coping strategy
<b>Themes</b>	1. Learning English in a formal classroom	1. Negative self-Perception of L2 learning	1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance	1. Relaxation techniques
	2. Exposure in class	2. Inadequate English ability	2. Poor speaking performance	2. Gaining support from others
	*3. Learning in the class: unpredictability	3. Academic expectations of themselves	3. Self-deprecating thoughts	*3. Confronting anxious situations
			4. Being propelled to work harder	

This chapter will present the interview data collected from both English major and non-English major students. Firstly, the data from English major students will be presented, followed by the data from the non-English major students. For each group of subjects, the sections are organized in the order of the sources, situations, effects of, and coping strategies for EFL anxiety. The idea for this organization comes from the concept of 'cause and effect'. After the difficulties are detected, solutions are then explored for the problems. (The themes in each aspect are not necessarily linked with each other as the aim of this study was to look into the different dimensions individually.) The diagram below explains the structure:

Figure 4.1 The order of the sections



Likewise, themes in each section are organized in accordance with the number of codes generated and the literature discussed on each of the themes. In other words, the sequence is from a large to a small number of codes and from commonly to less commonly mentioned themes in the literature. (Notwithstanding their highest frequencies, the themes asterisked in Table 4.2 were positioned in the last places as the less discussed or unexpected items.) The purpose of this order is to gradually build up a coherent and in-depth picture of the research outcomes.

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the interviews were all conducted and transcribed in Mandarin Chinese, but the excerpts have been translated into English. This type of parenthesis—(.)—has also been used within the extracts to add extra information. Specifically, (.) indicates a pause in the middle of a sentence to indicate the original flow of my participants' speeches. The 'R' in the extracted dialogue represents the interviewer himself, i.e. the researcher.

## 4.1 English major students' EFL anxiety

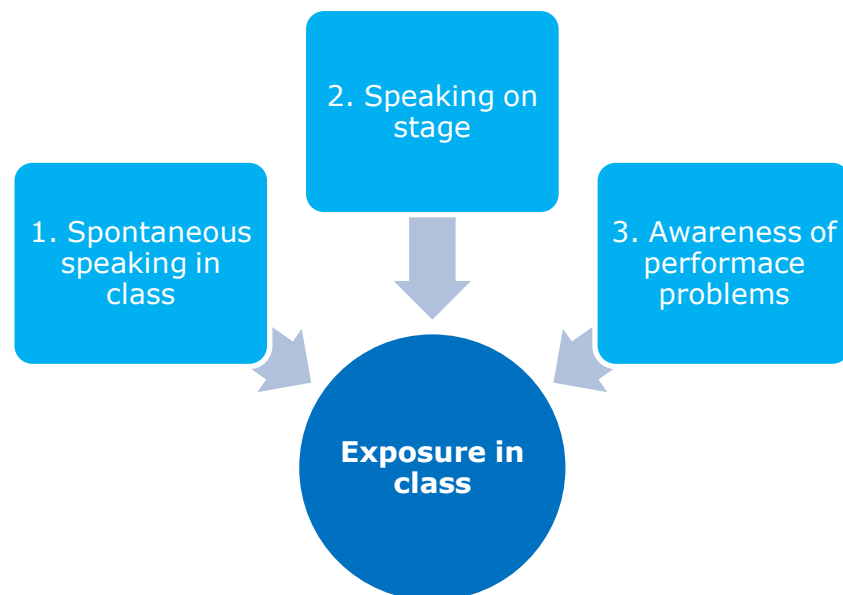
### 4.1.1 The situations where anxiety happens

The situations in Table 4.1 comprise (1) exposure in class, (2) learning in class: unpredictability, and (3) working with others different from me. Each also included several minor categories, highlighting more specific situations in which anxiety occurs. Each sub-category is introduced below.

#### 4.1.1.1 Exposure in class

Students are encouraged to speak English in the classroom to get used to speaking the language. Figure 4.2 reveals the relevant activities mentioned by the anxious students.

Figure 4.2 The sub-themes of 'exposure in class'



When attempting or required to respond, speak, or present in English in class, students, of course, risk exposing various aspects of themselves to the whole class.

### *Spontaneous speaking in class*

Spontaneous speaking in class was considered to be threatening by at least half the students. Specifically, they were concerned mainly about being called on to speak, including being randomly picked by the teacher, and speaking voluntarily. One student described her anxiety over being called on to speak, and her teacher perceived her nervousness on one occasion. She hoped to improve in her next attempt. In her own words,

As I looked like having something to say, my teacher called on me to answer her question..., so this meant that I had to answer the question in front of my classmates. And, again, I used very simple English to respond. After class,...The teacher asked me, "XXX [ENG02], did you feel anxious when I called on you?" I answered her, "A little bit." Then, she said, "Just a little bit?" I said to her, "No!" She said, "If you only felt a little bit, then I would call on you again to answer another question." I said, "No way..." I feel I still hope if I speak English in front of my classmates again, I can be less nervous. I hope this can be improved (ENG02).

Moreover, there were times when a student might feel motivated to answer a teacher's question, but, even then, there were problems with this:

ENG03: Sometimes you can actually understand the question asked by teacher,.... Of course, you really want to speak, but students are required to respond in English. Thus, you just give up straight away .

R: That is to say, when you want me to respond in English, I am really nervous indeed.

ENG03: Yeah...

She further mentioned her classmates' reaction, similar to hers, in the same situation:

There was one time when the teacher said that Chinese was allowed, so my classmates were very active and willing to answer and were able to say a string of words. However, when responding in English, they might just finish their response within two or three sentences (ENG03).

When asked about her own anxious experiences in class, another interviewee shared with me a number of classroom situations, one of which was 'when I am speaking in my English class':

I feel anxious in most of the English classes after entering university because everyone is (.) I feel that everyone is very professional. Therefore, as soon as you speak, you show your weak spots. Then, you will (.) I feel a bit more anxious when I speak in class (ENG06).

Seemingly, this student feels pressure after comparing her own ability with that of her peers. This probably makes her feel that her inferiority would be exposed in public when she had to perform. Her worry makes me wonder whether she, to some extent, cares about others'

reactions or failing to protect a positive image.

### *Speaking on stage*

Speaking on the classroom stage appears to be a situation that is rather frightening for many of the students. No matter what speaking task they perform, they seem, again, to be anxious about facing all of their classmates and trying to finish their oral task at the front. The only male student in the group recalled his first year experience at university and said that he was more likely to feel stressed and nervous in the English class:

Due to the fact that at the beginning, I was still not used to that kind of feeling (.) I mean it became the situation that we had comparatively more chance of coming up to the stage to do oral tasks or presentations with ppt. Since we needed to present in English, I became relatively anxious when I did not know how to express my ideas in English (ENG04).

He, however, claimed that he later felt much better after becoming more accustomed to this activity although having some anxiety was inevitable for him. Furthermore, one female fellow claimed that she, generally speaking, disliked coming up to the stage to perform in any class, including English. Nevertheless, she 'would speak if in front of acquaintances, but not in front of unknown people' (ENG09). She then described her first year experience of anxiety over speaking on stage:

Because everyone was still shy in the first year, at the beginning teacher would ask you to come up to the stage and



say, "Ok! stand on these three (.) One stands there and one stands there, and then two practice English conversation face to face." At that time when on stage, you felt very anxious as if you were going to faint very soon (ENG09).

After everyone in the class knew one another, her teacher asked students to stand on the opposite sides of the classroom for English conversation practice. According to her, 'The one standing in the front would feel [comparatively] very uncomfortable and uneasy as the others kept looking at him or her' (ENG09). The above students' problem is presumably lack of experience or familiarity with the classroom practices. It is also reasonable to question whether their English abilities are good enough to support them in these activities. Stage fright or shyness could, moreover, be an issue for the students, especially the female one.

#### *Awareness of performance problems*

Finally, the students claimed to produce negative emotional responses to the perceived flaws in their own performances in class, such as faltering speech, poor pronunciation, and incomprehensible responses. One of the students thought that it was shameful for her not to speak English fluently and smoothly in class: 'I feel when I perform and speak raggedly in class, I feel very ashamed as everyone is listening to you speak' (ENG08). Once again, the anxiety occurring in this situation perhaps originate from such causes as fear of giving people a negative impression of her, i.e. losing face, and disliking feelings of being judged by peers and receiving negative comments or

reactions from classmates. Another female student employed words, such as 'worried (擔心)', 'afraid (害怕)', and 'nervous (緊張)'; successively in expressing her anxiety when she felt that she was not pronouncing English well. She referred explicitly to two situations—(1) being given a text in advance and asked to read it aloud the next day and (2) being given a text and asked to read it instantly:

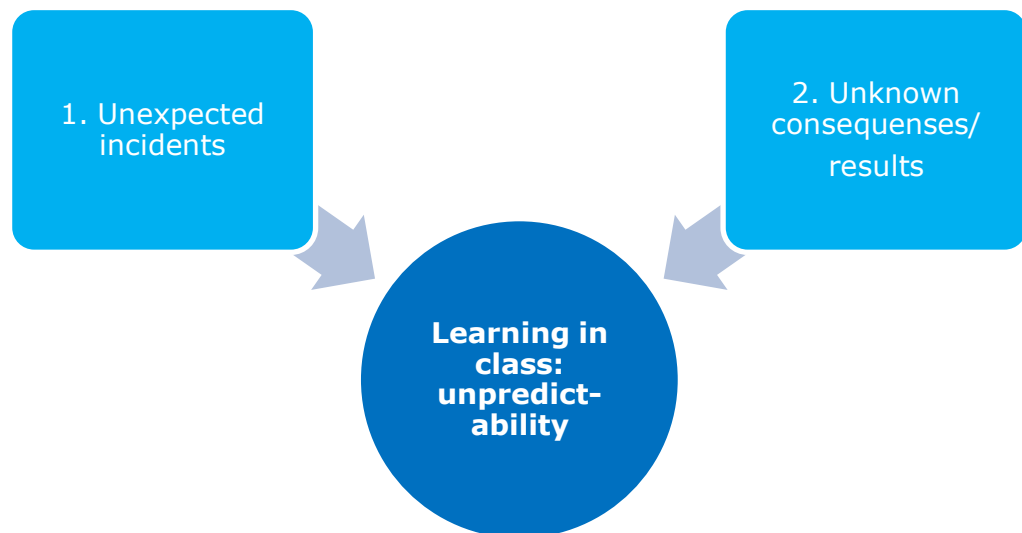
If she [the teacher] today suddenly...asks me to read a text aloud straight away, then...I will be very worried about pronouncing each word badly. Therefore, I will particularly focus on the pronunciation. However, if she gives me an article and asks me to read it aloud next day, then I will definitely go and...check the pronunciation, something like that. It is because I feel that pronouncing incorrectly is something that should not happen (ENG01).

This student seems obsessed with correct pronunciation. She believes that pronunciation has a great impact on people's initial impression of a person. Therefore, it becomes important for her to pronounce English without flaws when she is speaking English.

#### 4.1.1.2 Learning in class: unpredictability

Unpredictability here indicates situations and consequences that the students did not expect to happen or did not have any way to anticipate what happened while undertaking learning tasks in the classroom. Specifically, Figure 4.3 illustrates two sub-themes assigned to the major theme of unpredictability.

Figure 4.3 The sub-themes of 'learning in class: unpredictability'



The participants' experiences, as described below, exemplify the difference between these two.

#### *Unexpected incidents*

Unexpected incidents mainly indicate the learning related changes or occurrences beyond the students' control or power of prediction in the classroom. When faced with these unanticipated situations, the participants reported a fear of losing control over their emotions. A lower level student revealed her anxiety when she cannot understand what her teacher says. While responding to the main questions, she further described this situation:

When I am listening, the teacher may (.) "Ok! This is very important!" I only hear this is very important...For example, the teacher now says, "Ok, what I am going to say is very important", and then she starts to say. However, I totally have no idea of what the teacher just said. I think in my mind, "Ah,

I am sunk; I will miss this chapter when reviewing work before the test, won't I?" (ENG06).

She also explained that the content of the teacher's talk can influence her emotional reactions to the situation: 'It depends on the importance. If the teacher just talks about something not related to the class (.) I mean just talking about daily trivial matters in English, then I feel it is fine' (ENG06). Apparently, this student is still confident in understanding the teachers' words to a certain extent, but feels her ability is poor when she has to cope with relatively difficult, unfamiliar, or unexpected content. Therefore, she may normally have no warning before the problem occurs. Apart from the above situation, ENG06 also stated that she was unable to cope emotionally with the situation when her teacher wanted her to answer a question which she had not prepared in advance. Specifically,

For example, I now have three questions and have prepared for them in advance. If the teacher asks me these questions, I will not feel afraid. However, if the teacher unexpectedly asks me a fourth question, I will be at my wit's end and not know how to answer (ENG06).

Additionally, a student described university teachers' different ways of posing questions to students from high school ones':

Yes, the high school teacher also called on students, but he or she would not (.) The teacher just taught us by referring to the text books. What we studied were just the things which the teacher taught us, so you just studied what was taught if

you did not understand it. However, my teacher now (.) This may be the question in the text book. The teacher would extend the question and ask you and call on you to respond (ENG08).

The situation, mentioned at the end of her remark above, was suggested to engender her nervousness because of the unpredictability of content. However, closed-ended questions would not be problematic for her:

If the teacher just wants you to (.) gives you some time to write down your answer and say it, but that answer is not open-ended, i.e. there is a fixed answer to the question. If the teacher asks me to answer, I will not feel nervous. However, if the answer is open-ended, i.e. you need to state in detail, I will feel nervous (ENG08).

Taiwan's education system before university level is quite test-oriented. We are usually educated with the concept that there must be a fixed answer to a question. We are, therefore, more used to closed questions rather than open-ended ones requiring students to think and develop their own arguments or ideas. Moreover, in terms of classroom culture, students are normally not allowed to talk in class unless called on to by the teacher. That is, we have to keep quiet and listen to the lectures and take everything in without any reflection. The last two cases appear to indicate that the students have their own views of how classes are typically run, which may originate from their past learning experiences.

### *Unknown consequences/results*

Performing poorly in class is seemingly a major issue for the students. They can have anxiety related reactions to the situations above since they are unable to foresee what will happen afterwards. One student first described her anxiety about the teacher's randomly calling on students, but later in her interview she emphasized that it was whether or not she could answer her teacher's question that played an important role in her emotional response and what the consequence of that might be. The dialogue between me and ENG09 is as follows:

R:        So, while the teacher is randomly calling on students  
(.)...Do you all feel nervous?

⋮

ENG09: I would think in my mind, 'Do not call on me'.

R:        So, is it because you feel very nervous or what?

ENG09: it is because I am very nervous, and also really do not know the answer. If I know the answer, I can say I will absolutely not think, 'Do not call on me'. Ok, I am the one. I mean just like it is not a big deal. I am the one who you call on. Then, I just answer.

R:        How about when you do not know the answer? I mean why you would feel very nervous...

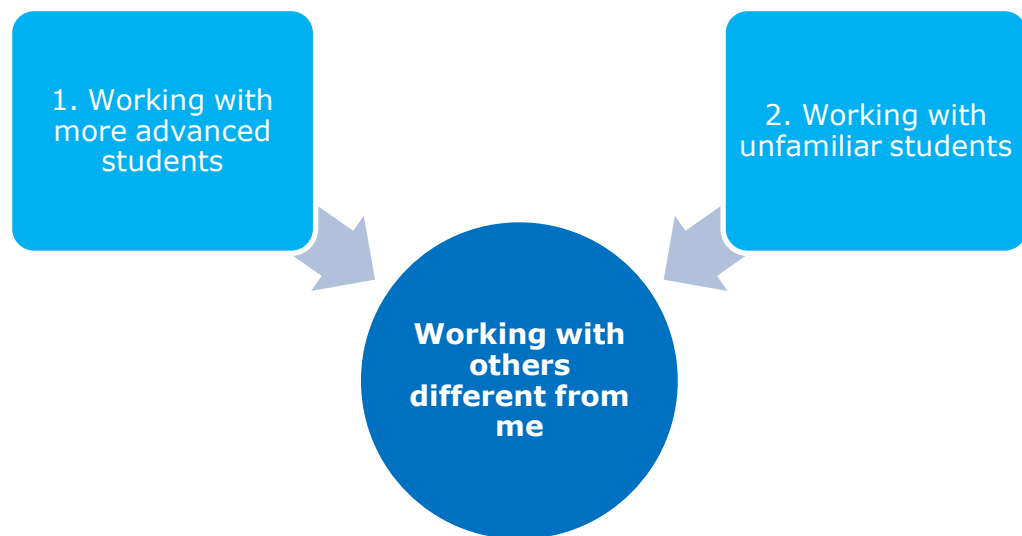
ENG09: It may be because I am afraid of being punished by the teacher.

#### 4.1.1.3 Working with others different from me

Language teachers normally make use of group work as a platform for students to, for example, share their thoughts and practice their English skills with each other. Nevertheless, the people

in the group may influence each other's emotions. More precisely, as Figure 4.4 shows, 'working with more advanced students' and 'working with unfamiliar students' are the two components of the theme.

Figure 4.4 The subthemes of 'working with others different from me'



#### *Working with more advanced/unfamiliar peers*

One female respondent, ENG08, described the primary sources of her anxieties—'negative reactions from advanced and unfamiliar peers' and 'feeling of being judged by unfamiliar peers'. The extract about the former included information relating to the connected situation, but no information was given about the situations relating to the second sub-theme. The situation linked to this is, therefore, provided as follows:

I feel if my classmate talks with me in English, my closer peer, then if the teacher wants us to make an English conversation

in class, I will feel relatively relaxed. If the classmate is (.)  
But, if the teacher groups me with an unfamiliar and superior  
one, I will become comparatively nervous (ENG08).

#### 4.1.2 The sources of anxiety

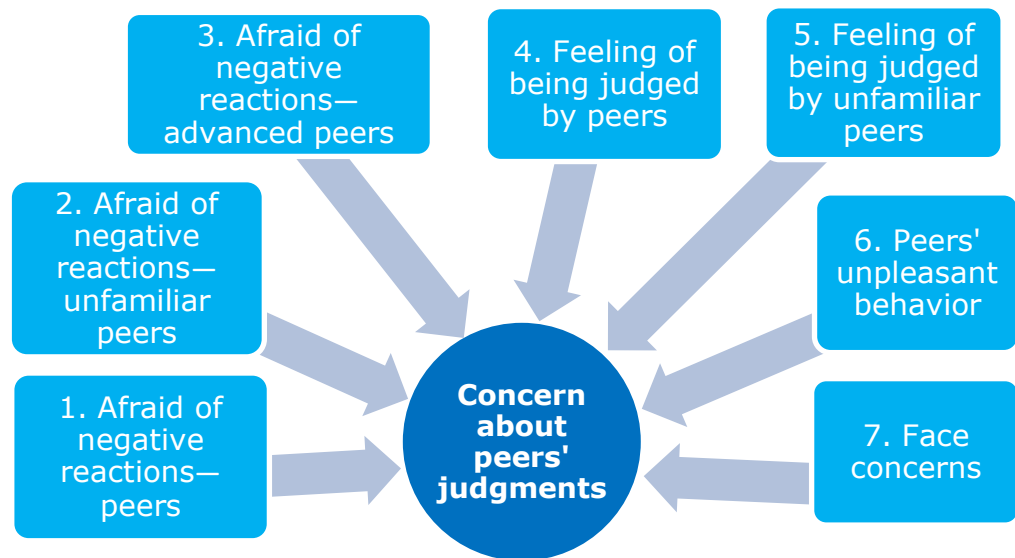
The significant sources of anxiety, as listed in Table 4.1, are (1) concern about peers' judgments, (2) negative self-perception of L2 learning, and (3) individual differences: learning behaviors. Each of these also includes several minor categories pointing to more specific sources of anxiety. The introduction to each sub-category is presented below.

##### 4.1.2.1 Concern with peers' judgments

This source of anxiety, as the diagram below reveals, indicates that the participants seem to be particularly concerned about perceiving or receiving negative feedback from and exposing their flaws to their classmates.



Figure 4.5 The sub-themes of 'concern about peers' judgments'



#### *Afraid of negative reactions—peers*

With regard to the first category, the students appear to be highly sensitive to their classmates' negative impressions of them. Specifically, they are afraid of being looked down on or given no credit in terms of their English ability or performance in class. One student claimed that she was not fearful of her classmates' negative feedback on her performance in the general English class, since everyone was similar in their English proficiency. She was, thus, more willing to volunteer answers in class. However, she acted quite differently in the professional courses of her major: 'Regarding professional courses,...,you just dare not to raise your hand as you are afraid of giving wrong answers and everyone's level of English is different' (ENG02). After prompting, she further clarified that it is not because she does not understand the topics, but

because my expressiveness is not very good, I just do not know how to express my ideas thoroughly although I know what I am probably talking about. I am afraid that others may say you are so (.) very poor or something (ENG02).

A multi-level class, therefore, could mean that the more proficient students may detect the less proficient ones' mistakes and evaluate their performance. Furthermore, as ENG08 said, 'I am just afraid that they would wonder why I speak so poorly and the like because we study in the same class after all'. Another female student expressed her concern about pronouncing English poorly. Compared with some classmates, she said that her way of speaking English is rather 'Taiwanese', i.e. '[no] speed and intonation' (ENG08). She later claimed that pronunciation has an impact on people's views of one's spoken English:

It plays the role that others hear if your speaking English sounds beautiful...There are many teachers who once studied abroad, so they speak English very fluently and the like. But I would favor more those who can speak English beautifully. I myself do have this kind of feeling. Therefore, I think that others would also do the same. So, I feel that pronunciation is very important for me (ENG08).

She finally commented that even though someone spoke English accurately, if his or her pronunciation was poor, she would consider his or her speaking to be no good. This student apparently puts great emphasis on pronunciation, and holds the belief that it is important to achieve a native-like pronunciation. It is consequently not surprising

that she is so judgmental about others' speaking ability, only based on pronunciation.

*Afraid of negative reactions—advanced & unfamiliar peers*

The second and third components, i.e. afraid of negative reactions—unfamiliar and advanced peers, are illustrated together here as both kinds of classmate were mentioned within the same description. A female student said that she was worried about unfamiliar and advanced peers' negative comments about her:

Sometimes when the teacher groups the students,...of course, the group you are grouped into must include many unfamiliar or a few advanced peers...Then, you cannot just always stay quiet and not offer any ideas. Yet, although I feel that I myself have some ideas or opinions, I just do not know how to express them if they all need to be in English...I am just so afraid that others will think why your answer is so rubbish and the like (ENG08).

She later restated her struggle in a more precise way:

I hope that I do not need to participate in all the activities, but it is impossible. If I do not participate, others will say something about me. However, if I participate, I am afraid that others will feel my answer is not what they want (ENG08).

This student possibly feels insecure and has a negative self-concept when with the above classmates. Precisely, she knows nothing about unfamiliar peers; ability differences make her feel under pressure. She

may also want to make a good impression on them and probably does not want to be criticized by advanced and unfamiliar classmates.

#### *Feeling of being judged by peers*

Being judged or evaluated by peers while performing in English seems to be normal for the students. They assume and, at the same time, are concerned that their peers act as both audience and evaluators of their performances in classroom activities partly because they judge their peers in the same way. As one student iterated, when listening to others perform in English, '...I myself will also think okay, this man (.) I mean what he or she has done well and what poorly' (ENG01). Clearly, this attitude negatively impacts on the students' emotions when performing in English.

#### *Feeling of being judged by unfamiliar peers*

Due to the fact that one code in the above sub-theme is specific to unfamiliar classmates, i.e. feeling of being judged by unfamiliar peers, this has been identified and so forms another category by itself. It is another dimension that the interviewee wanted to focus on while discussing related issues. A female student distinguished two opposing emotions when asked to converse with a peer (a familiar classmate compared to an unfamiliar one) in English speaking practice. It was because

Those familiar with you must know how well you speak English. I am not even worried about how they would feel

about me. However, if they are people I am not familiar with or never talk to, I will feel very annoyed. I will want to perform well. But, the result is normally not good (ENG08).

I prompted her later in the interview to share more with me about her struggles in that situation:

It is because I do not know...whether he or she would say something in private. Furthermore, everyone has his or her own opinions or thoughts. I think it is likely that after I talk with him or her, he or she may more or less have comments in their minds. I am sure there must be (ENG08).

She emphasized her point: 'I just do not want to allow others [unfamiliar peers] to comment on me...I mean after our conversation,...s-/he her-/himself may wonder why my level is this or that. I just feel very annoyed about it' (ENG08).

#### *Peers' unpleasant behavior*

The sub-category, 'peers' unpleasant behaviors', is mainly about classmates' unfavorable behavioral responses, such as weird looks and disturbing laughter, concerning each others' English ability or performance. One student claimed that she sometimes felt as if somebody was laughing when she spoke in class. In fact, she did not care that her classmates laughed out loud at her because of her local accent. What, however, touched her nerve was underhand sniggering noises made by others:

Because I have the problem of accent, when I speak and my classmates go "ha-ha", I do not really mind. However, you may sometimes (.) Like not long ago,...I was a bit not sure about the pronunciation, so I just said /dɪ'skas/. Then, he [a male classmate] just made the sound, /tsəh/...He maybe also wanted to laugh out loud, but it was his snigger that made me feel pretty uncomfortable. Therefore, I just started to be a bit afraid of this kind of situation. I mean a bit like why did he make that kind of sound? I felt very angry and sad. I cannot accept that kind of sniggering (ENG06).

The disturbing sound, as she explained, made her feel the object of prejudice and disrespect, and this was believed to add a new source of anxiety for her. It seems that this student knows her own problem well and therefore thinks that people laughing at it is a normal, inevitable reaction. However, sniggering is unacceptable.

### *Face concerns*

'Face concerns' is a sub-category that mainly relates to the students' concern about failing to maintain or protect their own image or making themselves or being made to feel embarrassed in class. In other words, they are afraid of their disadvantages being noticed and being laughed at when they do not perform well. When asked about where her anxieties came from, one interviewee revealed that the biggest problem for her was her lack of self-confidence, although she believed that her teacher would still patiently listen to students, regardless of how slowly they spoke up. I then probed her interpretation of self-confidence here. However, in her response, she indicated that her worry about being laughed at was due to her inferior

performance:

You just feel that your level of English is not as good as others. And, you feel that (.) maybe other classmates can use very profound words to describe things. However, you may always be only able to use easily comprehensible words to speak or answer questions. You therefore become too fearful to speak or respond. You are afraid that others will laugh at you (ENG02).

In addition, a male student attributed his anxiety about being called on to answer a question to the fact that many people could hear his response. Although he did not mention any term related to 'face', the above factor could be an indication of his fear of feeling embarrassed or losing face in class:

For example, I was called on some time before...The question was really pretty easy. Maybe...there were too many people, so I was very nervous. As everyone can hear your answer, you apparently needed to think how to respond. You might keep saying "I think it is" something. You just kept stammering and the like...I think that it is mainly because there were too many people (ENG04).

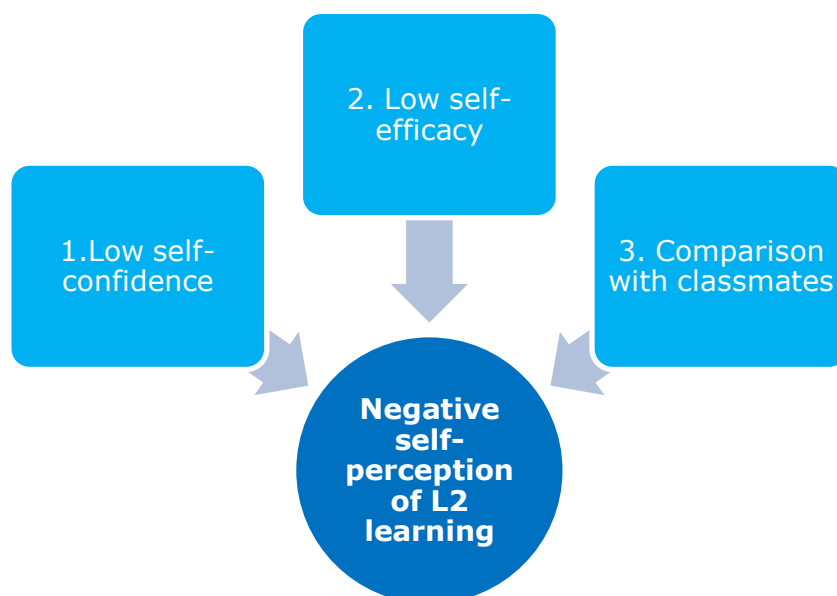
Later in the interview, he briefly described what could make him anxious when giving a wrong answer. His remarks showed how he cared about others hearing his mistake: 'For example, like in the way of asking questions, maybe I give a wrong answer. Then, I myself may think that everyone can hear my answer at that time, but I still respond to the question wrongly' (ENG04). In Chinese culture, we attach great importance to our own self-image. We believe that

excellence or perfection is the one quality to present to people. Thus, it is little wonder that poor performance can cause anxiety about loss of face in front of others.

#### 4.1.2.2 Negative self-perception of L2 learning

How students perceive themselves in different aspects of learning can have a huge impact on their emotions during their participation in classroom activities. As Figure 4.6 reveals, the students were found to have three areas of negative self-perception:

Figure 4.6 The sub-themes of 'negative self-perception of L2 learning'



##### *Low self-confidence*

Regarding 'low self-confidence', the students revealed the concerns about their own disadvantageous English ability or skills, i.e. no 'lack of anxiety' in using the L2 and negative 'self-ratings of L2 proficiency' (Sampasivam and Clément 2014: 25). One of the



students evaluated her own English ability and considered it to be inferior:

you just feel that your level of English is not as good as others. And, you feel that (.) maybe other classmates can use very profound words to describe objects. However, you may always be only able to use easily comprehensible words to speak or answer questions (ENG02).

Her self-perception consequently prevented her from participating in any activities requiring speaking. Moreover, the male interviewee seemed to attribute his emotional (and technical) problem of communicating with native English teachers to his inferior speaking skills, i.e. the negative rating of his own speaking ability:

While talking to the teacher, maybe the native English teacher, I still more or less have (.) I still have so far felt a bit that I do not know how to talk to him or her. I mean I still feel very nervous. I think it is because maybe I myself do not speak very well, and I do not speak very fluently either (ENG04).

He further noted that although his teacher listened to him very patiently, this could make him far more nervous—his teacher's waiting for him to speak and his incapacity to express his thoughts.

#### *Low self-efficacy*

Low self-efficacy is different from 'low self-confidence' in that I relate it to when students do not have 'belief in his/her ability to perform a designated task or complete an activity' (Mills 2014: 8) in

the class. A female student thought that the main source of her anxiety was a lack of self-confidence, and even considered it a 'barrier' to her participation in the activities:

I think it is a lack of self-confidence...The teacher is expecting you to take your time over speaking. At least, the teacher thinks that you should not always say you don't know, you don't know. The teacher, of course, hopes that you can (.) will still listen to what you are trying to say. I think it is me myself (.) I think it is my own lack of self-confidence, my own barrier, I think (ENG02).

Notwithstanding, some of her further responses offer more specific information on her belief about her lack of self confidence. For example, apart from 'You feel that others would all consider your expressions strange', she is also 'afraid that the teacher cannot understand what I am saying' (ENG02). In line with the given definition, her descriptions are, nevertheless, indicative of a lack of self-efficacy in different situations. Another student noted his anxiety about giving individual (impromptu) speeches or presentations on stage, and further explained that he was concerned about his ability to perform:

Sometimes when taking a test or maybe like we come up to the stage..., I will still feel very nervous. Because this is quite impromptu, i.e. you are given five or six minutes and you need to come up with a two or three minute summary to make an introduction, you will feel unsure as to whether you will do it badly or that you may not be able to prepare yourself well enough within the time limit (ENG04).

They seem to have negative assumptions about their levels of English and therefore would doubt whether their abilities are good enough to help them to complete the tasks successfully. Their lack of experience in speaking could also be associated with the development of their low self-confidence and self-efficacy. Furthermore, without positive past experiences to support them, it is likely that they imagine scenarios of poor performances.

### *Comparison with classmates*

Comparison between classmates is probably inevitable in the learning environment. Students discover the difference in English ability between themselves and their peers within the process of learning, and can perceive themselves as capable or incapable in their environment. A female participant gave an example of group discussion in the professional courses of her major through the medium of English and revealed that she felt very anxious during the process, mainly due to the difference in English levels. By contrast, she was less afraid of speaking in her general English class, where people had similar English proficiency levels. She commented that 'Mostly when needing to cooperate with your classmates, you are more able to see the difference between yourself and others. Then, you would become very anxious' (ENG02). After a series of questions and answers, she reemphasized her awareness of difference in English ability and explained how this can influence her emotions and behavior in different classroom situations:

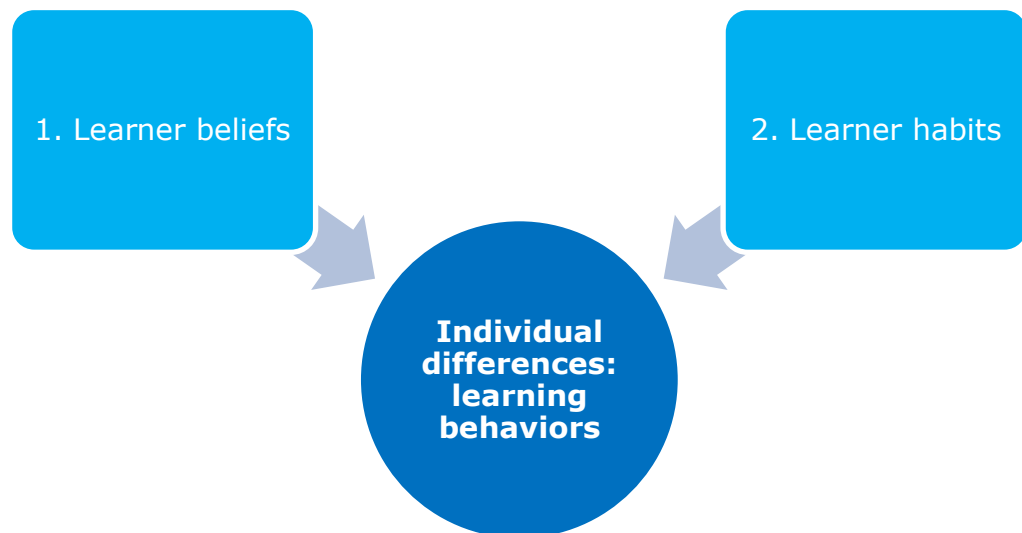
I think that what influences me the most is because...I myself really feel that my level is either similar to or very different from everyone else...If I am now in the general English course, even if the teacher calls on me and I am very nervous, I maybe spend two or three seconds at most thinking, and then answer a little later. But, I am still able to speak up using very simple English. However, if in professional courses, because my own perception (.) I always know that there is a big difference between myself and others' levels of English. So, it is comparatively easy to feel stress when you need to complete, for example, a questionnaire or something together with your classmates (ENG02).

Undoubtedly, this student discovered the differences in ability by comparing herself with others. Nevertheless, an issue raised here is whom she has compared herself with. If the persons are far more proficient than she is, it is hardly surprising that this makes her life a misery since catching them up is not instantly possible. Furthermore, identity crisis and peer pressure may happen because of her uniqueness in the group.

#### 4.1.2.3 Individual differences: learning behaviors

The students unveiled some of their beliefs about and habits of learning English (in the classroom) as parts of the sources of their anxieties. Figure 4.7 demonstrates the items involved in 'learning behavior':

Figure 4.7 The subthemes of 'learner behavior'



#### *Learner beliefs*

Stevick (1980) claims that 'whether other people agree or not, learners act upon their beliefs as if they were true' (cited in Gregersen and MacIntyre 2014: 34). In other words, unhelpful beliefs can contribute to difficulties, e.g. emotional issues, in language learning. One interviewee believed that pronunciation could influence the interlocutor's first impression of her in terms of English (ability). Therefore, as she responded, 'I feel very worried when I do not pronounce English well' (ENG01). Furthermore, in her own words:

I mean while you are talking with someone in English, the way you pronounce English is the first impression a person has of you,... Therefore, if my pronunciation is wrong, I will become even more afraid...[and] nervous. Yet, I am not so nervous that I dare not speak anymore. I may relatively zealously want to instantly know what its KK phonetic symbol looks like. I will go look it up (ENG01).

Another female student explained about her anxiety over the situation of being called on to answer a question missed in her preparation. She proposed two major reasons for this, one of which pinpoints a common myth/problem about learning/speaking English which Taiwanese people hold:

I mean if she suddenly asks me a question about which I totally have no idea, then...I need to rethink Ah! So, how do I manage the grammar? Because I find that Taiwanese very (.)  
One reason why we cannot speak English freely is that we will think about whether this grammar is right or wrong, and then you do not speak out until we have constructed a perfect sentence. Therefore, when the teacher asks me, I will spend a lot of time thinking about it (ENG06).

The extracts appear to indicate a belief that successful learning depends on whether the student can produce a native-like or mistake-free performance. However, risk taking plays an important role in learning a language well (Horwitz et al. 1986). That is, the students' (to them) logical, but erroneous, beliefs possibly hinder their progress in learning. These beliefs may also have some connection with the Chinese culture mentioned above—'no speaking until being sure'.

### *Learner habits*

'Learner habits' here indicate the methods/ways which the students are accustomed to adopting to deal with learning related activities. Nevertheless, it seems that some of these do not lead them

to pleasant learning experiences. One participant explained the main reasons for her anxiety over listening tests played once only. Apart from the problem of adapting to understanding English expressions, she also attributed the negative emotion primarily to her habit in listening to English: 'In fact, I feel that this [way] should be no good. I mean I am still used to (.) For example, when I finish listening to this sentence, I am still used to interpreting it again in Chinese way of explanation' (ENG02). She further noted the problem caused by this habit: 'While you are still thinking of what it just said, [it] has gone to the next question' (ENG02). Beliefs and habits are deeply ingrained over time and difficult to change. Thus, proper guidance is needed if certain beliefs and habits are considered by experts to be unhelpful for learning. Moreover, it is assumed that this student needs more practice to familiarize herself with more useful listening strategies and English itself in order to abandon her bad habit.

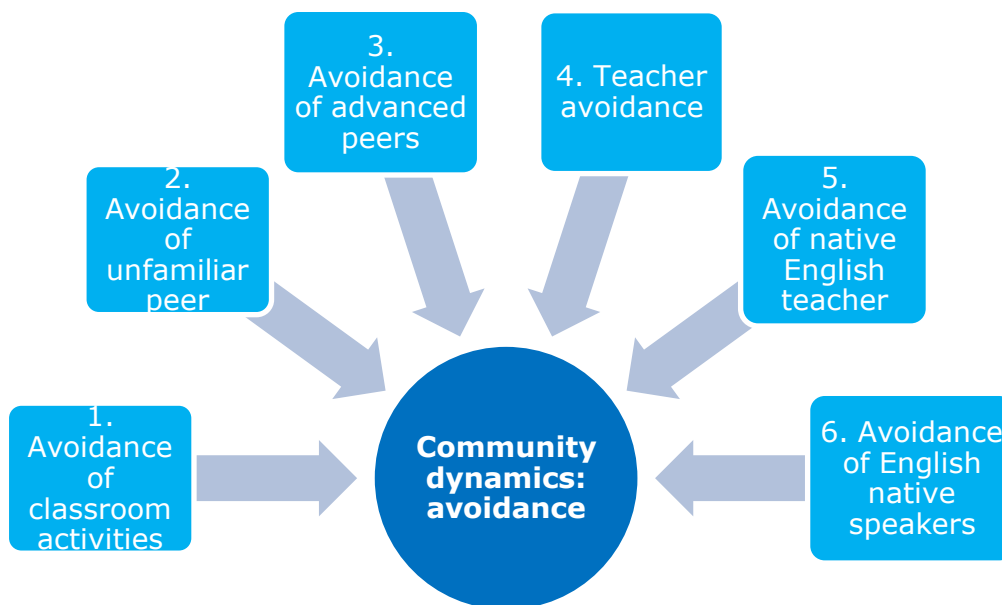
#### 4.1.3 The effects of anxiety

The effects of anxiety on the English major students are summarized in Table 4.1, i.e. (1) community dynamics: avoidance, (2) poor speaking performance, (3) self-disapproving thoughts, and (4) being propelled to work harder. Each of these also includes several minor categories, indicating more specific effects of anxiety. The introduction to each sub-category is presented below.

#### 4.1.3.1 Classroom dynamics: avoidance

'Avoidance' here indicates that the students refuse to have (social) interactions with people in the learning context. There were even people preventing themselves from participating in classroom activities. The diagram below illustrates the six contexts of avoidance generated from the interview data.

Figure 4.8 The sub-themes of 'avoidance'



##### *Avoidance of classroom activities*

More than half of the students indicated their avoidance behavior when addressing anxious classroom activities. One student (ENG06) seemed to have difficulty coping and dealing with speaking activities in the class, e.g. felt anxious when speaking in class and lowered her head to avoid the teacher calling on her. She claimed that she was therefore comparatively quieter in English compared with other classes:



- R: So, if we compare general English and other classes
- ENG06: Of course, I am quieter in English classes because, after all, you dare not draw the teacher's attention if you do not understand or are not sure about the subject.
- R: You mean general English, i.e. classes for the four skills?
- ENG06: Yes, yes, yes. If you are not certain and keep talking, of course, the teacher will ask you to answer her questions. However, when the teacher calls on you, you do not know the answers. So, of course, it is better to just be quiet and listen to the teacher's lectures.

Another student claimed that many students, including herself, gave up volunteering to answer the teacher's questions due to her poor speaking ability. Furthermore, they believed that there were always people eager to give it a try. Hence, they would listen to them rather than speak in class:

- ENG03: Because we cannot reply quickly and fluently, and we think that there are many classmates willing to respond anyway, so we can just let them speak. We would have this idea.
- R: Then, it is fine to just listen.
- ENG03: Yes, now that so many people want to speak, we can just listen.
- R: Would you like to speak if you had the chance?
- ENG03: Sometimes you actually can understand the question the teacher asks,...Of course, you want to speak, but you must speak in English. So, you just give up speaking. You know the answer, but you just give up.

Three students mentioned the avoidance effect caused by the arousal of anxiety during speaking or presentation activities on stage. They all thought it best to finish their presentation as quickly as possible. As one student said, 'I will finish it very quickly' (ENG09), but still include all the ideas and information. Another student answered 'I just feel how annoying this is and why not finished yet, and then I need to keep thinking of some ways to make things up. I mean digging those things out' (ENG04). The other student revealed 'Because I am totally agitated, I just want to get off the stage as soon as possible. I mean I just want to get away from it sooner rather than later' (ENG01).

#### *Avoidance of unfamiliar peers*

The eighth interviewee, who had discussed her problem with unfamiliar/advanced peers before, revealed her attempt to avoid having to interact with her group members if it was the teacher who divided students into different groups. According to her,

Of course, the group you are grouped into must include many unfamiliar or a few advanced peers...I am just so afraid that others will think why your answer is so poor and the like (ENG08).

She was consequently determined to waive her right to speak and let others present their ideas or opinions during group discussion. As she concluded, 'It is fine if I choose my own members. However, if it is the teacher who does the grouping, I will let others do the presentation mostly. I will stay quiet if I do not need to speak' (ENG08).

### *Avoidance of advanced peers*

In terms of the third component, a student stated that she felt very anxious when speaking in front of or talking to foreign and more advanced students. She thought that they were all very good at English, so she was afraid of 'being looked down on' and 'being considered to be someone equipped with poor English' (ENG07). She claimed that she therefore tried to have little contact with those students, e.g. rarely having conversations in English or interacting in daily life with them. As she said, 'I am not brave enough to approach and interact with those equipped with greater English ability' (NG07).

### *Teacher avoidance*

Each student was asked whether they found their interactions with teachers (or peers) changing due to the arousal of anxiety. One student claimed that she would directly ask her classmates rather than teacher for help or more information when she was called on to respond to a question that she could not understand or answer:

I mean if the teacher asks me a question and I cannot understand it, I will be very anxious. I may ask the classmates next to me about what she is asking me. Or, if I do not know how to answer it, I will also ask those next to me about how to answer it. However, I just do not directly ask my teacher in front of her face. I would rather ask the classmates next to me (ENG08).

Another female student said that she was unable to answer the teacher's question right after being called on unless she was given

some time to prepare the question. Therefore, she lowered her head, i.e. avoided eye contact, to prevent her teacher's noticing her at that moment:

I also lower my head as I am afraid that teacher will call on me. In terms of asking a question, because I do not understand and I still need to digest the question and respond. I am not like those who can say whatever comes to mind...If you, for example, let me go out to do some discussion and give me ten minutes, I can answer you. If you suddenly ask me something, I cannot respond (ENG06).

#### *Avoidance of native English teachers*

Considering 'native English teacher avoidance', the male participant claimed that students mostly made little attempt to approach their native English teacher(s) about resolving their questions or problems unless the teacher could speak Chinese. They would rather directly consult their classmates about their difficulties in learning. The dialogue is as follows:

ENG04: I think it depends on the type of teacher. Take native English teachers for example, most of the time, everyone is probably not brave enough to ask questions or the like. If they are teachers who can speak Chinese, yes, we may ask questions, but we just sometimes do not know how to express our questions in English. As a result, it turns out that we may directly use Chinese to ask the teacher what he or she thinks that question actually means...

R: So, no one is brave enough to ask, right?

ENG04: Yes, in general, no one is relatively brave enough to ask unless you are someone maybe with better speaking ability. So, you may go ask (.) may help everyone ask questions.

⋮

ENG04: Yes, yes. Or, it may turn out that everyone asks their classmates whether they understand what the teacher was saying.

### *Avoidance of English native speakers*

Lastly, the third interviewee noted that she felt quite nervous and uneasy when needing to communicate with native speakers of English. She thought that she could not understand the teacher's lessons in English, let alone native speakers, and that native speakers always spoke English very fast. For these two reasons, she attempted to block any chance of having interactions with native speakers:

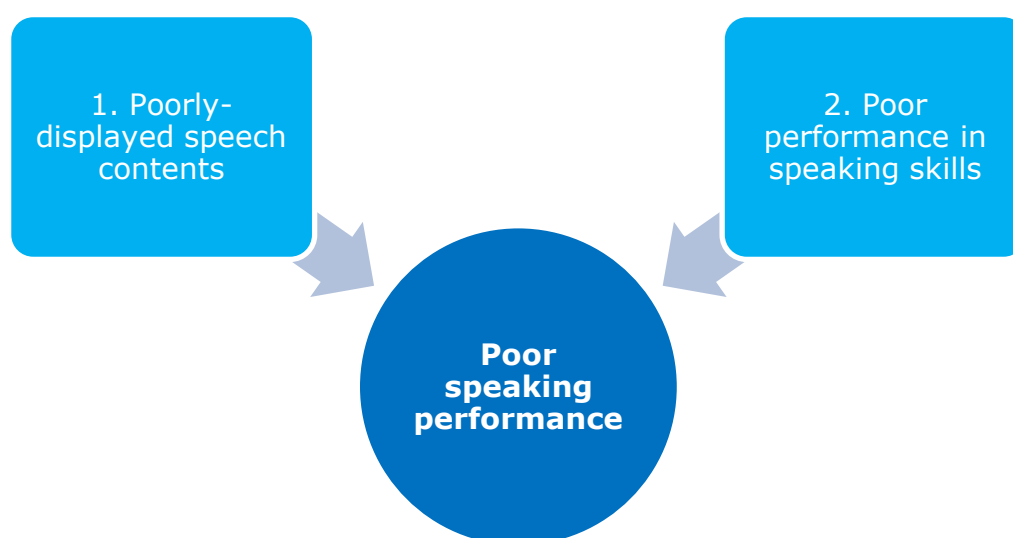
Yes, they speak very fast. Then, actually sometimes (.) In fact, that is certainly just a reflex action because it is actually not that difficult sometimes. One time there was a Sister on campus and she wanted to (.) I was very nervous at the beginning, so I asked my classmate to talk to her. As a matter of fact, what she was going to say was just that she needed a male student to help her move things, but you subconsciously thought that I just cannot understand it anyway, and so asked my classmate to come talk to her. However, in fact, I actually could understand what she said, and she did not speak very fast. Nevertheless, next time the same situation occurs again, you will still be subconsciously unwilling to communicate with and want others to talk to the person (ENG03).

The behavior of avoidance caused by anxiety is apparently quite common and pervasive here. It is, nevertheless, surprising that the emotion even negatively influences their interactions after class. This may be related to the fact that the courses they take are almost the same, and most of them are English-medium. Therefore, the time after class turns out to be the only period when the student can free herself from her own concerns.

#### 4.1.3.2 Poor speaking performance

The affiliated codes revealed that the anxious feelings had fundamental negative impacts on the students' spoken production. 'What' and 'how' they present, as Figure 4.9 demonstrates, are the two aspects which emerged.

Figure 4.9 The sub-themes of 'poor speaking performance'



### *Poorly-displayed speech contents*

The first issue raised here by the students was that they were unable to deliver well-organized contents while speaking or giving a presentation when anxious. An interviewee stated that she became confused about the order of contents while presenting on stage:

I must feel very nervous. Because normally although I have rehearsed the order of presenting the contents, I just totally mess it up once I become anxious...I actually did spend much time preparing for it (ENG03).

Moreover, the male respondent experienced difficulty delivering the contents of his presentation clearly and smoothly. He noted that he was confused about what was presented since he did 'speaking and recalling' almost simultaneously, and even needed to accelerate before the time was up. In his own words,

At that time when you feel really nervous, either your brain goes blank or you just do not know what you are talking about. You just keep trying to recall. For example, you are allowed to write a draft. So, you maybe just keep trying to think of what was in the draft and which part I should start to connect from. You just start to recall. You would spend relatively longer on that. Once you have spent time remembering the stuff, you need to hurry yourself up later in terms of the progress of your presentation (ENG04).

### *Poor performance in speaking skills*

The second category otherwise revealed that negative emotions also bring about undesirable presentation/speaking skills, such as a

slow speaking pace and ungrammatical sentences. One student mentioned that she could be very nervous when giving an impromptu presentation, e.g. taking an oral test through role play. She claimed that she, therefore, not only forgot the script, but also was unaware that the pace of her speaking slowed down considerably:

I was nervous indeed. I was so nervous that (.) They all thought that I tried to deliberately stall for time and spoke very slowly. I was just so nervous that I forgot the script and tried to recall it. I was speaking and recalling it at the same time, and I totally had no idea that I spoke really slowly. However, after I got off the stage, my classmates asked me why I spoke so slowly. I replied, "Really? I thought I spoke very fast." Because I usually speak very fast, I think I speak very fast (ENG9).

Another student described how anxiety affected her ability to manipulate English usage, i.e. English grammar and sentence structure, in the context of speaking or presenting on stage. She, in short, thought that she spoke so-called Taiwanese English.

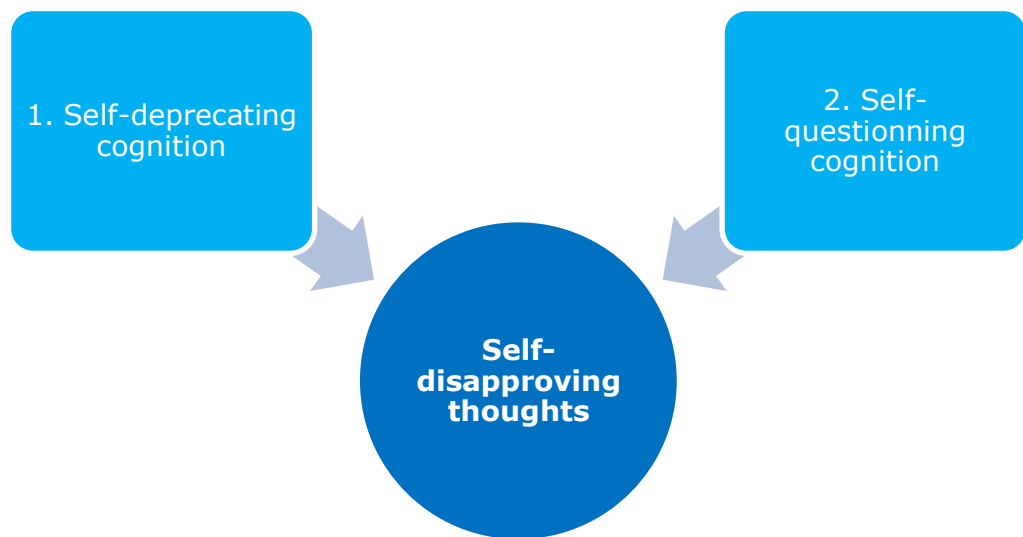
It turns out that you just do not care about grammar. You just speak whatever comes to your mind. You do not try to organize it in your head, either. This is the situation. I mean like a sentence should have been finished completely with a full stop, but later on you just do not care about it. It has turned out that you are speaking English in a Taiwanese way (ENG01).



#### 4.1.3.3 Self-disapproving thoughts

The engenderment of anxiety also causes the students to criticize themselves in terms of their learning and performance. They, more precisely, deprecated and questioned their own ability of and achievement in English. The diagram below demonstrates the sub-themes included in this theme.

Figure 4.10 The sub-themes of 'self-disapproving thoughts'



##### *Self-deprecating cognition*

Concerning this effect, the students shared with me that they played themselves and their English ability or learning outcomes down. The first respondent claimed that she probably 'starts to be negative about herself' and her ability when feeling anxious and doing badly on a current task: 'For example, if the presentation is not done well, I will wonder why I couldn't do it well and why all the others could do it, but not me. I will have that negative kind of thinking' (ENG01).

### *Self-questioning cognition*

The students also expressed doubts or suspicions about themselves, i.e. were self-questioning, about various aspects of their English ability. The same student as above also stated that her teacher's teaching pace was so fast that she felt very tense in classes. As a result, as indicated in her response, she started to question her listening ability and vocabulary size in English:

Like the Listening teacher, because this semester we (.) I mean it was the first time last semester we took her course. I felt very afraid at that time since her teaching pace was quite fast... As the teaching pace was very quick, I felt particularly tense in class. Moreover, I was quite concerned about my own listening ability. I mean I was worried about whether my listening ability was not good enough because she spoke very fast (.) I mean maybe my vocabulary was not large enough, either. I felt very nervous and would keep listening and listening as well (ENG01).

Nevertheless, she later became used to the teacher's way of teaching, which was thought to be beneficial to the students themselves. It seems that this student subconsciously associates the arousal of anxiety with inadequate English ability.

#### 4.1.3.4 Being propelled to work harder

As the above descriptions have illustrated, learning anxiety itself has negative effects on the students in such dimensions as sociability, cognition, and the self. On the other hand, it is also the case that they can be propelled by emotion to put more effort into their learning, in

other words, by squaring up to situations and confronting their difficulties and negative emotions. (As this theme stands by itself, no diagram is shown for reference.) A female informant was aware that she 'perhaps sometimes needs to be more attentive' (ENG08) as she was afraid of being called on by the teacher. When feeling threatened, she attempted to be more focused and face her difficulties full on:

[I will] try to get myself into the situation instantly. Then, maybe [if] there are some words I want to say at the moment, but I do not know them, I will make myself hurry to look them up. Then, [I will] push myself to think about how to speak and the like (ENG08).

She further clarified the above effect and explained that

I mean [when] the teacher gives us time for preparation, I will make myself hurry to find out the things I do not understand and ask others about the things I do not know how to express (ENG08).

Moreover, the second interviewee claimed that feelings of anxiety made her aware of her own disadvantages and so she attempted to make improvements to them. As the dialogue shows,

ENG02: I mean you will feel when getting anxious, you know what you feel anxious about, you will feel that you yourself are perhaps still, in fact, incapable. Then,...I mean [you] may recall the previous embarrassing situation, and [tell yourself] that the same situation cannot happen again next time. What I can do is only try to urge myself to work harder.

R: But, it is certain that you will do something, right?

⋮

ENG02: [I will] try to compensate for the things I lack.

This student does not see her perceived poor performance as a dead end, and has faith in herself to some extent. She appears to think that as long as she works hard to make improvements, the problems causing her anxiety can be solved.

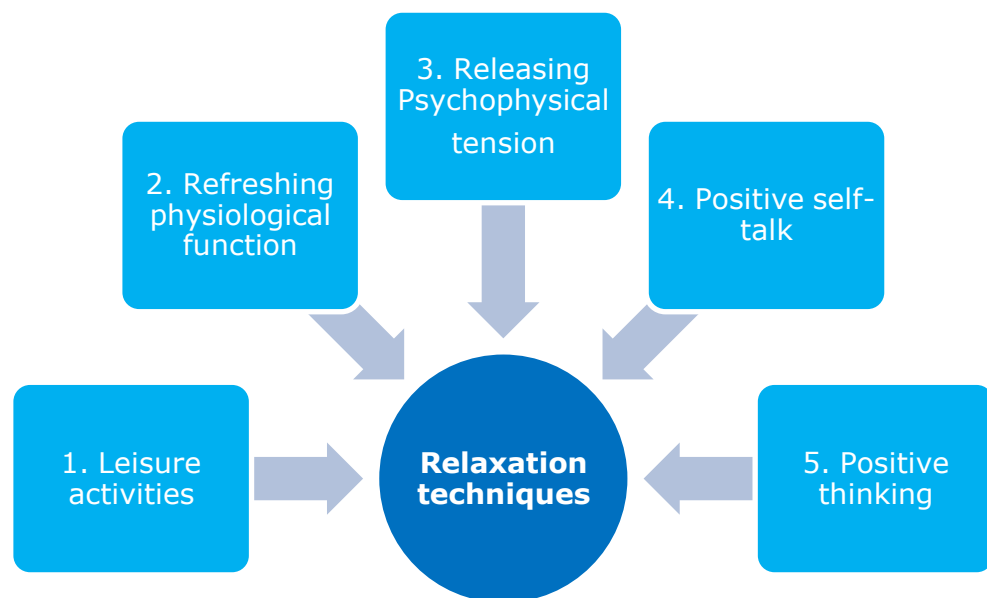
#### 4.1.4 Coping tactics for anxiety

The coping strategy in Table 4.1 comprises (1) relaxation techniques, (2) gaining support from others, and (3) readiness for activities. Each of them also contains sub-categories, pointing out more specific coping tactics for anxiety. The introduction to each sub-category is presented below.

##### 4.1.4.1 Relaxation techniques

The students sometimes try to relieve their emotional burdens through adjustments to their mental and physical states. There are five categories, as Figure 4.11 presents, linked to this major theme, each of which is introduced with a brief description and the relevant extracts in the category.

Figure 4.11 The sub-themes of 'relaxation techniques'



#### *Leisure activities*

Several students alleviated their anxiety or shifted their attention through some leisure activities, e.g. listening to music or watching films. Below are the extracts from two of the respondents.

For example, if I totally have no idea about how to answer a question in the report, I will listen to music for a moment and the like, or I just cannot think of anything (ENG03). (after school)

Like if I have a thing to do or something else to deal with the next day and feel anxious about it, I may, the night before the day, (.) think of wanting to make it good, but it is just (.) my behavior turns out to be watching films or the like (ENG01).

#### *Releasing psychophysical tension*

'Releasing psychophysical tension' is mainly stretching and taking a deep breath here, which were considered to have the function of

releasing both physical and psychological tension. The specific extracts are as follows:

I will do stretching, stretch my body a bit (ENG07).

I take a deep breath and stop for a minute and carry on (ENG07).

Like in some situations you just feel very nervous here. You have no way to (.) Because it is impossible to make it disappear...The only thing I can do is to take a deep breath, but this does not work well for me (ENG09).

#### *Refreshing physiological functions*

In terms of 'refreshing physiological functions', one student mentioned that she considered 'eating' and 'sleeping' to be the best ways to ameliorate her anxious feelings:

If I have something, I will eat it. Eating is the best way to alleviate pressure for me (ENG09).

Sometimes when I get home with much stress (.) When back in my hometown, I just want to (.) just sleep until I wake up naturally. I mean getting up relatively late (ENG09).

#### *Positive self-talk*

One student attempted to convince herself of a positive scenario; the other reminded herself of adjusting her pace of speaking. Both claimed that their respective method was helpful for the alleviation of anxiety. In their own words,

In order to relax myself, I will tell myself that this is nothing. I will convince myself that this is nothing, everybody is the same, and everyone forgets everything tomorrow. I just tell myself that everyone will forget everything tomorrow and who is gonna remember that I or anyone said wrong words or the like yesterday (ENG02).

I may instantly try to think of a way to release myself a bit. I mean the speaking pace needs to be slowed down quite a bit, and then my worry can be alleviated (ENG07). (R: So you will remind yourself to slow down your speaking pace. ENG07: Yes, yes.)

### *Positive thinking*

One student tried to look at his setback from a positive angle. He made use of his past experience of learning Mandarin Chinese when young to look on the bright side. According to him,

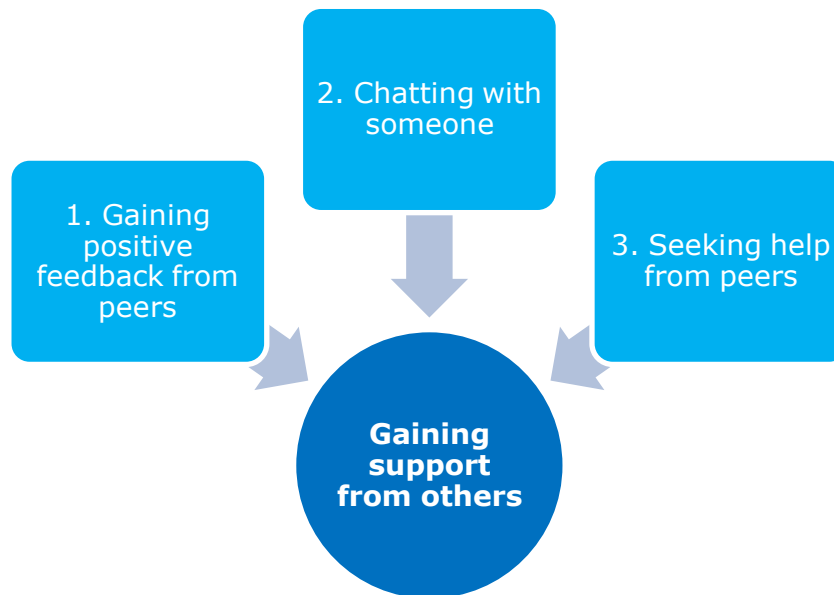
But [we] needed to think while we were learning Mandarin, we did not know anything...Then, we neither spoke it very fluently at the beginning nor were able to all of a sudden. Sometimes, [we] may need to think from a different angle. Like what we say, maybe if [you] have a more positive way of thinking, the angle from which you view things may be different. You perhaps have different ideas towards learning, too (ENG04).

#### 4.1.4.2 Gaining support from others

The students make use of the 'human resources' around them in dealing with feelings of anxiety. Most of the students try to seek their classmates for help, but one of them calls her parent in order to release herself from a negative mood. The diagram below shows the

components included in this theme.

Figure 4.12 The sub-themes of 'gaining support from peers'



#### *Gaining positive feedback from peers*

Regarding the first sub-theme, the students attempted to confirm with their classmates that their worries were, in fact, not so important or necessary that they needed to take them seriously. The extracts below can help explain this in a detailed way.

I will also ask others if they can understand. If they also do not understand, then I will feel quite okay. As I am not the only person who cannot understand, I feel safe (ENG03).  
As soon as I get off the stage, I ask my classmates whether she heard me say any wrong words. She says that she was not listening at all. I say that I feel so embarrassed. She says don't feel embarrassed. She says some people were playing with their phones, and some doing other stuff. I will just think that it is, in fact, nothing. So, I may just feel fine at that moment (ENG02).



### *Chatting with someone*

Sharing their nervous feelings with someone, e.g. parents or peers, was also considered to be one of the coping strategies for anxiety. Two students used this strategy to calm themselves down:

I will make a phone call. I mean like (.) Because I am now living outside, i.e. not living at home, I will phone my mom and have a chat with her (ENG01).

I tell her [my peer] that I am very nervous. She says don't be nervous. She says don't be nervous. Then, I take a test and say that goodness, I feel very nervous. She says she is nervous. Later, she tells me that she is very nervous. It is her turn to tell me that she is very nervous. I say to her don't be nervous. This is really funny (ENG09).

### *Seeking help from peers*

In addition, four students claimed that when faced with difficulties in tasks or activities, they felt much less anxious if they can instantly receive help from their classmates. Two examples are provided below:

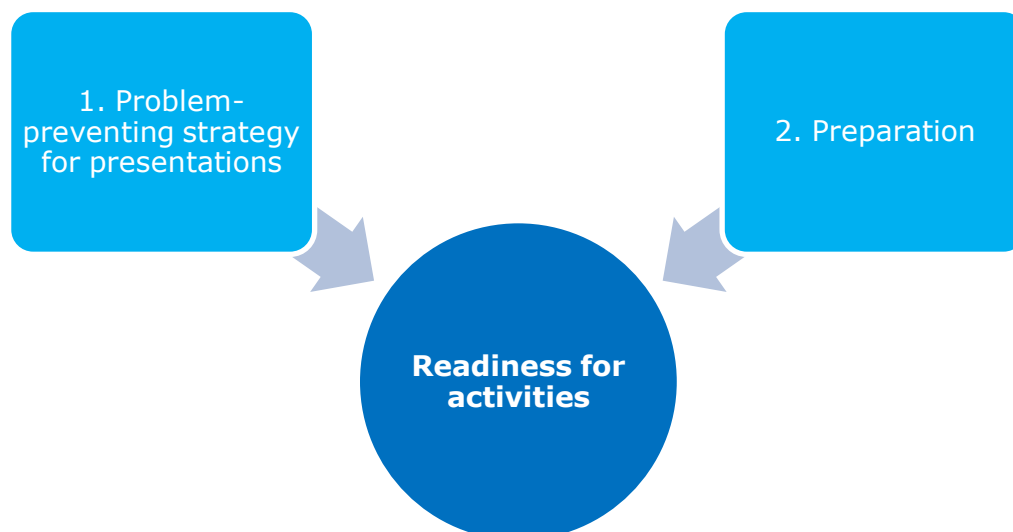
R: Just like what you said, you may sometimes ask for help from your neighbors [while answering the teacher's question], so you will comparatively (.)  
ENG06: Yes, yes, yes. I feel comparatively relieved.

I think it is more important that you and your peers can help each other. I mean you can let him or her know what you are presenting. If you really forget it, he or she just needs to remind you of one point. Then, you can carry on (ENG04).

#### 4.1.4.3 Readiness for activities

The diagram below reveals that this category contains two particular sub-themes or strategies:

Figure 4.13 The sub-themes of 'readiness for activities'



As indicated in the title, the students attempt to prepare themselves well for classroom activities so that they are more confident in dealing with them.

#### *Problem-preventing strategy for presentations*

Two students below developed their own strategies to avoid any potential anxiety-provoking sources in their presentations:

I now just make the ppt handouts first, and then...I may write down what I am going to talk about in this ppt in Chinese... When the time comes, I may extend what I want to talk about in English. By doing so, you do not need to compose a draft anymore...once you forget the content, you will get even

more anxious (ENG04).

I once tried to stand on stage directly without glasses and contact lenses. It felt very good. I could see nothing. In this way, I did not feel so nervous (ENG09).

### *Preparation*

Three students believed that getting themselves ready for the class was the best way to prevent themselves from getting anxious in class. As each commented,

If I am nervous, for example, I am giving a presentation on stage soon, I will keep staring at my script/draft, i.e. keeping reading, reading, and reading (ENG01).

I think I have developed the habit of previewing the lesson before going to class. You feel more at ease and know what the teacher may be teaching in the next class. Moreover, the teacher may ask questions in class. Then, you can have relatively more ideas, and can respond relatively quickly as well (ENG02).

When you are presenting, it depends on how much you know about the contents of the presentation. At least if you know them well, when you see this ppt,...you can immediately know what it is about...If you know, your anxiety will be naturally not so high and your presentation can be relatively smooth (ENG04).

These two sub-themes appear to suggest another way of mitigating anxiety. Precisely speaking, anxious learners can directly not only deal with anxiety itself, but also look for solutions to lessen the likelihood of anxiety, i.e. by preparing well in advance.

Section 4.2 below presents the findings based on the data generated from the interviews with non-English major students.

## **4.2 Non-English major students' EFL anxiety**

This section will now present the findings from the non-major students of English. These findings differ somewhat from the data discussed in the previous section although there are some significant similarities between the English-major and non-major students. The order of the sub-sections below is the same as that of the above.

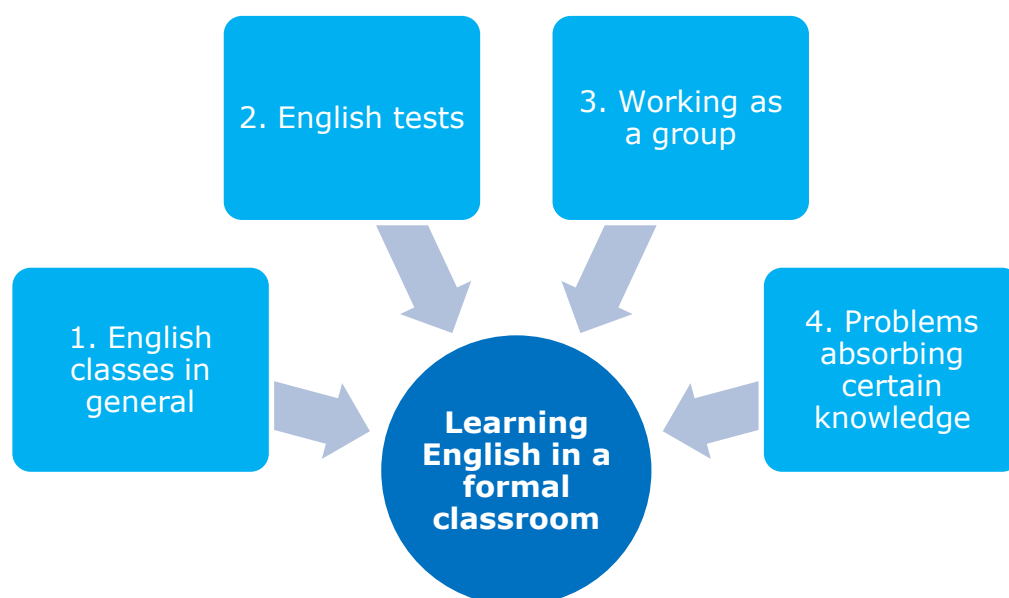
### **4.2.1 The situations where anxiety happens**

The situations listed in Table 4.2 are (1) learning English in a formal classroom, (2) exposure in class, and (3) learning in class: unpredictability. Each also includes several minor categories, highlighting more specific situations when anxiety is caused. The sub-categories are presented below.

#### **4.2.1.1 Learning English in a formal classroom**

This theme, as Figure 4.14 shows, is composed of four sub-themes: 'English classes in general', 'English tests', 'working as a group', and 'problems absorbing certain knowledge'. These four categories depict a relatively general picture of the language classroom. That is, the dimensions of classroom situations identified are not as specific as the other sub-themes, such as 'speaking on stage'. Therefore, they were grouped together to form a major theme under the heading above.

Figure 4.14 The sub-themes of 'Learning English in a formal classroom'



#### *English classes in general*

As indicated in the first component, some university students are likely to have negative feelings towards their English classes as a whole. One student clearly expressed her tension and nervousness about the class. This student claimed that she was so incapable of learning English that she felt relatively nervous in class,

And this one as well—I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes—because...I mean perhaps I have been at the stage of being incapable...I am anxious when I go to English classes (NE01).

She explained that 'I do not know when the teacher will call on me...and am afraid of failing the course' (NE01). However, she was not concerned about these issues at all in the other courses and so comparatively relaxed there, for example, in her major subject classes

and the Chinese-medium ones. I assume that this student must have experienced more difficulties in learning English than other subjects. Thus, from her descriptions, it can be seen that she has exceedingly low self-confidence and self-efficacy, which may cause her anxiety in English classes.

### *English tests*

Tests are an inevitable part of the curriculum in most courses, including English. It seems probable that students would have a more negative reaction to tests or examinations since these may impact on their academic performance for the course. The seventh interviewee expressed her anxiety when taking an oral test through role play. She described the whole process of the test from the stage of preparation to that of presentation. Indeed, based on her extract, she felt nervous throughout the whole process:

You draw the topics, and then you go out and think for ten minutes. Then, if you cannot understand the question, you will feel nervous due to only ten minutes [for preparation]. Then, you need to hurry yourself up in thinking. Then, you and your partner will feel nervous about what you are going to talk about later. Then, when going into the classroom and starting to speak, you also feel nervous. You also feel very nervous in the two minutes when you are speaking (NE07).

The schedule, as can be seen, seems quite tight. Apparently, time pressure, stage fright/shyness, and impact on score are all potential sources of her anxiety here. The above student also mentioned

experiencing anxiety when taking a listening test with various accents, '...and sometimes the extracurricular listening in the mid and final exams. I mean like sometimes you cannot understand some of the accents, so you can only choose or tick the answers randomly' (NE07). She had described the same issue, but in the context of classroom activities similar to tests:

Sometimes the accent of the speaker is just so strange. I mean some are relatively more confusing. I do not know why. While you are listening, you feel sunk and do not understand it...Maybe you need to listen to it three or four more times so that you can really understand what it says...because sometimes you only listen once and the teacher asks you to write down the points and calls on someone to answer. But, the accent is just so strange (NE07).

In addition, the first interviewee stated that, 'While doing reviews before an English test, I feel very confused' (NE01). She claimed that the questions in the test paper had become more complicated than before:

It is because [the questions] are not those typical kinds...I assumed that [the questions] designed were still relatively easy. I mean the questions felt fine. However, they have become more varied (NE01).

She also noted that the same object was explained differently in the textbook from the handouts, which confused her when she studied for her test: 'While you are reading this stuff [the handouts given by the

teacher], you just feel, "Why they are explained a bit differently in the textbook?" (NE01).

### *Working as a group*

Students are usually divided into several groups and then discuss a topic or carry out a task together as a group. During this process, the interaction between group members can be the context where the arousal of anxiety occurs. One of the respondents described her experiences of working with someone to carry out a task: 'We are asked to write in pairs (.) Take writing an essay for example, I mean the type that two people work on together as a group' (NE09). She stated that she was concerned about making irrelevant suggestions and her partner's reactions to them. Specifically, 'I am afraid that what I have said is not right, i.e. it is topic-irrelevant stuff. Then, it is heard by the other person or whatever. I mean maybe he/she neither directly tells me that my answer is wrong nor uses that sentence I have just suggested' (NE09). It seems that 'collaborative learning' fails to be implemented effectively here. Although this student offers some ideas, her partner does not give any feedback on them. This one-way interaction probably makes her feel ignored and lost. Furthermore, her partner's later behavior could destroy her confidence in and expectations for her own ideas.

### *Problems absorbing certain knowledge*

Some students revealed their anxiety about learning certain elements of English, such as vocabulary and grammar. The following



illustrates the case of memorizing English vocabulary. One student thought that it was quite easy for her to forget the vocabulary which she had memorized because English was not the main language used around her. In her own words,

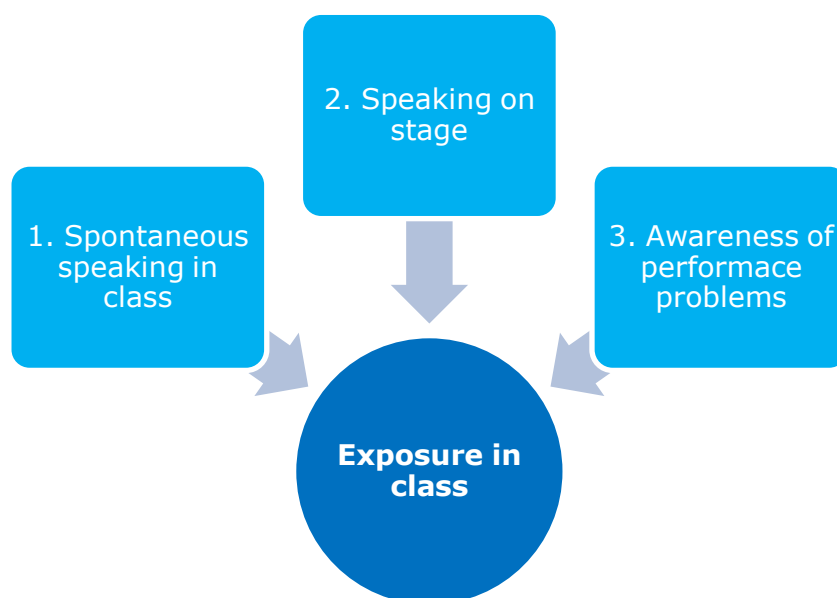
You just forget it right after you memorize it. [The memorization] is just used to deal with tests, i.e. [you] cannot remember it forever. It is because even if you memorize it, you do not really [have the chance to] use it in daily life. I mean you still use Mandarin to communicate every day...as this is a Mandarin-speaking environment..., so [you] you forget what you have memorized (NE01).

She claimed that, 'You may recognize it on seeing it. However, it is difficult if you yourself need to spell it out or instantly call it to mind' (NE01). She said, in short, that she felt anxious when it came to memorizing vocabulary.

#### 4.2.1.2 Exposure in class

Students are encouraged to speak English in the classroom for the sake of practicing using the language. Figure 4.15 reveals the relevant activities mentioned by the non-major English students that cause anxiety.

Figure 4.15 The sub-themes of 'exposure in class'



When attempting or required to respond, speak, or present in English in class, they are, of course, placed in the position of exposing various aspects of themselves to the whole class.

#### *Spontaneous speaking in class*

Spontaneous speaking in class was considered to be threatening by some students. Specifically, they were concerned mainly about speaking voluntarily and being called on to speak. One of the female students compared her behavior in the English class with that in other classes. She claimed that she was more willing to speak voluntarily in the latter than in the former. According to her, because some classmates around her are excellent in English, she was afraid of showing any initiative in class. In her own words,

Because some of your classmates' levels of English are very high, you become relatively afraid of raising your hand and

volunteering to speak...You just have the feeling that the more you speak, the more mistakes you make, so you dare not to raise your hand. Yet, it is fine in other classes...In other classes, whether I speak depends on whether I want to do so. However, in the English class, although you sometimes have many ideas, you dare not raise your hand (NE11).

That is to say, 'If the [English] teacher asks me to speak, I will speak. Yet, if she does not call on me, I do not speak voluntarily' (NE11). This student is from an advanced class although she resists this classification. After comparing herself with her classmates in ability, she probably feels peer pressure from those who are even more advanced. It is likely that she instantly loses her self-confidence or self-efficacy and care about others' reactions to her performance when in the English class. All this seems to prevent her from speaking actively in class.

Another female student claimed that her English teacher at university must call on students to speak or answer questions, in contrast to the one in senior high school. It was especially stressful to answer the question when she had difficulty expressing her ideas. The extract from her is as follows:

English class at university is relatively stressful. The teacher must keep calling on us (.) We ourselves should also offer to speak on our own initiative. Nevertheless, because the class is delivered in English, you need to answer in English when the teacher calls you. It is very stressful when you cannot say a word...There is no such thing [calling people to speak] in senior high school (NE07).

She however stated that 'when teacher calls on you to answer, if you can answer, you will just answer of course' (NE07).

### *Speaking on stage*

Speaking on stage is also anxiety-provoking for the students. No matter what speaking tasks they do, they seem to be anxious about facing all of their classmates and attempting to finish their oral tasks at the front. A female student mentioned having emotional difficulties speaking English on stage, especially with the appearance of unfamiliar others in the classroom. As she said, 'Maybe as far as speaking English on stage is concerned, I do feel quite nervous when I speak at the front. I mean, I dare not speak up in English' (NE06). She affirmed that, 'It is still very difficult for me to overcome this [anxiety over speaking English on stage] so far' (NE06). Apparently, this student has experienced stage fright and is shy (about public speaking). She also appears to feel insecure with unfamiliar classmates. With regard to English, she said that her poor pronunciation may stop her being understood, which illustrates her belief that correct pronunciation plays a vital role in communication. These are all likely to make her anxious in the situation above.

Another student described her experience of feeling anxious in performing a play with her classmates on stage as speaking practice in the class.

For example, if the whole group needs to perform on stage, then I hope that the parts assigned to me will be few, because,

I mean, if you are involved in many parts, this means that you need to say many sentences and memorize many things. Also, it is usual to feel anxious when you go on stage. Then, you are afraid you will forget those sentences memorized or something and what you need to do next, and that the sentences spoken are not pronounced well (NE09).

Conversation-based speaking practice seems to be quite common in English classes although doing a play, rather than one-to-one role play, involves more people. Nevertheless, this student is seemingly unsure of herself in the practice and frightened on stage. It may be interesting to know why she still feels anxious even though she does not perform the task alone.

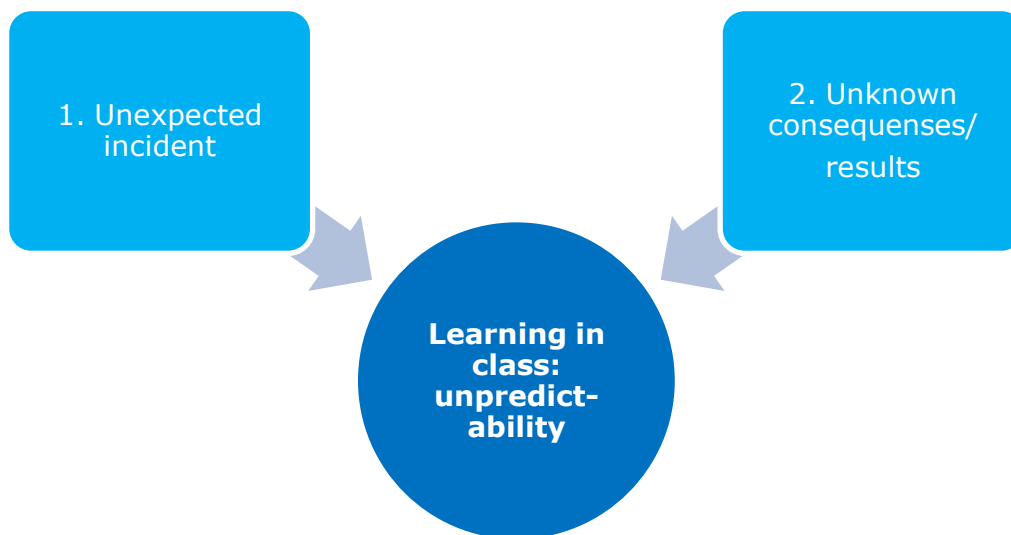
#### *Awareness of performance problems*

Two students claimed to have negative emotional responses to the perceived flaws of their performance in class, such as faltering speech. They expressed their anxiety when fluent speech was not achieved. One claimed that previous bad experiences could influence her willingness to speak next time. As she said, 'Maybe because I myself do not speak very fluently, I become so unsure of myself that I dare not speak next time' (NE04). These students possibly have the belief that fluency is an essential requirement for being an effective communicator. They also probably demand themselves to speak English as fluently as possible. However, they are both elementary-level students of English. Their belief and expectations, therefore, appears rather unrealistic, so they can become anxious when they are not fulfilled.

#### 4.2.1.3 Learning in class: unpredictability

Unpredictability here indicates the situations and the consequences that the students did not expect to happen or when they did not have any way to predict what would happen while undertaking learning tasks in the classroom. Specifically, Figure 4.16 illustrates the two sub-themes connected to the major theme above.

Figure 4.16 The sub-themes of 'learning in class: unpredictability'



The participants' experiences, as described below, exemplify the difference between these two.

##### *Unexpected incidents*

Unexpected incidents are mainly indicative of learning related changes or occurrences beyond students' control or anticipation in the classroom. When faced with unexpected situations, the participants reported their tendency to lose control over their emotions. One

student expressed her anxiety when suddenly not understanding what the teacher said in class: 'Our teacher lectures in English. Although she usually speaks easier sentences or words, sometimes when she suddenly says a word I do not understand, I will keep thinking about what on earth the word means' (NE06). She claimed that this negatively impacted on her learning later in class. She added that if her teacher explained the word also in English, she would become even more confused. Furthermore, she 'could start to feel a bit frustrated' (NE06), as well, when this occurred. It was because she felt that all the others could understand the teacher or if asked about the knowledge delivered, she could not answer. Another student indicated her nervousness when called on to answer a question for which she had not prepared in advance. She described her feelings at that moment:

I cannot think of how I should answer the question only until I stand up. It is because when teacher calls on you, it is impossible for you to stand up and think over the question thoroughly, then start to speak. Therefore, you just directly say whatever comes to mind there and then, but what you said could be ungrammatical sentences or something (NE09).

#### *Unknown consequences/results*

Performing poorly in class seemed to be a major issue for the students. (Few people felt concerned about the possibility of their failing class or making no progress on test results.) They had anxiety related reactions to the situations outlined above since they were unable to foresee what would happen afterwards. An advanced-level

student mentioned that she felt annoyed when she could not handle the course properly. I then asked her whether she meant the materials provided in her course were difficult. She then provided me with a number of reasons for her annoyance, such as a relatively small class and 'More words, limited time' in writing tests. She finally claimed that her current class brought her under comparatively high pressure, and she worried about the issue of 'pass and fail' constantly. In her own words, 'I just feel more stressed. I am worried about failing tests every time and the like, whether I am being alerted to low scores, or whether I am failing the course' (NE11). An elementary-level student pointed out Item 37 ('when I do not understand my teacher's question and so give a wrong answer'), as illustrated below, in the questionnaire as one of her anxious situations. She then further described the whole scene of the class vividly at the moment when the event happened:

Then (.) I worry about how my teacher will treat me when I do not understand my teacher's question and so give a wrong answer. Yes, this one. This one is just very embarrassing indeed. She may ask you A, but you answer C. They are totally different. Then, maybe (.) I mean when all the people just eh? and look at you with a weird look on their faces, you just think is this not the answer? Then, you just instantly ask your neighbors what on earth she was talking about. You ask your neighbors is what I answered not right and that sort of thing (NE01).

She finally confirmed that she, in fact, cared about her classmates' and teacher's reactions to her responses.



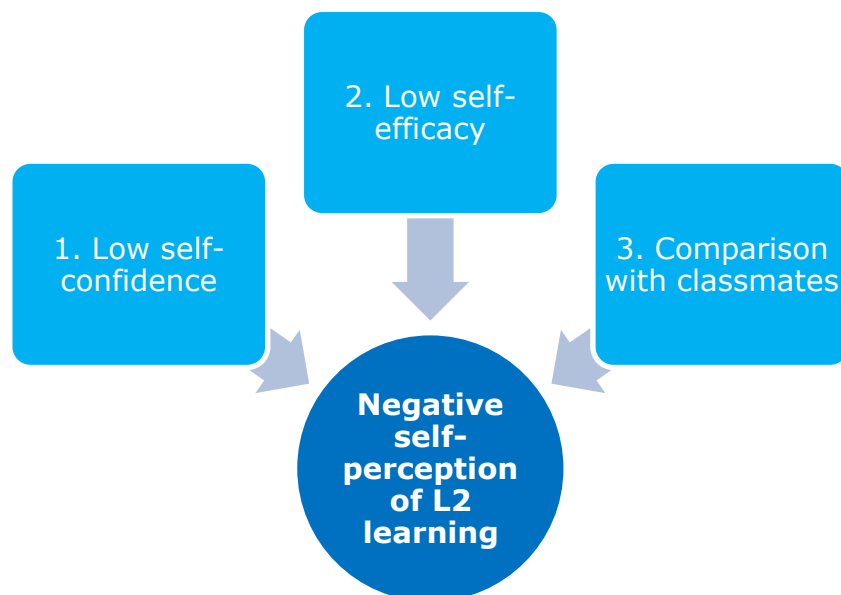
#### 4.2.2 The sources of anxiety

The sources listed in Table 4.2 are (1) negative self-perception of L2 learning, (2) inadequate English ability, and (3) academic expectations of themselves. Each also includes several minor categories, emphasizing more specific sources of anxiety. The introductions to the sub-categories are presented below.

##### 4.2.2.1 Negative self-perception of L2 learning

How students perceive themselves in different aspects of learning can have a great impact on their emotions during participation in classroom activities. As Figure 4.17 demonstrates, the students were found to have three negative self-perceptions:

Figure 4.17 The subthemes of 'negative self-perception of L2 learning'



### *Low self-confidence*

The students with low self-confidence unveiled the worries about their disadvantageous English ability or skills, i.e. no 'lack of anxiety' in using the L2 and negative 'self-ratings of L2 proficiency' (Sampasivam and Clément 2014: 25). An advanced student, mentioned in Section: 'unknown consequences', considered that she should not have been assigned to the highest level of class, and questioned the classification mechanism:

I feel that level-classifying system of the university is a bit strange. I mean I do not feel that I myself have achieved that high level, but the result is that I suddenly jump that high. In fact, I think that the university classifies students via the CSEPT (.) I think that it is a bit inaccurate. I...suddenly got a very high score last time, i.e. the highest level (NE11).

It seemed that she 'is not quite accustomed to' and 'feels relatively more pressure' (NE11) in the advanced class, with the differences between her previous class and current one in relation to such aspects as test design and class size. Another student had emotional difficulty speaking on stage (and talking with unfamiliar classmates) in English. She attributed her anxiety in these situations mainly to her personality and the problem of her pronunciation: 'I think that it is related to my own personality, i.e. I am quite shy actually. Furthermore, I think that my English pronunciation is not very good, so I more or less dare not speak' (NE06). She thought that pronunciation was so important as it determined whether others could understand what she said. It is apparent that this student also has a similar belief about pronunciation

to the English major students above.

### *Low self-efficacy*

Low self-efficacy is different from 'low self-confidence' in that I relate it to when students do not have the 'beliefs in his/her ability to perform a designated task or complete an activity' (Mills 2014: 8) in class. The male student felt no excitement about taking an oral test through role play. He claimed that, 'Those excited when role play takes place are all normally extremely self-confident and not afraid of making mistakes. I am impressed with their marching forward bravely' (NE08). However, he said that, 'I have a completely opposite reaction to it' (NE08). It was because he was constantly 'afraid of ending the conversation and so making it difficult for his partner to carry on' (NE08):

'Because maybe what I say are almost the types of words used to make an ending, he or she will wonder how to carry on and be stuck there. It is actually my fault. I mean if I want to allow him or her to continue, I have to perhaps give him or her a sentence which he or she can expand [the dialogue]. However, I usually do not say it' (NE08).

He further emphasized, 'I do not do it unless it is necessary. I do not want to encounter it' (NE08).

One female student was probed for the possible reason why she felt nervous when called on to speak. She explained that

I am afraid that the teacher or classmates do not know what I am saying. Then, I will keep telling myself to use relatively secure words. That is, while I am speaking, I will say (.) I mean use some phrases or sentences that everyone can understand. Then, I cannot really speak very freely or with ease. I am still afraid that the teacher and classmates do not know what I am saying (NE06).

She claimed that her lack of efficacy could be traced back to the experience that her friends could not understand her well when they talked to one another in English in private. She finally said, 'when having no idea how to explain,...I really want to explain the meaning of what I just said in Chinese' (NE06). Both students apparently had gone through unsuccessful learning experiences, and their extracts seem to also indicate their lack of ability to address their problems. This might be the foundations of their low self-efficacy.

Another student was asked the reasons for some of her anxious situations. She claimed that, 'My response must be wrong anyways' (NE01). This belief in her own incapability of the self had always been a major problem and had negatively impacted on her emotions and participation in activities. In her own words,

It should be a lack of confidence which has accumulated for years because the level of lacking confidence is getting higher. I just feel that I dare not to speak. I myself think that what I say must be wrong anyway...Then, I just feel so anxious. Then, at the moment when maybe the teacher has asked me a question and then I need to respond in English, I just stand there and do not know what to do. I just become very anxious (NE01).

Although she attributed her problem to low self-confidence, her lack of belief in her ability to complete the activity, according to the above definition, demonstrates a lack of her own self-efficacy.

#### *Comparison with classmates*

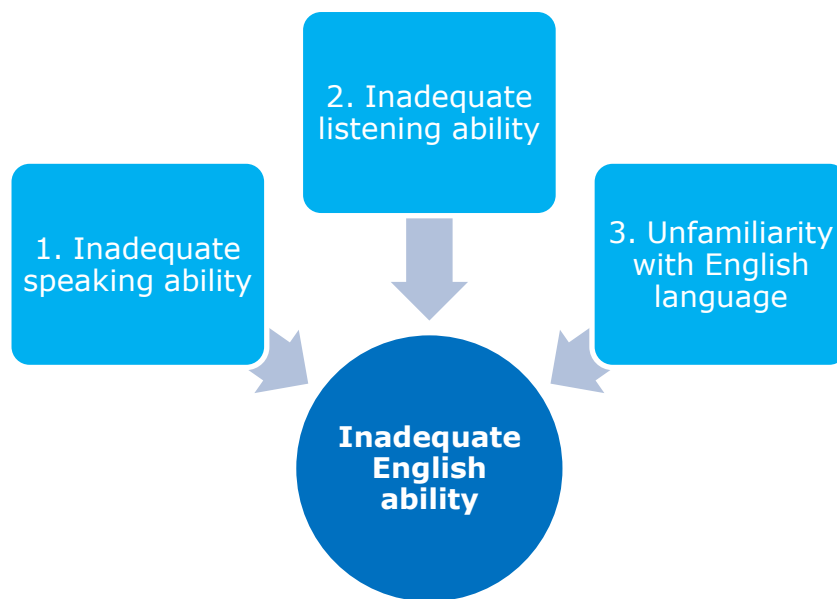
Comparison between classmates seems to be inevitable in the learning environment. The students discovered the difference in English ability between them and their peers within the process of learning, and further perceived themselves as capable or incapable in the class environment. A female student was concerned that others could not understand what she said and therefore felt nervous when speaking on stage or in class. She thought that, 'Their [others'] English ability is quite good, but mine is not. Therefore, I feel that they may not be able to understand me' (NE04). She admitted that she not only imagined others' reactions to her speaking, but also made the comparison spontaneously. In addition, she mentioned that she felt anxious when not speaking fluently. She said 'I myself am less confident and consider myself to be inferior in English ability'. Although she required herself to speak fluently, she did not seem to have achieved this. This made her even more anxious. The reason for this, according to her, was that 'Maybe in comparison to the more advanced peers, I just feel that other classmates all speak very fluently and I myself should also do the same as well' (NE04). This student seems to crave being part of the compared group. Nevertheless, whom she compared herself with could make a huge difference to the degrees of her anxiety. It is also apparent that she

has low self-confidence in the learning context.

#### 4.2.2.2 Inadequate English ability

The non-major English students were conscious that their lack of English skills could prevent them from successfully achieving classroom tasks. Therefore, they seemed to hold themselves back from participating in activities considered threatening. The diagram below specifically shows the components of the theme above.

Figure 4.18 The sub-themes of 'inadequate English ability'



##### *Inadequate speaking ability*

'Inadequate speaking ability' mainly describes the students' difficulty in expressing their ideas or opinions in English. The male student expressed his anxiety when students were required to speak English in group discussions. He claimed that,

I have many ideas, but I do not know how to express them [in English]' (NE08). He further explained that 'I want to let them [group members] know my ideas, but I truly do not have that much vocabulary and I do not know how to express them either. Hence, I will gradually start to feel anxious (NE08).

He said that he wanted to speak, but he seemed stuck. Nevertheless, his fellow group members might still keep pushing him to communicate by saying, 'Eh? Eh? Eh? Again! Again! Eh? We cannot hear you' (NE08).

Apart from this case, a female student stated that she 'speaks in English, but thinks in Chinese'. However, this turned out to be very problematic indeed:

You actually have many ideas in your mind. I mean while others are speaking, you do want to respond. Although you have already drafted your ideas in Chinese in your mind, when you have to speak in English, it becomes (.). I mean if you are unable to express them clearly, you just feel very nervous indeed (NE06).

It was also challenging for her to describe her ideas in an alternative way after the first attempt failed:

I, in fact, want to say this. Yet, if I am stuck in the situation that I cannot say or understand certain vocabulary or I cannot speak a certain phrase or sentence, then, of course, the teacher will still say 'Can you think of it in a different way?' However, the problem is that you just do not know how to say it in other ways. Then, you can become very nervous (NE06).

It appears to me that both students are willing and attempt to speak as best they can, even though they have difficulty addressing the tasks. Nonetheless, their degree of anxiety accumulates due to their limited speaking ability and/or others' behaviors.

### *Inadequate listening ability*

Regarding the aspect of listening, nearly half of the students have difficulty fully understanding people speaking in English, especially with various accents. The first respondent discussed the primary reasons for her anxiety while taking English listening tests where speakers had various accents. She explained that the differences between American and British Englishes, such as accents, meanings, and grammar usages, made her quite confused. Furthermore, in relation to accent, she said that she even had difficulty understanding the accents of non-English speakers: 'Take the test this time for example, there was a Norwegian in it [the recording]. Then, [when he] spoke in English, [I] could not understand what [he] was saying. Because he had that accent, [I] just could not [understand it]' (NE01). She further described the consequence of this: 'Moreover, our test was played once only, you needed to guess the answers desperately. Yeah. [You] just kept thinking over again. I mean [you] would spend more time on it. Then, you might not be able to finish other parts' (NE01). There is little doubt that her incapability also partly comprises her unfamiliarity with accents of Englishes.



### *Unfamiliarity with English language*

Considering the last sub-theme, over half of the students also attributed their anxieties to the problem of being unfamiliar with English itself or components, such as vocabulary and accents. One student experienced anxiety while speaking on stage, but she felt far less anxious after becoming used to it. She thought that the language employed to present was one of the reasons for her anxiety:

I feel that using any language that is not your mother tongue to speak and unfamiliar things (.) I mean when [you] cannot completely use your most familiar thing [language] to speak, [you] must feel anxiety to a certain extent (NE11).

Moreover, another student claimed that small vocabulary size was one cause of her anxiety when talking with her teacher in English:

Inadequate vocabulary is also one of the reasons because, in Chinese, what you may want to say is this, but you cannot think of any [proper English] vocabulary. However hard you try to think of it, you just cannot recall it (NE01).

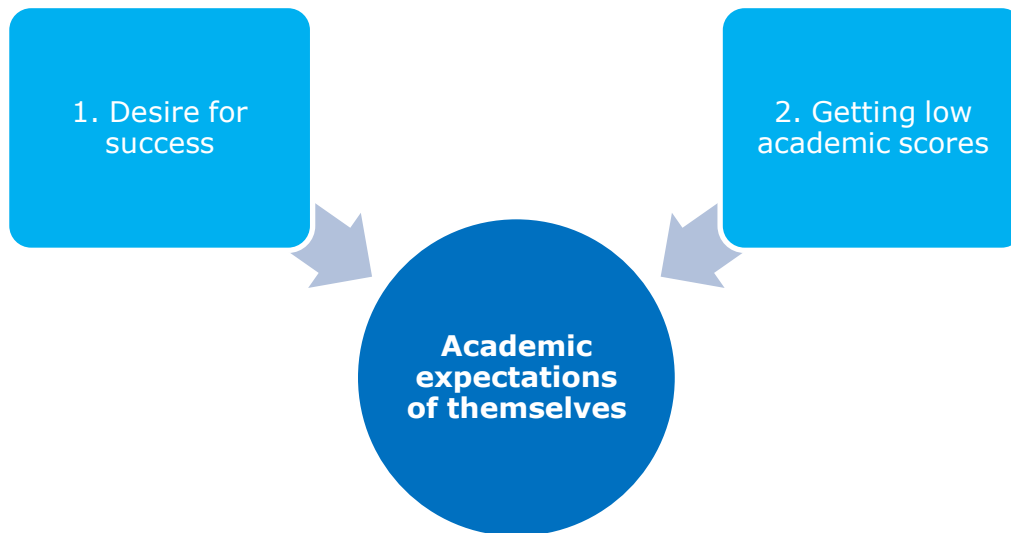
The source of another anxiety of her own may be regarded as the context of the above. Precisely, there is no authentic environment provided for her to review memorized vocabulary.

#### 4.2.2.3 Academic expectations of themselves

Although the students are not majoring in English, they still expect themselves to maintain or reach appropriate standards of

performance in the process or the tests. This seems to indicate that they still take their learning and the subject seriously. As Figure 4.19 shows, there were two components associated with this theme.

Figure 4.19 The sub-themes of 'academic expectation of themselves'



#### *Desire for success*

With respect to 'desire for success', three female interviewees indicated caring about how well they had done or could do. One student was afraid that her English ability had not improved. She explained that it was 'because [you] have spent so much time on English, but [you] still do not make any progress. [You] will feel that you have been wasting your time since you remember nothing even though you have studied it' (NE09). I asked her whether there was any other cause of this anxiety. She answered, 'There is no one putting pressure on me. [If] it is I myself who really want to learn this thing, then I will want to do it very well as [I] have spent time on it already'

(NE09). This student certainly had a strong interest in learning English and desired to see a successful outcome.

Another student discussed the cause of her anxiety in the situation when she had no idea what her teacher said in class. Nevertheless, she claimed that this situation happened only a few times. One major reason for her anxiety in the context, according to her, was that, 'You have reached a level, but by chance, you still totally have no idea. You must feel very anxious. You just feel that you [should] probably still...be able to understand' (NE11). That is, she found it shocking when she could not understand something at all as this should not have occurred. As an advanced student of English, it seems not surprising that she was confident in understanding her teacher's lectures in English. I also believe that she had a high degree of self-confidence, at least in her listening ability. However, I wonder whether high self-confidence can contribute to anxiety when the situation met is outside a person's anticipation, as in the example noted above.

#### *Getting low academic scores*

Regarding the second sub-theme, nearly half the students expressed their fear of getting low scores for English tasks or tests. An interviewee revealed her fear of being unable to finish her English test in time, especially when, 'Only ten minutes left' was announced. She claimed that this happened more often when she took examinations held by other organizations. Her explanation for this anxiety was as follows: '[It is] because there may be questions in the latter part that

I can [do], but I get no chance to answer them. That is, I am supposed to be able to get those points, but I do not in fact' (NE09). Moreover, she did not like the experience of performing a play on stage for speaking practice. One of her concerns, as she said, was that, 'It [the performance] is perhaps going to be marked or something. I am afraid of not performing well and so the whole group gets a low score' (NE09). She, furthermore, stated that her presumption of a poor performance happened only when she needed to use English to speak (especially in front of the others).

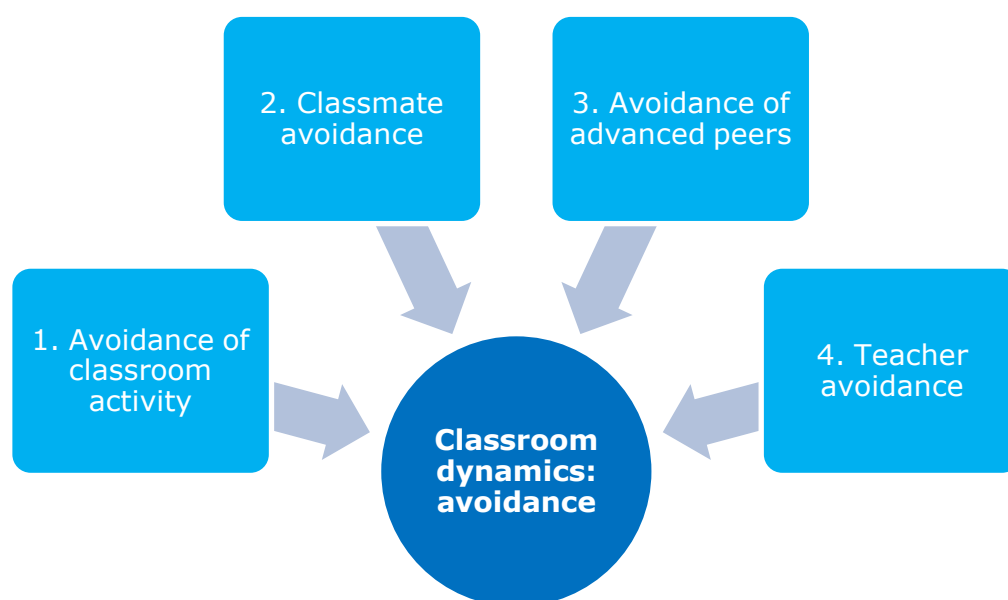
#### 4.2.3 The effects of anxiety

The list of effects of anxiety in Table 4.2 comprises (1) classroom dynamics: avoidance, (2) poor speaking performance, (3) self-deprecating thoughts, and (4) being propelled to work harder. Each has also included several minor categories, pointing out more specific effects of anxiety. The introduction to each sub-category is presented below.

##### 4.2.3.1 Classroom dynamics: avoidance

'Avoidance' here indicates that the students refused to have (social) interactions with people in the learning context. There were even people preventing themselves from participating in classroom activities. The diagram below demonstrates the four areas associated with 'avoidance'.

Figure 4.20 The sub-themes of 'avoidance'



#### *Avoidance of classroom activities*

Most of the students were aware of their own avoidance behaviors while confronting classroom situations from which their anxiety emerged. An advanced-level student, NE11, discussed her anxiety over speaking voluntarily and her resistance to it in the section of 'spontaneous speaking in class' above. Two elementary-level students spoke of the effect which anxiety had on them in terms of listening. One took the class as a whole and said that anxiety made her 'unable to understand and uninterested in what the teacher said' (NE04). The other explained her anxiety over extracurricular listening practice and stated the reactions that she had afterwards:

Take listening to an extracurricular recording for example, [if] I truly cannot understand it, then...I will just give up at that moment, i.e. I just do not listen to it. I will study it alone and take some time to understand it and go home to look it up. I just really do not want to listen to it at that moment (NE07).

She claimed that the same reaction occurred even to the teacher's lecture. However, if the lectures or recordings could still be understood in part, she would try her best to listen (albeit with anxiety).

Student NE07, moreover, had the thought that she still needed to put more effort into English when feeling anxiety in the learning process. Nevertheless, she did not know how to start off due to the breadth of English knowledge, and yet refusing it was not allowed, which made her even more stressed. As a result, 'Half [of me] wants to study, but the other half wants to give up, i.e. be lazy. But, I really hope that the lazy half can be balanced out by the other half. However, it just does not work sometimes' (NE07). She also considered stopping studying English. Although English is a compulsory subject, her major has nothing to do with English studies at all. Thus, it may be unsurprising that she had the above confusion in herself. Moreover, her failing to deal with her problems in learning probably turns out to be a convincing excuse for leaving it aside.

#### *Classmate avoidance*

Considering 'classmate avoidance', a female student expressed her anxiety when speaking to her classmates (and teacher) in English. She explained that she had little confidence in herself and her classmates normally spoke English rather fast. She indicated that she, therefore, attempted to prevent herself from having the opportunity to converse with them in English. The extract of dialogue is as follows:

R: So, does it affect your interaction with your classmates and teacher when you are anxious?

NE04: [I] dare not interact. I mean comparatively dare not to speak to them.

R: Comparatively dare not to speak to them?

NE04: Use English. Use English to talk to them. It [the conversation] may get shorter and shorter.

R: You mean (.)

NE04: That is, the conversation is relatively short and simple.

### *Avoidance of advanced peers*

Regarding the third component, the sixth respondent described how anxiety changed her behavior while interacting with another classmate in class. More precisely, she claimed that she almost became a passive interlocutor in conversation with him or her, especially with those who were advanced in English. In her own words,

[The interaction] can become relatively embarrassing. Take classmates for example, if you feel very anxious or nervous (.) I mean interacting with classmates. If your classmates (.) the one you are talking to is excellent at English and speaking, then the situation becomes that you just listen to him or her. Then, you will (.) It turns out that you can only respond to a certain point or part of the conversation. Then, it turns out that (.) I mean he is active, [but] you are passive (NE06).

### *Teacher avoidance*

Lastly, the first interviewee revealed that her current teacher decided the seating arrangement for students and made sure every student had an equal chance of being called on to speak. 'It [therefore] makes no difference where [you] sit in the classroom' (NE01).

However, she said that, 'If [the teacher] does not make any arrangement, [I] will just sit in the middle [rows], middle but not the very front' (NE01). This was because, 'I feel that the teacher will keep focus [-ing] on me. I just feel very afraid as [I] wonder whether [the teacher] will call on me to answer every question' (NE01).

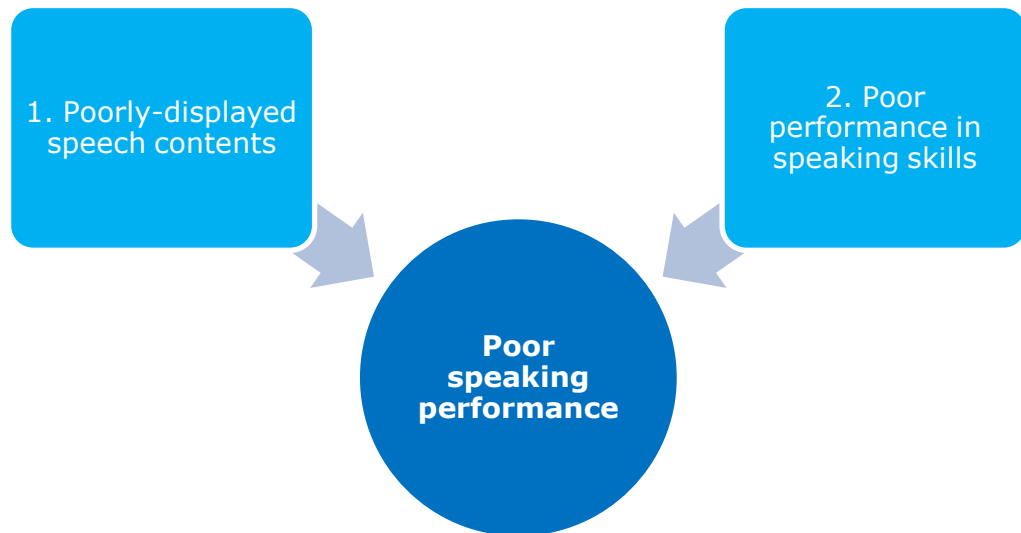
The above cases of avoidance behaviors, unlike those of the English majors, seemingly only happened during the students' participation in classroom activities as they only came together for this one course. Moreover, due to their majors, the non-English major students have little chance to make contact with native speakers of English and, therefore, it is reasonable that they mention nothing related to them.

#### 4.2.3.2 Poor speaking performance

According to the affiliated codes, anxious feelings had fundamentally negative impacts on the students' spoken production. 'What' and 'how' they present, as Figure 4.21 demonstrates, are the two aspects considered in the following sections.



Figure 4.21 The sub-themes of 'poor speaking performance'



*Poorly-displayed speech contents*

The first component above indicates that the students were unable to deliver well-organized contents while speaking or giving a presentation when anxious. A female respondent said that she jumped from one topic/section to another randomly when anxious:

When feeling anxious, [you] will perform relatively badly in terms of organization. I mean partly say [something] here, then partly jump to [something] there. Or, [you] have not finished one part. However, as you feel very anxious and nervous, [you] again instantly jump to another part, but [you] apparently have not finished speaking about the earlier part (NE06).

She was then asked to provide me with an example in order to clarify the whole scenario:

Take my midterm oral exam for example, I needed to speak English at the front in the midterm oral exam. I just felt very anxious and nervous...For example (.) I mean the topic for the oral I picked out at that time was "which city in Taiwan is the best to live in? Why?". Then, I said Tainan, and then I gave three advantages. However, perhaps I had not finished introducing the first one at all (.) I mean I had thought [of what I wanted to say] already during the preparation...Then, [I] just directly jumped into the second advantage (NE06).

Another female student mentioned that she was normally able to present most of the content prepared at home. Nevertheless, she claimed that anxiety could lead her to speak of something different from what she had rehearsed during the presentation:

Due to nervousness, sometimes I just say whatever I see (.) I mean, want to say whatever comes to mind. Then, the things presented are totally different from those rehearsed at home. Then, I may speak without concern. I mean it is because the things instantly coming to your mind may not be correct, but you still say them. In fact, at that moment, you do not know if the things are correct or not...I am just afraid that the information provided is incorrect (NE09).

### *Poor performance in speaking skills*

The second category illustrates that negative emotions also bring about undesirable presentation/speaking skills, such as incorrect pronunciation and grammar, a quivering voice and stammer, and the use of only simple words and sentences. The male student described how anxiety negatively influenced the outcome of his speaking practice via role play in class. Specifically, grammatical and

pronunciation mistakes were both made and noticed:

Maybe the teacher requires students to use the past tense. Perhaps because you are too nervous, [the tense used] becomes the future or present, or the like. Moreover, maybe while you pronounce [a word], [you] stress the syllables wrongly so that [the word] becomes a different word (NE08).

Interestingly, he claimed that he was always unaware of mistakes until his teacher commented on his performance. Additionally, five students stated that they were faced with the problems of either having a quivering voice or stammer or both when anxious during their speaking in class. One student mentioned both, based on her experiences in midterm oral examinations: 'We all need to stand at the front speaking when taking oral exams. I can feel my voice quivering. Then, my English pronunciation, also due to (.) As my voice is quivering, [I] do not pronounce very well either' (NE06). She further specified that, 'I mean a word suddenly...quivers a bit, and [I] stammer. [I] stammer in front of the whole class. Thus, [the presentation] is totally not ok' (NE06). The same student also revealed her anxiety over being called on to speak due to fear that peers and the teacher could not understand what she said. In relation to this concern, she said that she felt restrained from manipulating sentences and words freely:

[I] will want to keep telling myself to use relatively secure words. [I] mean while speaking, I will say (.) use some words or sentences that everyone can understand. Then, [I] just

cannot speak freely or without concern. [I] am still afraid that peers and the teacher have no idea what I am saying (NE06).

#### 4.2.3.3 Self-deprecating thoughts

The arousal of anxiety also leads the students to criticize themselves in terms of their learning and performance. They deprecated their own ability and achievement in English. (Because this theme stands alone, no diagram is presented for reference.) One respondent indicated negating her own English ability in the description of the alterations in her emotions and thinking from one situation to another:

[When] talking to the teacher, if you both understand each other, you, of course, feel very happy at that moment. [You] just feel that you can understand the teacher very well. However, if today [you] suddenly (.) if [you] do not speak very well, i.e. suddenly speak badly, and the teacher cannot understand either (.) if that stimulus suddenly appears, even if [the teacher] does not understand only one thing or [I] cannot understand the teacher, I feel that this is no good and wonder why I am so poor [at English] (NE07).

Another respondent provided more explicit responses to the effect of anxiety on the self:

[Anxiety] makes me feel that I get anxious at this moment and so think that I might not have familiarized myself with this aspect or manipulated it very well (NE01).

She further added that

'[You] wonder why [you] cannot understand, why [you] still cannot speak, perhaps [you] did not memorize [something] well etc. [You] relatively have the feeling that [you] are blaming yourself' (NE01).

#### 4.2.3.4 Being propelled to work harder

In the light of the themes above, it is certain that learner anxiety has negatively impacted on the students in the areas of sociability, cognition, and perceptions of the self. However, they can also be propelled by negative emotion to put more effort into their learning. (Because this theme stands by itself, no diagram is demonstrated for reference.) The fifth informant stated that pressure might be considered as either positive or negative, depending on the person who suffers from it: 'Some people must regard stress as positive and be making more progress themselves. Some [, however,] like I just said, will escape. I think that I should [belong to] the positive side' (NE05). She mentioned her experience of practicing speaking at her university's language center, and discussed what she had done after being reproved for poor performance by the student tutor:

Last time I went to the LDCC. I did prepare a long script..., but while I was reading it..., I could not read it out very well due to anxiety...As a result, I was reproved by the tutor...The tutor said that you were no good or something. Because of this, after I went back, I kept listening to the [electronic] dictionary and kept speaking and speaking. If I was unfamiliar with a word, I just listened to [the dictionary for it]

fifty times and the like (NE05).

She, furthermore, claimed that, 'If the performance this time is done badly, I will want to do it comparatively better [next time]' or 'think that I must do so-and-so if I still have the chance next time' (NE05).

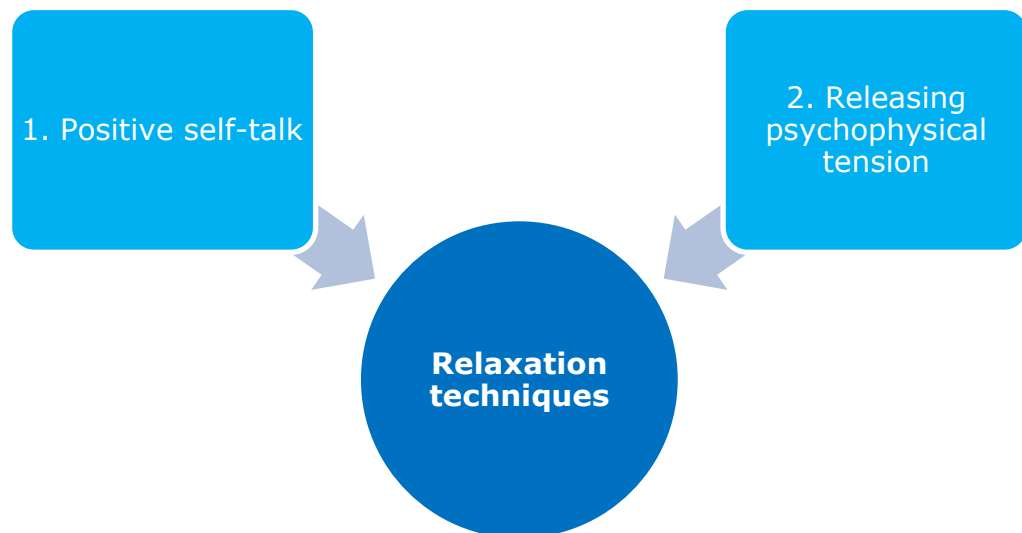
#### 4.2.4 Coping tactics for anxiety

The coping strategies listed in Table 4.2 for non-major English students are (1) relaxation techniques, (2) gaining support from others, and (3) confronting anxiety-provoking situations. Each of them has also embraced several minor categories, focusing on more specific coping tactics for anxiety. The introduction to each sub-category is illustrated below.

##### 4.2.4.1 Relaxation techniques

The students attempt to mitigate their emotional burdens through adjustments to their mental and physical states. There are two categories, as Figure 4.22 presents, affiliated with this major theme, each of which is introduced with a brief description of and the relevant extracts to the category.

Figure 4.22 The sub-themes of 'relaxation techniques'



#### *Positive self-talk*

Three students attempted to console themselves by soft words or positive interpretations of the current situation in order to release their anxiety in certain activities. Two of them had provided relatively detailed descriptions of the scenes:

Take my speaking wrongly for example,...after this situation finishes, I may...console and say to myself that "It's fine. That is not the first time. Just go back and carefully look it up again" (NE01).

I try to convince myself. I say to myself that "Maybe others do not understand it, either, or try not to be so nervous", i.e. talk to myself (NE06).

#### *Releasing psychophysical tension*

'Releasing psychophysical tension' is composed of playing with friends and/or taking a walk after class and taking a deep breath,

which were considered to have the function of releasing both physical and psychological tensions. The specific extracts are as follows:

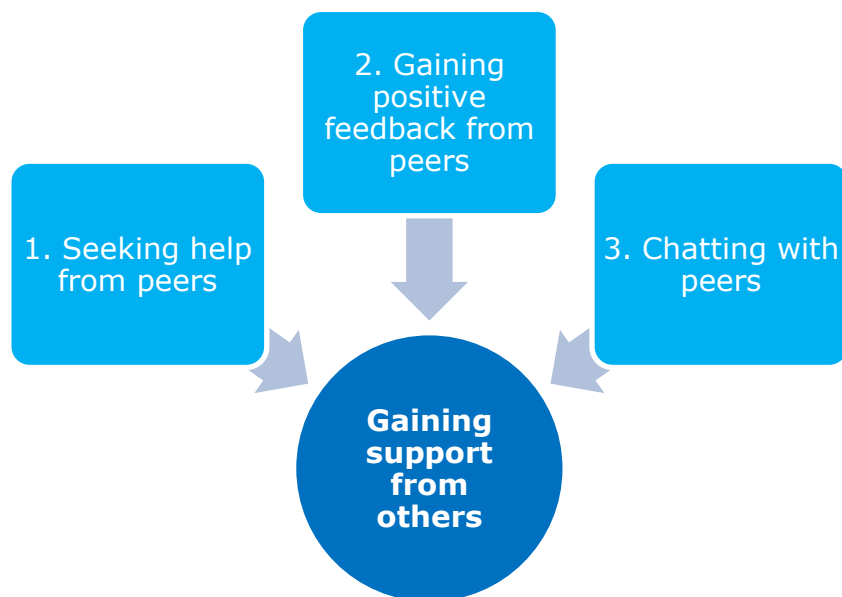
I play with my friends [after class].  
I will go out to take a walk (NE09).

I may think about how to solve this predicament, and then take a deep breath. It will be fine afterwards (NE08).

#### 4.2.4.2 Gaining support from others

The students make use of the 'human resources' around them to deal with anxious feelings. Most of the students try to seek their classmates for help in mitigating feelings of anxiety. The diagram below shows the components of this theme.

Figure 4.23 The sub-themes of 'gaining support from others'





### *Seeking help from peers*

Three students stated that when encountering difficulties in classroom activities or tasks, they felt greatly relieved if they could receive help from their classmates. The examples are as follows:

Because he or she [the neighbors] certainly have written the answer...[,so] I just read out his or her answer. I would say I do not understand this part. Could you tell me [the answer]?...Then, he or she will tell me and so I will feel relieved (NE07).

When I am called on to answer a question, I have perhaps missed it during the preparation, or I am suddenly called on and so do not know how to answer. At that moment, I will think of how to answer. Then, I may turn to my group members and ask what to say...After spending some time organizing [my answer] and taking a deep breath, I face the question again and say what I just thought of (NE08).

### *Gaining positive feedback from peers*

Concerning the second category, two students attempted to confirm with their classmates that their worries were, in fact, not so important or necessary that they needed to take them seriously. The extract below can explain this.

'I look at others' facial expressions, reactions, etc. If others are not ok like me, I will say fortunately that guy is not ok either. Then, I will not be so nervous relatively. However, if others' reactions are eager to try to or totally understand, I will become even more anxious. But, if others are all not ok, I will slowly (.) Ok, good, good ,good. Very good, very good' (NE06).

### *Chatting with peers*

Lastly, sharing with classmates nervous feelings was also considered to be one of the coping strategies for anxiety. One student employed this tactic to calm herself down:

R: Will you do something to make yourself feel better?

NE05: What I usually do is talk to someone. I directly ask him or her, 'What can I do? I feel so nervous and the like'.

...

R: Anything else? Will you also do other things to make yourself (.)

...

NE05: I will just directly talk [to others]. Then, there is no other thing [I] can do.

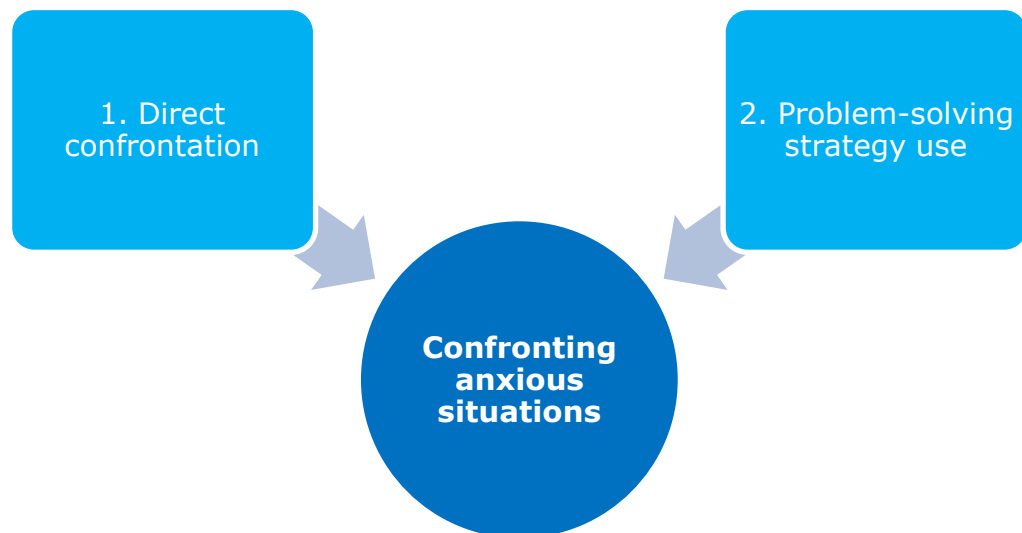
R: You will find someone quickly?

NE05: Yes. I will ask, 'What can I do? I feel so nervous. Then, I am so afraid of making mistakes'. After sharing, [you] still need to get on the stage.

#### 4.2.4.3 Confronting anxious situations

Two specific strategies comprise this theme as demonstrated in Figure 4.24. As the titles indicate, the respondents chose not to escape from their anxiety and attempt to come up with solutions to the problem. The descriptions of each strategy are presented below.

Figure 4.24 The sub-themes of 'confronting anxious situations'



#### *Direct confrontation*

With regard to 'direct confrontation', one female student chose to face her anxiety bravely and tried her best to carry on the current task smoothly. In her own words:

Regarding anxiety, there seems to be nothing you can do. I mean what you can do is force yourself to do it. Or, you just keep looking at your partner. If [you] really cannot think of any ways, [you] just make up a sentence similar to the one forgotten to make your partner able to carry on speaking...This is probably the way [I] adopt (NE01).

#### *Problem-solving strategy use*

Three students seemed to face their anxieties squarely and attempt to come up with solutions to the emotional problems. Because NE01's description, also coded in the second category, is displayed above, only the other two students' remarks are presented below.

I feel, “Why I am so useless and why I am so nervous to this degree at the very moment?” However, later on, I will think of what to do next time if I encounter this situation again...I will think of how to overcome anxiety and the like if the same situation happens again next time (NE05).

NE08: Uhm, releasing my emotion

R: Yes.

NE08: I may think of how to resolve this predicament, and then take a deep breath. I will feel better then.

R: Ok

NE08: Yeah. I feel relatively less nervous [and so] just face it first.

R: You mean think of solutions?

...

NE08: Yes, I will [carry them out]. I mean I will think of some relatively feasible solutions to overcome it.

### **4.3 Summary**

This chapter demonstrated two sets of findings from interviews with English major and non-English major students. The significant themes of each aspect of anxiety—situation, source, effect, and coping strategy—were presented and illustrated with relevant extracts and commentaries. It seemed that the students from each group reported different sources of anxiety. Chapter 5 is devoted to the findings from the teachers’ interviews.

## CHAPTER 5 INTERVIEW FINDINGS: TEACHERS

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter gives the findings from the interview data of teacher participants. In Chapters 3 and/or 4, I had discussed (1) how the data were processed and analyzed, (2) how the themes generated were selected and presented, (3) how the sections in Chapter 4 were organized, which is also applied to this chapter, and (4) what the parentheses in the extracts mean. Therefore, I directly reveal the themes generated from the data of the teachers of English majors and non-majors respectively. Appendices 9 and 10 give specific information of the themes.

In accordance with the reasons and considerations for selection in Chapter 4, Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 below demonstrate the abridged versions of the original lists of themes above.

Table 5.1 Reduced themes from the data of English majors' teachers

Aspects (of anxiety)	Situation	Source	Effect	Coping strategy for students' anxiety
<b>Themes</b>	1. Learning English in a formal classroom	1. Negative self-perception of L2 learning	1. Alteration of psychophysical conditions	1. Establishing a positive relationship
	2. Exposure in class	2. Concern about peers' judgments	2. Classroom dynamics: avoidance	2. Making students ready for the tasks/ challenges
		3. Poor relationship between group members	3. Being propelled to work harder	*3. Trying to inhibit students' negative emotions

Table 5.2 Reduced themes from the data of non-majors' teachers

Aspects (of anxiety)	Situation	Source	Effect	Coping strategy
<b>Themes</b>	1. Exposure in class	1. Negative self-perception of L2 learning	1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance	1. Making students ready for the tasks/ challenges
	2. Learning in class: un-predictability	2. Concern about peers' judgments	2. Poor speaking performance	2. Making use of peers' influence
		3. Inadequate English ability	3. Being propelled to work harder	*3. Trying to inhibit students' negative emotions

These themes are successively introduced and discussed in detail in the following sections.

## **5.1 The perceptions of English majors' teachers**

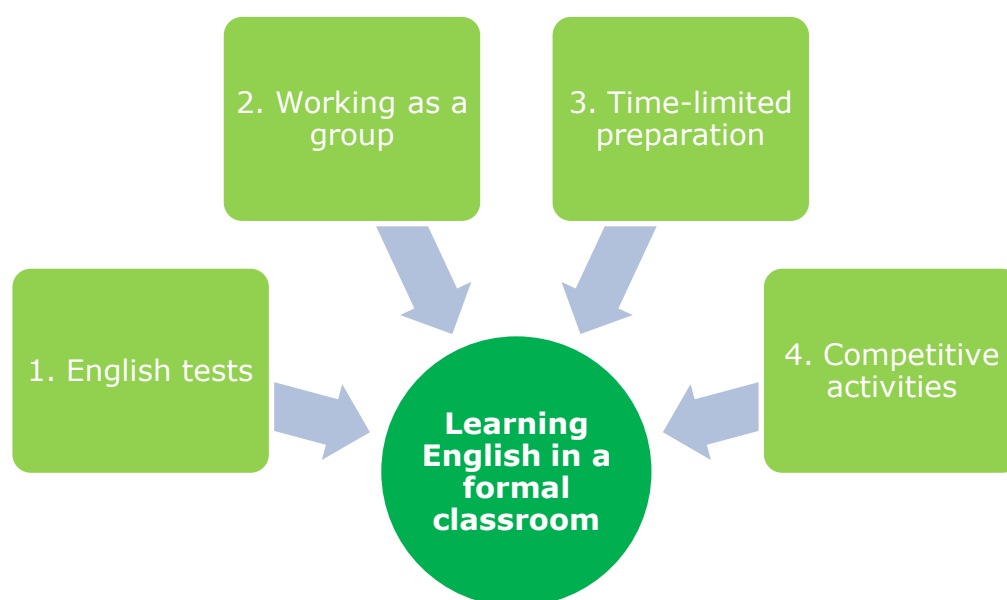
### **5.1.1 The situations where anxiety happens**

The situations in Table 5.1 are (1) learning English in a formal classroom and (2) exposure in class. Each also contains several minor categories, emphasizing more specific situations of anxiety. The introduction to each sub-category is below.

#### **5.1.1.1 Learning English in a formal classroom**

As detailed in Figure 5.1, this theme has four sub-themes— (1) English tests, (2) working as a group, (3) time-limited preparation, and (4) competitive activities. These four categories depict a relatively general picture of the language classroom. That is, the dimensions of classroom situations identified are not as specific as the other sub-themes, such as 'speaking on stage'. Thus, they were grouped together to form a major theme under the heading above.

Figure 5.1 The sub-themes of 'English class'



### *English tests*

Tests are an inevitable part of the curriculum in most courses, including English. It seems probable that students may have a negative attitude towards tests or examinations since they may impact largely on their academic performance assessment for a course. The fourth interviewee observed that students became exceptionally anxious when taking normal tests and midterm/final examinations. In her own words,

Very apparent, especially when they take written tests, [their anxiety] is super obvious...I think that they still think that written tests equals formal exams. Besides, when you let them read a large sheet of something, they are very nervous. Then, I do not know whether it is because of the final exam or (.). But, when they did quizzes, I also felt that they were nervous. I mean, when they see that sheet of something, they just get nervous (ET04).



Nonetheless, she mentioned that 'The degree of anxiety in taking quizzes is, of course, different from that in taking exams' (ET04). There appears to be no doubt that the former is less serious than the latter since examinations normally carry a much higher percentage of the total semester score. Additionally, the same teacher found it interesting that some students experienced anxiety even when taking a one-to-one oral test with her:

It is really interesting...because [you can] perceive that they are very nervous when listening to them [students] speaking. For example, they speak English very fast or stammer. Also, they do not perform as usual...Then, [you] ask them if they feel very nervous. They say, "Yes". Then, sometimes I just feel that but we are on a one-to-one basis already. I am not asking you to face a group of people...However, they are nervous even about that (ET04).

Apparently, the number of people with whom those students are faced is not the major problem here. It is, however, who the listener is perceived to be that can raise a question. Although the students only speak to the teacher, the latter may be taken more as an examiner than as an audience, i.e. the person who assesses them and decides whether they pass or not.

### *Working as a group*

Students are usually divided into several groups and then discuss a subject or carry out a task together as a group. During the process, the interaction between group members can be the context where

anxiety occurs. Apart from ET05's case in Section 5.1.2.3, the other teacher reported the occurrence of pressure in students' group discussion for an activity:

When groups have discussion activities, I feel that they [some students] do [feel nervous]...in terms of you know participating in the class...For instance, I ask them to listen and take notes. Then, when they are alone, he or she can choose to do or not to do it. Then, if the people in a group do it, it means that everyone is called to carry it out. That is, the participation feels relatively strong (ET04).

The nervousness of these students is probably due to stress from other group members and their loss of control and freedom in the context. Specifically, they need to be cooperative to undertake the activity with the other members even though they may not be interested in it. Nevertheless, as the extract shows, the seemingly anxious state is believed to prompt them to participate in the work more actively.

#### *Time-limited preparation*

Concerning 'time-limited preparation', it is not unusual that students are allowed a few minutes to prepare for the coming activities or tests in class. Nevertheless, according to the teachers, students were observed to exhibit anxiety during their preparation. One teacher raised the issue of students' anxiety in preparation by introducing two contrasting contexts:

[You] give them five minutes (.) Because I feel that in instruction there is a routine whereby you give students five minutes to practice. Then, you reconvene and ask [them] questions. I feel that students are not anxious about this. When do they feel anxious? When I give them five minutes to prepare a presentation or role play, for example...Then, you also project a very big online stop watch and leave it counting down. After five minutes, I instantly drew lots [to see who the presenter is] (ET01).

Another teacher reduced students' preparation time for oral examinations and then discovered that they had difficulty coping with the change:

We have speaking tests where students come up and choose a topic and then they have a certain amount of time to prepare a conversation in front of the class. I noticed that for the final exam, when I reduced their preparation time from 10 minutes to five minutes, they started to complain and ask for more time (ET02).

In doing this, he intended to prompt his students to 'really "talk" with each other' rather than only 'speak a memorized dialogue' (ET02).

### *Competitive activities*

Competitive activities are designed for and employed in class to make the course interesting and enhance students' speaking ability. Only two teachers mentioned using such activities in their classes, and claimed that anxious feelings were indeed triggered during the process. One of the teachers described the situation when students debated an issue as speaking practice in her class:

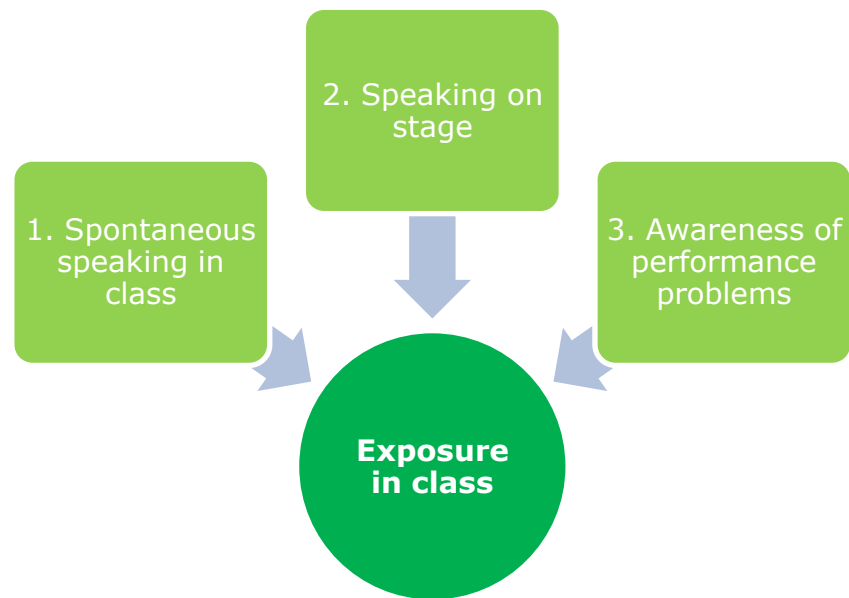
I once let students carry out a debate. [The topic] was about what (.) [It] was about the Wall Street campaign...I suddenly forget its name in English...Ah! [It is] Occupy Wall Street. I let them have a debate. I divided them into four groups and there were for and against sides. They were obviously very nervous [in the competition] (ET01).

She, furthermore, briefly spoke of the association between students' nervousness and the audience: 'They are a group of students who like to show themselves. When there are crowds [audiences] in front of them, they become nervous. However, they will turn this nervousness into a positive force' (ET01). Apart from the atmosphere of competitiveness, her students' anxious feelings may also relate to their concern about others' views, face protection, and/or desire to win the competition, as implied in the above extract. Moreover, although it is interesting to be informed of the positive effect of anxiety, whether the emotion truly does no harm is a question that only can be answered by the students involved.

#### 5.1.1.2 Exposure in class

Students are encouraged to speak English in class to adapt to using the language. The diagram below reveals the speaking related activities mentioned by the teachers.

Figure 5.2 The sub-themes of 'exposure in class'



When attempting or required to respond, speak, or present in English in class, students are, of course, involved in the possibility or risk of exposing various aspects of themselves to the whole class.

#### *Spontaneous speaking in class*

Students were considered to experience anxiety when spontaneously speaking in class. Specifically, they were concerned about being picked on to speak, including when the teacher randomly called on them to speak, and volunteering answers to the teacher's questions. An interviewee stated that students experienced anxiety when singled out to speak. She also mentioned that this teaching procedure, in fact, carried an additional purpose sometimes. In her own words,

I feel that being singled out in front of the whole class makes them very nervous, and they worry that they won't be able to

answer. Nevertheless, because often I single out [a certain student] and I just know that he or she cannot answer, this is actually an act of warning. Then, sometimes I, of course, also call on those who can answer...because this class, i.e. listening and speaking, has more than fifty students. You are singled out from fifty-something students, which could be very frightening for them (ET04).

This big class results from the fact that ability grouping was not applied to the English class of English majors. It is assumed that suddenly being the focus of attention can put pressure on the student, but this thinking does not preclude shyness or low self-confidence in the student. Another female respondent reported interesting situations whereby when some students volunteer to answer her question even though they are anxious:

They feel anxious, but simultaneously want to [answer]. Their desire to answer is greater than their anxiety. This is not saying that their anxiety helps them. Not necessarily. They keep thinking and thinking that I want to answer that question. I feel afraid, but I still want to (ET05).

However, some anxious students attempt to avoid speaking:

[Some] anxious students may look at those wanting to answer, and [wonder] why they dare to. Sometimes they envy [their peers]. Sometimes they feel that '[it] has nothing to do with me, [so] it would be best if you do not call on me' (ET05).

### *Speaking on stage*

Speaking on stage was a situation where the teachers thought that students definitely experienced anxiety. No matter what speaking task they did, they seemed to be anxious about facing all of their classmates and trying to finish their oral presentation at the front. One female teacher claimed that students became anxious about doing speaking practice (role play) on stage. This, however, seemed to improve later in the year. More precisely,

The two students were still nervous even when finishing. Nevertheless, I felt that they were relatively nervous at the beginning. Later, they (.) I mean our course has been going...for nearly one year [;] they actually made improvements. You can see that they no longer procrastinate or refuse to go on stage and are not so anxious that they cannot speak when on stage. They all now (.) Practice has surely made them different (ET03).

In other words, when students are accustomed to this way of presenting, their anxiety is likely to be reduced. Another respondent realized that most students could get anxious when presenting on stage since 'they speak faster and faster' (ET04). One context was group presentations: 'I mean they feel very nervous when making...a big, complete (more than 15 or 20 minutes) [group] presentation' (ET04). She explained in passing that their anxiety was engendered by classmates' attentiveness and their desire to give a good presentation. Apparently, in addition to the concern about low scores, such performance-related worries as shyness, face issue, and/or

caring about others' views are all likely to be the sources of this anxiety. From the perspective of an individual, lack of experience, low (L2) self, and/or poor manipulation of English could also potentially contribute to anxiety of this kind.

#### *Awareness of performance problems*

Only one teacher mentioned students' negative emotional responses to perceived imperfections in their performances in class. Some students became embarrassed when presenting badly at the front. The teacher normally dealt with this by giving the students a second chance, i.e. return to them for the question later. In her own words, 'if some people do not speak well, they feel a bit embarrassed as others are looking at them' (ET01). She emphasized that 'I dislike [the intervention] that you still keep pushing the student to speak instantly when he or she is unable to' (ET01).

#### 5.1.2 The sources of students' anxiety

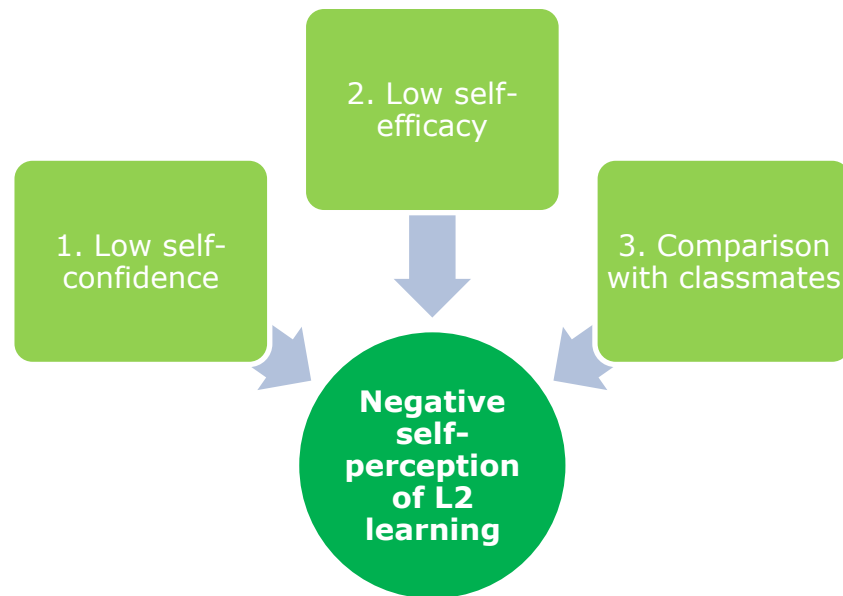
The sources in Table 5.1 are (1) negative self-perception of L2 learning, (2) concern about peers' judgments, and (3) poor relationship between group members. Each also embraces several minor categories, highlighting more specific sources of anxiety. The introduction to each sub-theme is presented below.



#### 5.1.2.1 Negative self-perception of L2 learning

How students perceive themselves in different aspects of learning can impact on their emotions during participation in classroom activities. As Figure 5.1 reveals, anxious students were observed to have three negative self-perceptions:

Figure 5.3 The sub-themes of 'negative self-perception of L2 learning'



##### *Low self-confidence*

University students were discovered to probably have the concerns about their own disadvantageous English ability or skills, i.e. no 'lack of anxiety' in using the L2 and negative 'self-ratings of L2 proficiency' (Sampasivam and Clément 2014: 25). Two teachers (ET03; ET05) perceived that students with anxiety over classroom situations criticized their own English ability. In particular, the former clearly stated the association between self-confidence and negative learner emotions:

If they themselves think that they are good, they may feel comfortable with the speaking course. [However,] if they themselves think that their own ability is not good enough, when [you] ask them to do any practice or something, you can feel that they are nervous all the time (ET03).

Apparently, how well the students rate themselves in various aspects of language learning has a powerful impact on their emotional responses to classroom activities.

### *Low self-efficacy*

Low self-efficacy is different from 'low self-confidence' in that I relate to when students do not have the 'beliefs in his/her ability to perform a designated task or complete an activity (Mills 2014: 8) in the class. The male teacher explained why Taiwanese university students feel anxious about sharing their ideas or opinions in class. Apart from relating to Taiwan's 'teacher-centered pedagogy', 'maybe they are afraid that their grammar will be incorrect, but I think the content is a bigger problem. They are constantly worried that their answers may not be correct' (ET02). In Taiwan, students are used to looking for standard answers to questions or checking whether their answers match the teacher's. Therefore, they do not take risks unless they are sure of themselves and their responses.

Additionally, a female teacher described what made students anxious while they were preparing for the coming presentation:

I feel group (.) because there are individual and group [presentations]. Like speaking, I give them three minutes to

prepare...Then, the reason why they feel anxious is that they are afraid that what they want to say is incomplete. In group work, this phenomenon may be even more obvious. I mean everyone has their own ideas, so how do they integrate [them] together within ten minutes? Then, they feel anxious about this since they are concerned about an incomplete presentation devoid of content when on stage (ET04).

There is perhaps no denying that these low self-efficacy beliefs involve struggling with the need to use a language other than mother tongue to perform during the whole process.

#### *Comparison with classmates*

Comparison between peers seems to be inevitable in the learning environment. Students discover differences in English ability between themselves and the other students within the process of learning, and regard themselves as capable or incapable. The fourth respondent not only mentioned what her students cared about in speaking, but also reported how they reacted to others' good performances:

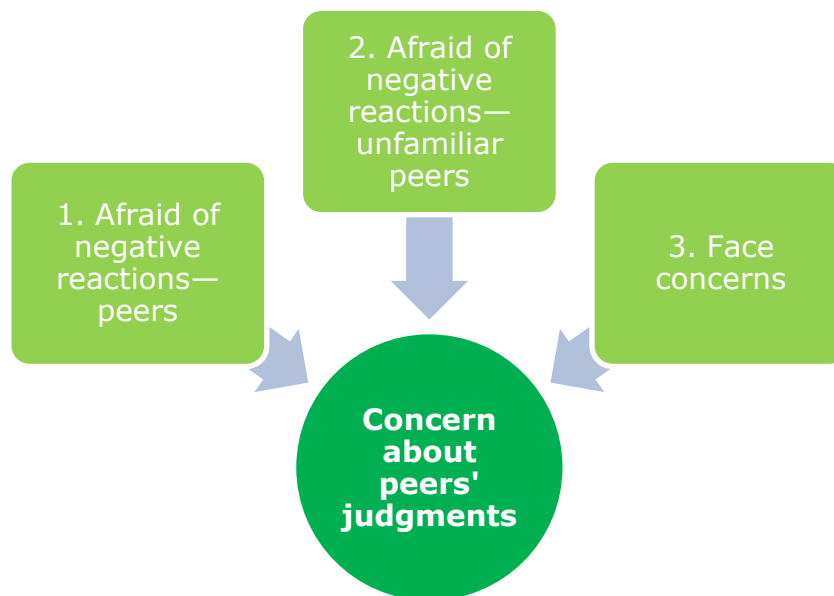
[They care about their] fluency and (.) exactly to what extent they can express their ideas [in English]...I feel that fluency is a very big problem as everyone hopes to speak English fluently. When they find that their classmates can do it, but they cannot, then they seem to shrink to some extent (ET04).

Apparently, peer pressure can be constantly experienced as a result of comparison students' English abilities/skills.

#### 5.1.2.2 Concern about peers' judgments

This cause of anxiety, detailed in Figure 5.4, indicates that English majors seem to worry about perceiving or receiving negative feedback from and exposing their disadvantages to their classmates.

Figure 5.4 The sub-themes of 'concern with peers' judgments'



#### *Afraid of negative reactions—peers*

Concerning the first item, high emotional sensitivity was observed in students to their classmates' negative impression of them. Specifically, they were afraid of being looked down on or given no credit in terms of their English ability or performance in class. A female teacher thought that students' performance anxiety could also be traced to their attempt to 'build up a [positive] image of their own in class' (ET03).

'Students actually care about the degree of respect their classmates have for them in class...Thus, if they always

cannot do [something], you can imagine that their peers will show some contempt for them in the class, won't they? [They] may hence lose others' respect for them' (ET03).

She claimed that 'if you give students oral tests, if [you] let them do them individually rather than in front of their peers, perhaps the outcome is better' (ET03).

Moreover, the male teacher mentioned a number of sources of anxiety when responding to the question about the role of anxiety in language learning. Among these causes, the most interesting one was what he called 'teacher's pet': 'I know that some students don't want to share their ideas in class because they don't want others to feel that they are "teacher's pet" if they answer questions all the time' (ET02). I then probed into what he meant, so he explained that "'teacher's pet" is someone who always raises their hands to answer all the questions' (ET02). In Chinese culture, 'keeping a low profile [, as a social norm,] is a crucial way to stay unified with the community' (Peng 2014:31). Take the above situation for example, the students could be considered to show off or ingratiate themselves with the teacher.

#### *Afraid of negative reactions—unfamiliar peers*

The concept in the second category is the same as in the one above, but focuses particularly on unfamiliar peers. One respondent indicated that whether students are worried about making mistakes depends on their degree of familiarity with other people in the class: 'when unfamiliarity in the class is relatively high, they do care about [making mistakes]. [However,] when the degree becomes mild, they

may not be concerned' (ET03). In order to obtain details, I asked her to what extent it caused anxiety, as in the dialogue below.

ET03: Yes. I think so. I mean the atmosphere of the class as a whole. If everyone just laughs and nothing more happens, [the situation] may be [fine]. However, perhaps some of them are just so afraid that others make judgments [about them] behind their backs...

R: That is, when peers in the class are familiar with each other, they will have less (.)

ET03: better

R: Namely, [they] will care less about the detail

ET03: Yes, less. Their fear of making mistakes will be less.

#### *Face concerns*

'Face concerns' here mainly relates to students' concerns about failing to maintain or protect their own image or making themselves or being made to feel embarrassed in class. That is, they are afraid of their disadvantages being noticed and being laughed at when not performing well. A teacher commented on the causes of students' anxiety about being called to speak in class. Apart from human nature and inadequate English ability, she also linked anxious feelings to the fear of other's noticing flawed performance.

It could be that they are afraid that [their] classmates hear them, for example, pronounce poorly and give the wrong responses. Or, they are uncertain whether what they say is right maybe [because] they are afraid of their mistakes being heard by their classmates (ET04).

Nevertheless, she suggested that 'sometimes, in fact, [their] classmates do not pay attention to [them], so they do not have to worry much about this' (ET04).

Two teachers indicated that students' dislike of embarrassment or need to maintain face involved their academic expectations of themselves. More precisely, according to the male teacher, 'I think part of the anxiety is due to higher academic expectations of themselves. Maybe because they have these expectations, they do not want to embarrass themselves in front of others' (ET02). Similarly, the other teacher said 'They also hope that they can learn English well. Just like what I said, because our department is English, they also still hope that they are able to speak [in English]' (ET03). Although ET03 did not directly point out the issue of face protection, it is understandable that, as English majors, they expect to be able to demonstrate the ability to manipulate English well, especially in front of those knowing their background.

#### 5.1.2.3 Poor relationship between group members

Dividing students into groups may be easy, but positive interactions or relationships cannot be guaranteed within each group. When relationships become negative, feelings like discomfort or pressure are likely to appear in some students. (Because this theme stands alone, no diagram is drawn for reference.) One experienced teacher discovered a number of phenomena which could contribute to the discomfort of some students. For example,

There are sometimes many problems in group work. Students, in fact, do not want to be in the same group, but are grouped together by accident. They have not got along well since the beginning, and then they just keep scolding each other. Or, if one was uncooperative once, they will consider this person to be always uncooperative...Unfortunately, this person gets grouped with them (ET05).

She said that she, therefore, lets students select their own members when they need to carry out a project as a group. However, if it is only a practice, she normally does the grouping herself.

### 5.1.3 The effects of anxiety on students

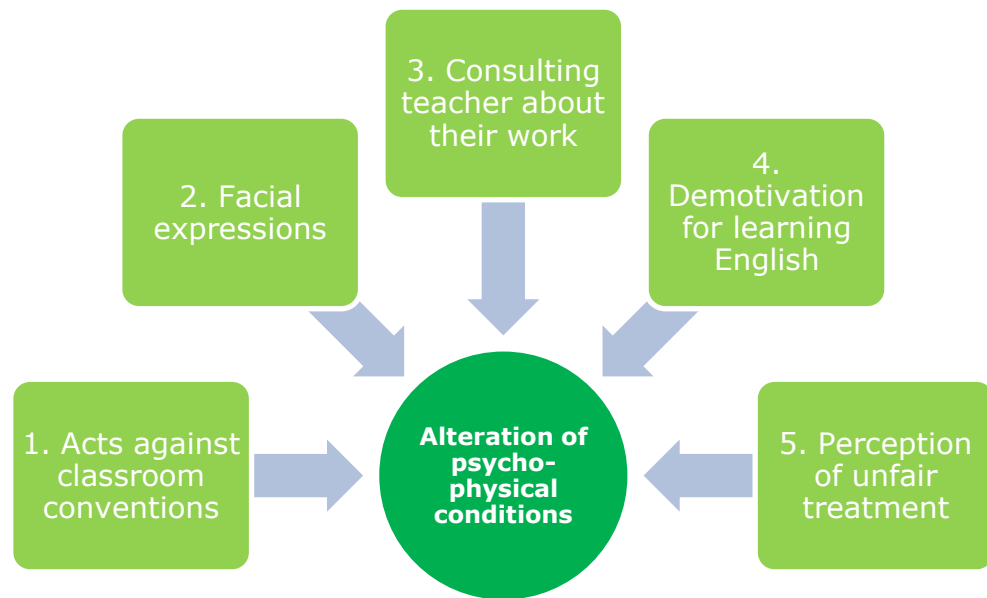
The effects in Table 5.1 are formed from (1) alteration of psychophysical conditions, (2) community dynamics: avoidance, and (3) being propelled to work harder. Each also contains several minor categories, pointing out more specific effects of anxiety. The introductions to these sub-categories are below.

#### 5.1.3.1 Alteration of psychophysical conditions

This describes the behavioral and psychological alterations in anxious students in class. That is, they are the changes which a teacher, generally speaking, does not see in those at ease. There are five variations within the main category, detail of which are in Figure 5.5 below.



Figure 5.5 The sub-themes of 'alteration of psychophysical conditions'



#### *Acts against classroom conventions*

This refers to the non-verbal behavior which anxious students displayed in the class. Most of their actions had the characteristic of refusal (or timidity). A teacher mentioned some anxious students' behavioral reactions to her calling on someone to speak: 'Some [anxious students] probably shrink back...[You] can notice that they have their head (.) Whenever [I] want to pick on someone [to speak], they just keep their head down' (ET03). The same behavior was also observed when the male teacher expected someone to volunteer an answer: 'when students are anxious because they don't know the answer, they never look up at you (eye contact) when you ask for volunteers to answer the question' (ET02). Another teacher described the manifestations of anxiety observed in some students participating in a group discussion. Some seemed to sit there and do nothing:

Some [anxious] classmates remain silent and do not know what to do [in their own group discussion]. I go to ask them and I instantly find that they are very nervous. Since it is their [group's] turn [to present] later and they do not have any ideas, they are very nervous. Then, as they are short of ideas, they cannot join in [the discussion] (ET04).

### *Facial expressions*

In addition to body language mentioned above, students' facial expressions are recognized as another clue to anxiety in different classroom situations. Although it is difficult to depict an anxious face, the expressions seemed to convey a person's distress in general. As ET05 said, '[anxious students] do not necessarily [screw up their face]. If you take photos of them, everyone's [facial expression] is different' (ET05). Nevertheless, she gave a more specific description of their facial expressions: 'they show no self-confidence in their faces...When you ask them to do something [in class], they just look very timid. You can usually realize [that they are anxious]' (ET05). Additionally, the male teacher suggested that facial expression is an effective indicator of whether a student is feeling anxious: 'The most obvious is in their facial expression. They have a worried look on their faces if I ask them something requiring giving their opinion [and]...when they don't know the answer to something' (ET02).

### *Consulting teacher about their work*

The teachers also consider students' consulting them about their work to be a sign of their anxious feelings. More precisely, it seems that anxious students expect to receive positive responses to their

enquiries from their teachers in order to eliminate their uncertainty or confusion or solve their problems. A female teacher claimed that most anxious students, due to their wish to improve, inquired about their own learning related issues:

About...most students' anxiety...for example, they cared about the class very much [, so] some students would ask me 'Why did you not give me A+ for my assignment I did in this way?' Then, I told them that it was because I was not inclined to give A+. The highest score was A...Some students would come to ask me [for suggestions], depending on what they did badly. Then, next time, you could see their strong intention to do well (ET04).

Another interesting phenomenon mentioned by the same teacher was that anxious students appeared to take their teacher's general comments personally and came to ask her about them. More precisely,

For instance, when you discuss some things with them [the whole class], they [anxious ones] just come to ask 'Teacher, was I the one who did it wrong?' Then, I just felt so surprised, and I said 'The person I was talking about was not you'...The reason why I felt surprised was that they read too much into my comments. While talking about [something], I do not indicate anyone specifically (ET04).

Another female teacher noticed that some anxious learners tried to reassure themselves about the coming classroom activities or tasks:

About anxious students, some come to ask the teacher more often than not what we are going to do next [or] what we are

going to do with something. They do worry about the future. [Like] how students are tested, if you do not explain [it] clearly, they will become very nervous (ET05).

It may be surprising that anxious students dare to talk to their teachers about their own learning issues. However, apparently, their anxiety comes from sources other than the teacher him-/herself.

### *Demotivation for learning English*

'Demotivation' here indicates that the loss of patience with and/or interest in (learning) English is highly likely to manifest itself in students with anxiety. One respondent revealed that negative thoughts and giving up could be seen in some of the anxious students:

They feel that they just cannot learn well. There are always people [thinking] in this way...There should also be this kind of students in the English department. I also find that some people just give up, but not many. But, when you teach other major students, [you see] relatively more. They just feel that their English is no good and so they give up. Nonetheless, there seem to be fewer students in the English department [acting] like this (ET03).

Another respondent shared with me the attitudes towards English of students who felt anxious about speaking English:

They [certain students] feel that speaking English is a frustrating thing...[, and then] learning later becomes a kind of anxiety-laden task. I mean as long as they have to deal with English, their attitude turns very passive and negative (ET04).

She commented that this situation was difficult to change if it had reached a certain stage, and hoped that their thinking and learning would be different in their future courses.

#### *Perception of unfair treatment*

Considering the last component, the feelings of anxiety could possibly lead some students to take teachers' instructions as objectionable treatment. One teacher raised this issue by starting off with the importance of good teacher-student interrelationships:

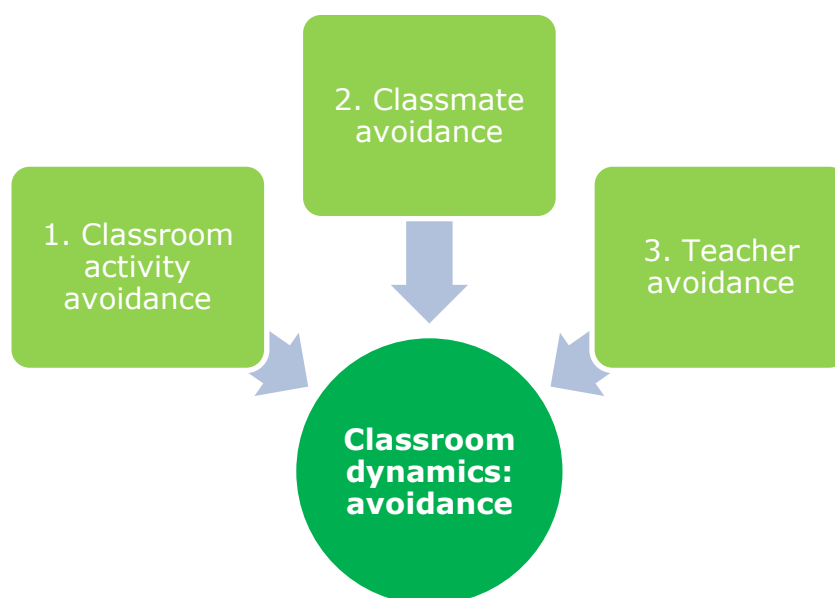
The relationship between student and teacher is quite important...You make students feel that you want what's best for them. Perhaps when you make students understand..., they will have a better reaction. Otherwise, sometimes students think that the requests from the teacher (.) they may take them as very negative. That is, [they] think that the teacher spites [them] (ET03).

That is, as she commented, 'perhaps [due to] their tension of this kind, they think that the teacher calls on me purposefully and therefore makes them so nervous...[if] they cannot realize it [teacher's intention]'

#### 5.1.3.2 Classroom dynamics: avoidance

'Avoidance' here indicates that students refused to interact with people in the learning context. There were even people preventing themselves from participating in classroom activities. The diagram below demonstrates the three components of this theme.

Figure 5.6 The sub-themes of 'community dynamics: avoidance'



#### *Avoidance of classroom activities*

Students were observed to have avoidance behavior when dealing with certain classroom situations where they feel anxious. The male interviewee spoke of student avoidance in two contexts. At the same time, he appeared to also compare the 'causes' of these avoidances.

I think the more anxious students would avoid classroom participation/performance since they would probably be afraid to speak publicly or be afraid of making mistakes. But I think interactions with teachers or peers may be more connected with personality. I have seen students who are very shy and do not say anything during group work [,] but when the group goes up on stage, their English is very good and fluent. Maybe the anxious students are the ones who go up on stage and try to get it over with as quickly as they can (ET02).

Although he claimed that personality results in certain students' avoidance behavior in a group discussion, the possibility of

communication apprehension or concern with peers' views may not be ignored in a context involving social interactions. Additionally, one female interviewee claimed that being absent and ignoring work were both likely to occur in anxious students:

There are students feeling so anxious that they cannot come to class, therefore [they] skip class. Some people do so...Also, they find that the teacher is always dissatisfied with [their] work and so they just leave it behind [the activities or assignments]. There are people doing this as well (ET03).

In terms of the second case, it is arguable that the students could feel so anxious or stressed that they are not interested in the course or the tasks and do not even care about whether their lack of work can affect their academic scores.

#### *Classmate avoidance*

Two teachers were aware that anxious students tried to avoid interacting with their peers while involved in a group discussion and/or speaking on stage. ET04 mentioned anxious students' avoiding discussion with other group members under 'acts against classroom conventions'. Moreover, she found that students with anxiety tried to rush their presentation on stage: 'I feel that they just want to complete this work as quickly and well as possible' (ET04). This effect of anxiety has also been reported by ET02 in the above paragraph. In other words, the less time they spend on stage, the less time they spend facing their peers and keeping themselves in the situation.

### *Teacher avoidance*

Lastly, it was found that students' anxiety probably weakened their interaction with their teachers inside and outside the classroom. Apart from the fact that anxious students lowered their heads to avoid being picked on to speak (ET02; ET03), ET03 also revealed that the students frequently failed to turn up for appointments with her.

[There are students] always avoiding the teacher. When [they] have to meet with the teacher, they just do not come at all...I am not certain whether it is because of anxiety or because they have decided to give up. It is very hard to say. [I think] it may be due to anxiety (ET03).

She stated that she would have forced them to keep the appointment in the past. However, she did not do so any more since the harder they were pushed, the higher their anxiety would be. Although it is difficult to say that the teacher is certainly the source of the students' anxiety, she is definitely associated with English. As a result, it is little wonder that the interaction between them is also negatively affected.

#### 5.1.3.3 Being propelled to work harder

In contrast to the above themes, being propelled to work harder indicates the likelihood that some students are propelled by anxiety to put more effort into their learning. (Since this theme stands by itself, no diagram is drawn for reference.) A participant claimed that most anxious students had higher expectations of themselves in class. According to her responses, these students were not negatively



impacted on by anxiety. They seemed to be zealous about learning:

When the well-behaved students listen to my lectures, I can feel that they actually feel anxious. For example, I give [students] one thing. Then, after they have read it, they perhaps (.), for instance, they seem not to understand it very well because...sometimes [when] I talk about the film clips, in fact, I think that they probably do not understand them well as there are no subtitles. Nevertheless, they still work very hard in order to understand them (ET04).

Arguably, whether anxiety plays a facilitating role in EFL learning could be discussed from three perspectives: (1) the degree of anxiety, (2) the ability to bear stress, and (3) the source of anxiety. Considering the above extract, it seems demonstrable that their willingness to work harder or participate in class is simultaneously boosted by their will to work although their desire for success makes them anxious in the class.

Another informant described the scene when students prepared for a coming activity (presentation) with anxiety, which, according to her, enhanced the effectiveness of their preparation:

Like what I just told you, I mean when people feel anxious, everyone is very zealous in preparation. That is, you find that everyone keeps talking and taking notes with good effort. They feel that they take this activity very seriously. The reason why they take it very seriously may be that they are afraid of losing face and/or being anxious, so they have to be well-prepared. I actually support this. If today I ask someone to do something, but they still...[keep doing their own things], [I think] that I may go crazy (ET01).

She, furthermore, thought that anxiety could positively affect students' attitude towards the course although she did not specify the degree of anxiety required to have this effect:

I feel that they will not treat this two credit course with a careless attitude. They will know that this is a course for which they need to spend time preparing...Even though they come in to only listen and speak, it is not a course where you can goof off (ET01).

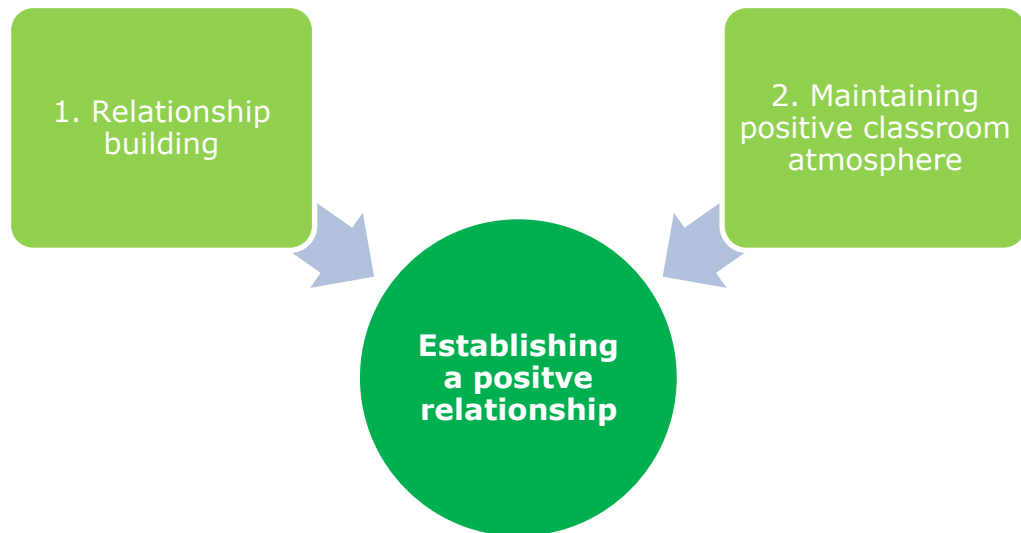
#### 5.1.4 The strategies used to address students' anxiety

The coping strategy for students' anxiety in Table 5.1 comprises (1) establishing a positive relationship, (2) making students ready for the tasks or challenges, and (3) trying to inhibit students' negative emotions. Each also has several minor categories, emphasizing more specific coping tactics for students' anxiety. The sub-categories are introduced below.

##### 5.1.4.1 Establishing a positive relationship

As the title implies, the construction or maintenance of appropriate interactions and atmosphere has been implemented to deal with students' anxieties in class. Within this theme two relevant tactics are involved.

Figure 5.7 The sub-themes of 'establishing a positive relationship'



### *Relationship building*

Concerning the first item, three teachers tried to develop or establish a familiar, friendly, and trustworthy relationship between teacher and students and between the students themselves through different activities or ways of grouping them on different occasions.

The following extracts illustrate these:

[My first step is that I] ask them to stand up and get to know each other...like ice breaking...Then, [I] write the things they will say on the blackboard to let them see them. They can walk around the classroom freely. If they do not know what to say, they can look at the blackboard (ET05).

In the class, I arrange...[students' seats], and then I sometimes shift their [quiet or less capable ones'] seats in order to let others have the chance to talk to others in English...Since they are peers, [i.e.] peer learning, there is less stress within peer learning...They talk to friends. They need to do [it] through classroom activities [as] kind of half

forced to...They have to do it as they are in class...Therefore, I purposefully use this kind of context to help them learn and make them dare to talk to them [others] next time and afterwards (ET05).

You let them choose [their own members] or do the grouping, but there are a few who are not recruited by any group...I once encountered a case...No one from his [original] class wanted him...,so I would sometimes grouped him with people from other classes [/departments] as...he did not feel stressed by them (ET05).

As far as the third description is concerned, the teacher apparently tries to help excluded students engage in activities so that they can gradually familiarize themselves with classroom practices, English language, and other peers. Their anxiety can, thus, be alleviated.

#### *Maintaining positive classroom atmosphere*

Regarding the second, only one teacher mentioned how he conducted his classroom sessions and treated misbehaving students in order to preserve a harmonious and relaxed learning environment.

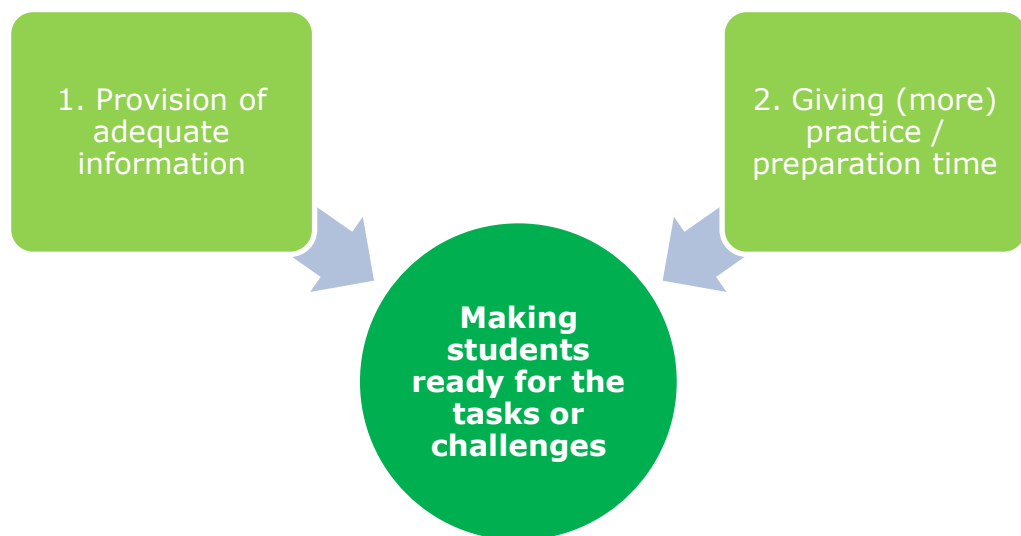
In classroom discussions, if we're learning and talking about the Olympics, I may say something like "Did you all watch the Olympics? My favorite event is the Lady's beach volleyball because they were all wearing bikinis" (ET02).

For classroom management, I will not scold the students if I notice that they're not paying attention as long as they don't interrupt the other students. Maybe I will stare at them and when one of those students notices, they will tell their partners to be quiet. I don't try to be a strict teacher (ET02).

#### 5.1.4.2 Making students ready for the tasks or challenges

The teachers try to equip their students with knowledge and a clear mind for the ongoing activity. There are two sub-themes within this major theme. The specific details are in Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8 The sub-themes of 'making students ready for the tasks or challenges'



##### *Provision of adequate information*

Four of five teachers reported providing their students with such information as how the course is conducted and how or why an activity is necessary as a strategy for making them feel secure about learning in class. Two teachers' comments are shown in the examples below.

While they are doing the activity, sometimes [you] discover that many people in class seem to be running into difficulty and feel very nervous. At the moment, I sometimes just say to them...'I can obviously see that you do not know what exactly I [the teacher] want you to do. Ok, let me look for a

student to demonstrate'. Then, I pick on someone with whom I have a better relationship, and then the student and I do the demonstration together...[Afterwards,] they know [how to do it] (ET03).

ET05: [I also alleviate their anxiety] through an introduction to the course. [This] can function as guidance.

R: You mean what you are going to teach in the course and the like?

ET05: Yes. When do the midterm and final exams take place? What are the scopes of the exams? What are you going to learn? I think that this is also necessary. How are they assessed? It is, in short, an introduction to the basics...

### *Giving (more) practice/preparation time*

Regarding the second component, students were given some (additional) preparation time before/in the middle of an activity to prepare them for the activity. It was even suggested that 'practice makes perfect' as far as learner anxiety was concerned.

Considering some people do not speak well, as the whole class is looking at them, they feel a bit embarrassed...I tell students 'I will give you five minutes for preparation. If you do not speak well or know what to say, I will call you again two minutes later'. I do not just simply let them go (E01).

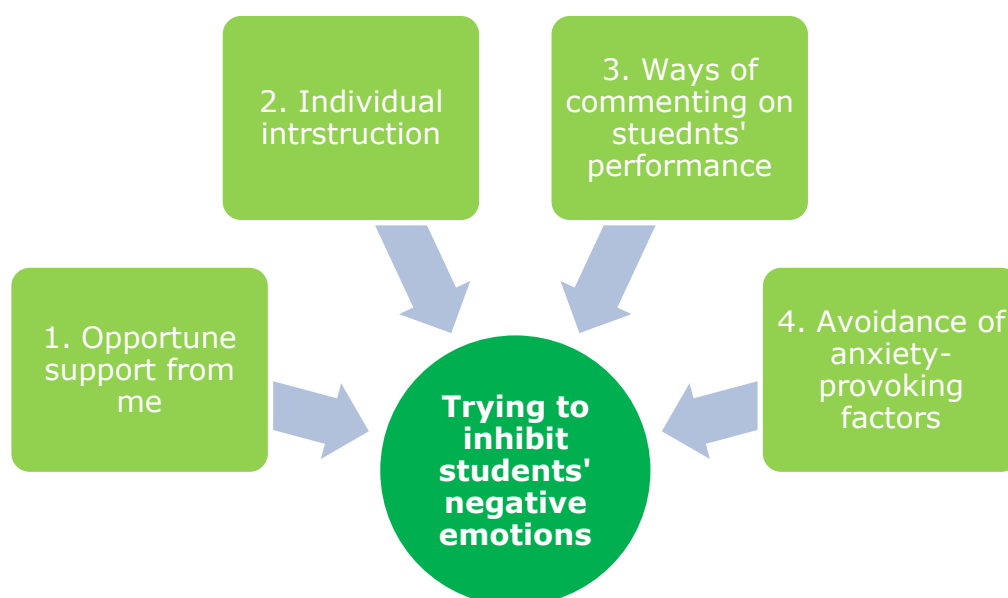
I also considered before what I could do about their seldom speaking up. I could not (.), but this course required students to speak. Nevertheless, [if] you force them, it did not seem [okay]. However, gradually, they could [speak] as well. [Thus, you] need to set different standards for them..., but you cannot set a special one as others may say you are being unfair. [The alternative way] may be to give them more

time... Others may not know I am giving [extra time to them] (ET05).

#### 5.1.4.3 Trying to inhibit students' negative emotions

This theme mainly expresses the ideas of precaution and compensation. That is, the teachers not only try to treat their students gently during the learning process, but also give them a helping hand when they confront difficulty performing activities or tasks. As Figure 5.9 shows, there are four specific tactics within this broad category.

Figure 5.9 The sub-themes of 'trying to inhibit students' negative emotions



##### *Opportune support from me*

With respect to the first, three teachers claimed that they helped their students instantly when they encountered trouble or actively asked them whether they needed help during their participation in activities.

Yes, I will go ask [them] 'Do you have any problems? I saw that you two do not seem to be speaking [conversing], so what happened?'...I usually walk around while the students are practicing. If I see students who seem to have no idea what to do, I will go tell [console or teach] them (ET03).

Sometimes I will intervene with one or two questions in due course...For example, when they cannot continue with their presentation any more, but their time has not come yet, I will ask them one or two questions. [This] makes them give a few responses...[e.g.] yes and no or one or two sentences. I sometimes do this, but I do not know if this alleviates their anxiety...My instinctive thought is that...[When] you make them at least say yes, there may be the possibility [of development] afterwards (ET04).

It seems that these teachers try to present the image of helper instead of a corrector to their students. That is, they are willing to help their students with their problems. They also appear to exhibit their sensitivity to and availability for students' difficulties and needs in learning.

### *Individual instruction*

'Individual instruction' means that students are given help with their emotional or learning problems on a one-to-one basis. Only ET03 mentioned this while discussing how to alleviate anxiety.

I normally walk around the classroom to give some individual instructions as much as possible. I find that most students feel very happy that you can give them some individual help. They will take it (.) They will feel that the teacher does care about me and want to teach me (ET03).



She noted that this was one method she used to build up a good relationship with her students.

#### *Ways of commenting on students' performance*

Two teachers revealed how they comment on their students' performance so as not to provoke negative emotions. They are inclined to emphasize the advantages of their learners' performances.

Every time students finish a conversation, I will give them some comments, won't I?... you can find that if the things the students say on stage are not interesting and they do not speak well either,...then, of course, [you can] find that they blush after coming off the stage. Nevertheless,...I hate...to only give negative [comments]. [You] still need to give some positive ones, e.g. your pronunciation is very good. You still need to try to mitigate the emotion. I truly feel that a teacher should not be allowed to emotionally torture students in class (ET01).

#### *Avoidance of anxiety-provoking factors*

Lastly, three teachers aimed to make students feel comfortable and secure during classroom situations. More precisely, they tried to avoid potential factors which might make students anxious in various contexts, such as test taking, presenting, and grouping:

I always try to make my tests and assignments have the right level of challenge for the students. I usually start with easy things at first, but after they know that they can do well, I will make them more challenging in future (ET02).

In Taiwan, students are afraid of being corrected publicly, but you tell them in private (.) While they are doing their work, you tell them that they can [do it] in this way. They will be very happy. However, sometimes work needs to be corrected publicly as others may not know [the correct usage] until you correct him or her. [We] do not need to [correct] everyone since we do not have much time (ET03).

If you keep looking at them [during their speaking performance], they will feel anxious. But, the problem is that it is impossible not to look at them...unless they are very nervous, I will tell them (.) like the one-to-one [oral] test, I will tell them 'Ok, I do not look at you then. You just speak'. Therefore, I do not look at them, but just listen (ET04).

Because I usually let them [students] do the grouping themselves..., the atmosphere in discussion or group work is actually mostly very good...It may be because they are all good friends. Hence, they would, for instance, give precedence to or tolerant each other...I perhaps have helped them alleviate their anxiety over that aspect a bit (ET04).

Section 5.2 below presents the findings based on the data generated from the interviews with the teachers of the non-English major students.

## 5.2 The perceptions of non-English majors' teachers

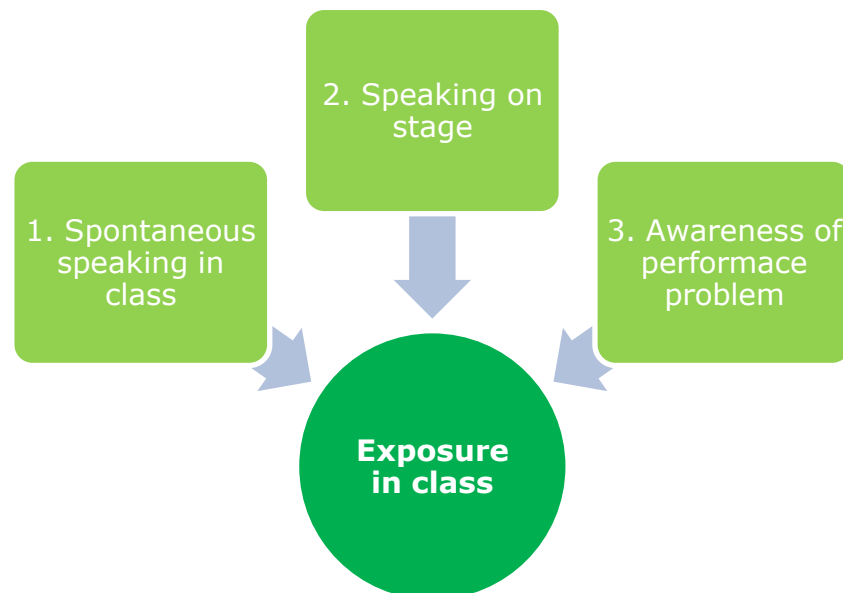
### 5.2.1 The situations where anxiety happens

The situations in Table 5.2 are (1) exposure in class and (2) learning in class: unpredictability. Each also has several minor categories, highlighting more specific situations of anxiety.

#### 5.2.1.1 Exposure in class

Students are encouraged to speak English in the classroom for the sake of adapting to using the language. Figure 5.10 reveals the relevant activities mentioned by the teachers.

Figure 5.10 The sub-themes of 'exposure in class'



When attempting or required to respond, speak, or present in English in class, students risk exposing various aspects of themselves to the whole class.

### *Spontaneous speaking in class*

Students were perceived to be anxious about spontaneous speaking in class. Specifically, they worried primarily about being called on to speak and teacher's randomly selecting someone. All six teachers said that their students feel anxious about being picked on to speak. One of the teachers described what she discovered from the anxious students:

Often if you called on a student, he or she, of course, feels that (.) Taiwan's students in general feel that they are afraid of making mistakes in speaking or responding, being laughed at when making mistakes, and that others consider them to be inferior, so they are not willing to speak. Or, [they] just say a sentence in whispers...They usually [speak English] in a very low voice...This shows their anxiety (NET07).

Another teacher discussed her students' reactions to her randomly calling on students to speak:

I usually pick students randomly to answer questions. Of course, before choosing someone randomly, I always give them time to prepare the answers. Afterwards, I randomly call on students to answer the questions. I am aware that, for students, [this] is very stressful as the students I have taught all give me the feedback that [they are] very nervous in my class (NET08).

### *Speaking on stage*

Speaking on stage is the situation which the teachers thought definitely made students feel anxious. No matter what the speaking

task is, they seemed to be anxious about facing their classmates and trying to finish their oral task at the front of the class. One teacher also mentioned the same situation, but clearly stated that there was a different response when the place changed: 'if you let them do [the practice] in their seat, they feel no anxiety at all. Once they come up to the stage..., they become nervous' (NET02). She claimed that her students were familiar with one another due to her grouping arrangements,

but they still act the same. Is this an aspect of human nature? As long as you stand in front of many people, you start to feel uncomfortable. Thus, there is a situation of this kind for sure. While you ask them to carry out some oral performances at the front, they start to feel nervous. Some people do, but not everyone (NET02).

Another teacher observed that even though students presented as a group on stage, anxiety still accompanied them to the end.

For example, I now let them to have a group discussion. After the discussion is over, I pick one group to come up to the stage and share the outcome with the other classmates. My feeling is that this also contributes to their anxiety to a certain extent (NET08).

Specifically, she mentioned a debate between two groups and said 'They are more nervous when on stage than in private because, in private, three people only need to face [the other] three' (NET08). Apparently, these teachers mainly consider students' reactions here

as part of human nature. Nevertheless, it could be argued that students are not used to facing a group of people when speaking since they had few chances to do this before university. Moreover, it is likely that students are concerned about others' views of them or their performances.

#### *Awareness of performance problems*

Only one teacher spoke of students' negative emotional responses to the perceived imperfections of their performance in class. She revealed students' anxiety over speaking on stage in the context of oral tests. She wondered why students did not prepare for the test even though they felt anxious, which increased their level of anxiety during the test. She then gave this illustration:

'In fact, they face so many people watching them speaking. When they cannot carry on, they just feel so stressed. Then, (.) They finish, [but] without much substance. After that, they are still very anxious. You can see their facial expression. You can see their behavior. They look very upset or tremble. They are just so nervous that they cannot carry on. After getting off the stage, you can see the sadness in their face. They are quite concerned about their marks. They are also concerned that...others all have seen their poor performance' (NET07).

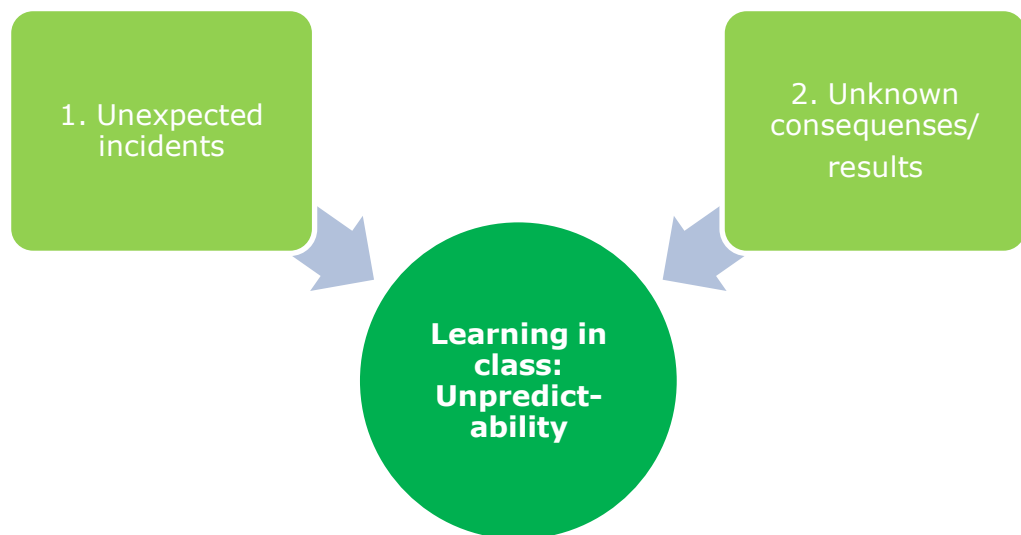
Obviously, emotional responses and particular situations are intertwined with each other. The students' negative emotions accumulate because anxiety-provoking situations come one after another within the context. Furthermore, the emotions are sustained

for a while, for they take their assumptions or concerns seriously, which are not solved yet.

#### 5.2.1.2 Learning in class: unpredictability

Unpredictability here refers to the situations and the consequences that the students did not expect to happen or did not have any way of anticipating while undertaking learning tasks in the classroom. Specifically, Figure 5.11 illustrates the two sub-themes within the major theme above.

Figure 5.11 The sub-themes of 'learning in class: unpredictability'



The teachers' perceptions, as described below, exemplify the difference between these two.

### *Unexpected incidents*

'Unexpected incident' mainly indicates the learning related changes or occurrences beyond the students' control or prediction in the classroom. When unanticipated situations occur, students were likely to lose control over their emotions. One respondent seemed to suggest that a teacher's curriculum design was connected with his or her students' emotional responses in class:

About other activities (.) I feel that this [the arrangement], due to every teacher's [distinct teaching] style, becomes different. For example, some teachers like to make changes each session. Then, some students feel a sense of freshness from the course. However, if I teach this class and feel I have got them stuck in a routine, when I do something different one day, this can also lead them to anxiety.

As she said, 'They just feel that they never expected this incident to happen. Why did it suddenly turn out this way?' (NET03). Arguably, students perhaps also have their own impression of how an English class is (should be) run normally. Aside from the university teacher's routines in teaching, this impression may be also partly formed of their previous experiences of learning before university.

### *Unknown consequences/results*

Performing badly in class, including the possibility of failing, seems to be an anxiety-causing issue for students since they are hardly able to foresee what will happen afterwards. A teacher pointed out not only students' anxiety over presenting poorly, but also their



worries about the result and others' reactions:

In face of so many people listening to them, when they cannot speak any more, they just feel very stressed. After this, they still feel very anxious...They worry about the result and that others all see their poor performance (NET07).

Two teachers, furthermore, discovered that students were worried about failing the course: 'another [situation] is that they are afraid of failing...Usually they are concerned about whether their scores can pass them' (NET07). Another teacher gave a more detailed comment on this:

I think that they are probably more worried about (.) like flunking because the problem is that this is a four/five credit course, which is a lot. However, the real reason why they have this anxiety is actually that they did not study..., and they do not come to the class, either. They have many excuses indeed (NET04).

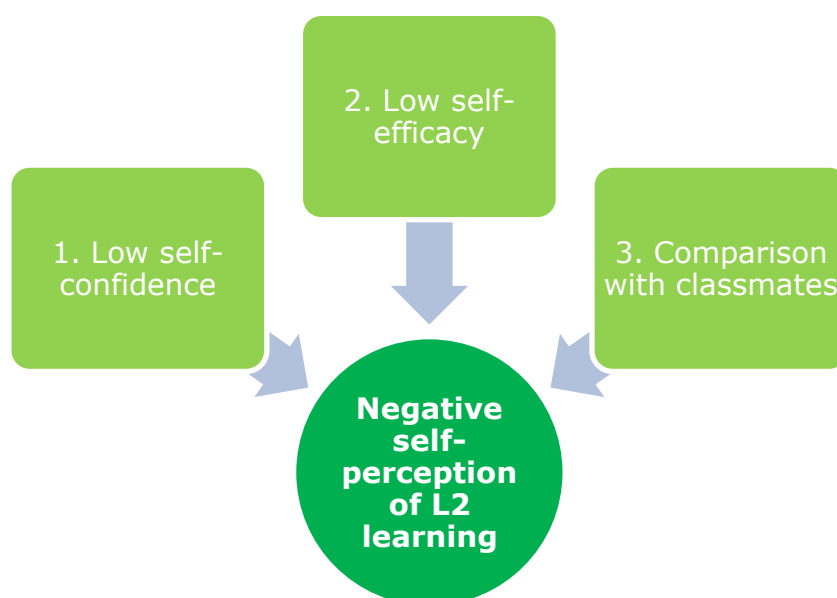
#### 5.2.2 The sources of students' anxiety

The source in Table 5.2 is composed of (1) negative self-perception of L2 learning, (2) concern with peers' judgments, and (3) inadequate English ability. Each of them also contains several minor categories, looking at more specific sources of anxiety. The introductions to the sub-categories are presented below.

### 5.2.2.1 Negative self-perception of L2 learning

How students perceive themselves in different aspects of learning can have a huge impact on their emotions during the participation in classroom activities. As Figure 5.12 displays, anxious students were considered to have three negative self-perceptions:

Figure 5.12 The sub-themes of 'negative self-perception'



#### *Low self-confidence*

Three teachers found that their students had the worries about their own disadvantageous English ability or skills, i.e. no 'lack of anxiety' and negative 'self-ratings of L2 proficiency' (Sampasivam and Clément 2014: 25). One of the teachers observed a positive relationship between self-perceived competence and speaking: 'those considering their English ability to be inferior...are relatively easy to observe avoiding speaking up for their ideas' (NET08). Precisely speaking,

Like the class I am teaching now, I do see some students perceive their own speaking ability as comparatively poor. Thus, when they have the chance, like when I call on them to share their ideas or I ask them to give an oral presentation, you can see these students become relatively timid (NET08).

Additionally, some students were discovered feeling anxious while working with others as a group. The teacher proposed three potential sources of their anxiety: (1) 'they do not get along with the other members well', (2) 'they consider their [English] ability very poor and therefore are unwilling to speak', or (3) 'they have no chance to speak or cut in as the others are better' (NET07). In other words, poor interpersonal relationships, low self-confidence, and deprivation of right or others' neglect are all possible to provoke students' anxiety during group activities. These correspond to the opinions of the students and teachers of English major on the issue of group work. In the light of this, working in groups may be another promising context for the scholars of learner anxiety to research.

#### *Low self-efficacy*

Low self-efficacy is different from 'low self-confidence' in that I relate it to when students do not have the 'beliefs in his/her ability to perform a designated task or complete an activity (Mills 2014: 8) in the class. A teacher described her students' different reactions to a situation when she asked a volunteer to answer her question:

[Most students in my class] are relatively introverted and quiet. Only two or three students dare to speak up...Besides,

those with better academic performances are usually the ones who are relatively willing to volunteer...When they [students] need to come out to present, I say 'Any volunteers?' When you see some not raising their hands, they are actually starting to feel a bit nervous as they are perhaps not sure about whether their work is correct or good or not. Then, no one dares to raise their hands (NET06).

She briefly concluded that the anxious students' characteristics were mainly due to their 'personality and...no confidence. When they are not certain, they become comparatively nervous. They dare not to raise their hands and come out to present' (NET06). Another teacher (NET07) specifically pointed out that 'often if a student is called on,...Taiwanese students, in general, are afraid of making mistakes when speaking or responding...and so are not willing to speak' (, which NET02 and NET03 also discovered in their students). She claimed that this low self-efficacy was linked with Taiwan's social norms or face culture: '[it is] because...we have been educated since we were little that if you are not good enough, do not stand up to speak [and] if you are not good enough, do not embarrass yourself' (NET07). Furthermore, 'we subconsciously require a standard answer [and think of] what answer the teacher expects or what the teacher's answer is. However, that is not the story sometimes' (NET07).

### *Comparison between classmates*

A learning environment appears to inevitably involve the comparison between classmates. Students discover the dissimilarities in English ability between themselves and others within the process of

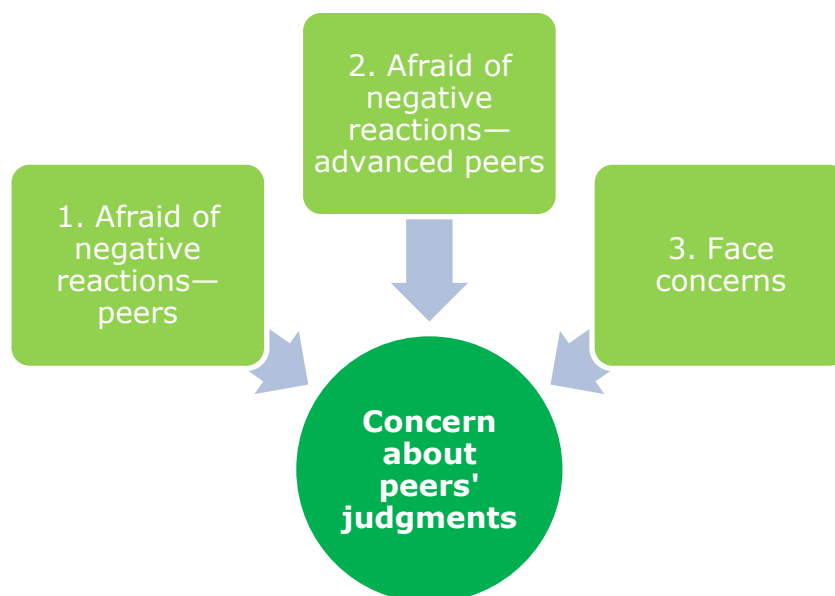
learning, and further consider themselves as competent or incompetent. The Level 8 class teacher heard some students comparing their ability with others when introducing themselves: 'After hearing classmates' [self-introductions], [I] think that I do not measure up to them. Why am I in this class?' (NET08). According to her, 'he or she had spoken the thought of being inferior to peers in English. When I call on them to speak, my feeling is that they are actually very nervous' (NET08). Furthermore, based on her responses to a relevant issue, this source of anxiety seemed to also be accompanied by 'fear of (advanced) peers' negative reactions', increasing the anxiety over performing in class. Although Class level 8 comprises the most advanced students, it seems that the slight differences in ability still negatively impact on the learners' self. Many of them may originally have had higher self in learning English. However, after meeting the superior people, their self could be severely damaged. Moreover, the classroom is probably regarded as a stressful learning environment due to the students recruited. Comparison here might have involved competitiveness in a sense. Nevertheless, being competent in English for university students, as mentioned by NET08, is usually perceived as depending solely on speaking performance, especially pronunciation or intonation. This is certainly an incorrect belief about learning English.

#### 5.2.2.2 Concern about peers' judgments

This theme, as illustrated in Figure 5.13, indicates that (non-major) students appear to be particularly concerned about

perceiving or receiving negative feedback from and exposing their disadvantages in front of their classmates.

Figure 5.13 The sub-themes of 'concern with peers' judgments'



#### *Afraid of negative reactions—peers*

Students demonstrate a high degree of emotional sensitivity to their classmates' negative impression of them. Specifically, they are afraid of being looked down upon or given no credit in terms of their English ability or performance in class. One teacher thought that students between low and intermediate levels became anxious more easily in English courses than others. The former, generally speaking, consisted of two kinds of students: (1) those who do not care about the course at all and (2) those who feel anxious due to the fear of being unable to do well. As for the anxious students, she stated that poor English manipulation and regular criticism of their performance usually made them lose confidence and even interest in English. It was

recognized that the concepts within this possibly include face issues or, more precisely, fear of their peers' negative reactions:

For some [anxious] students, it is because of face issue...They will accidentally disclose in their words that but others may say this and that if I say [something] in this way. Nevertheless, I admit that certainly whichever year they are in, they all have peer pressure from classmates. Thus, I believe that this would be one of the reasons (NET03).

*Afraid of negative reactions—advanced peers*

The concept of the second category is the same as above, but focuses particularly on advanced peers. NET08 had stated that those with anxiety had low self-confidence and compared themselves with other classmates in English ability. Apart from this, she also discovered that they were fearful of perceiving negative comments from others, including considered-to-be-superior ones:

I think that [they] are perhaps afraid that, [considering] their performance, classmates would feel 'Oh, dear, how come his or her English is so bad? The reason why I said this is mainly because my previous students produce the same feedback. They thought that their English ability was low. They were so afraid of saying something wrongly. This might make them laughed at by classmates (NET08).

She discussed this characteristic from a psychological perspective: 'young people care greatly about their peers' views of them, so they are obsessed with popularity [or commonality]. It is because they do not want to be an outsider, i.e. peer pressure' (NET08).

### *Face concerns*

'Face concerns' here mainly refers to students' concern about failing to maintain or protect their own image or making themselves or being made to feel embarrassed in class. That is, they are afraid of their disadvantages being noticed and being laughed at when not performing well. One of the low level class teachers briefly mentioned her students' anxiety over performing on stage and explained the main reasons for this in the dialogue below:

NET04: They actually do not feel nervous when sitting down there. However, their anxiety on stage is relatively more about fear of being laughed at by others.

R: That is, 'I do not want to embarrass myself [and] let everyone know that I do not speak well and the like'.

NET04: Yes, yes, yes. Some of them actually feel 'I do not speak well. In fact, peers may not be able to catch problems with their speaking. Yet, they themselves have this kind of feeling.

Another teacher provided more details depicting anxious students' face issue over speaking at the front. Specifically, she proposed two phenomena:

(1) I mean they may have limited English ability. Then, they think to themselves that they want to say [something], but cannot speak it out loud. This is what I encounter very often. Thus, they feel that it is a very embarrassing matter that they cannot say a word when standing at the front.



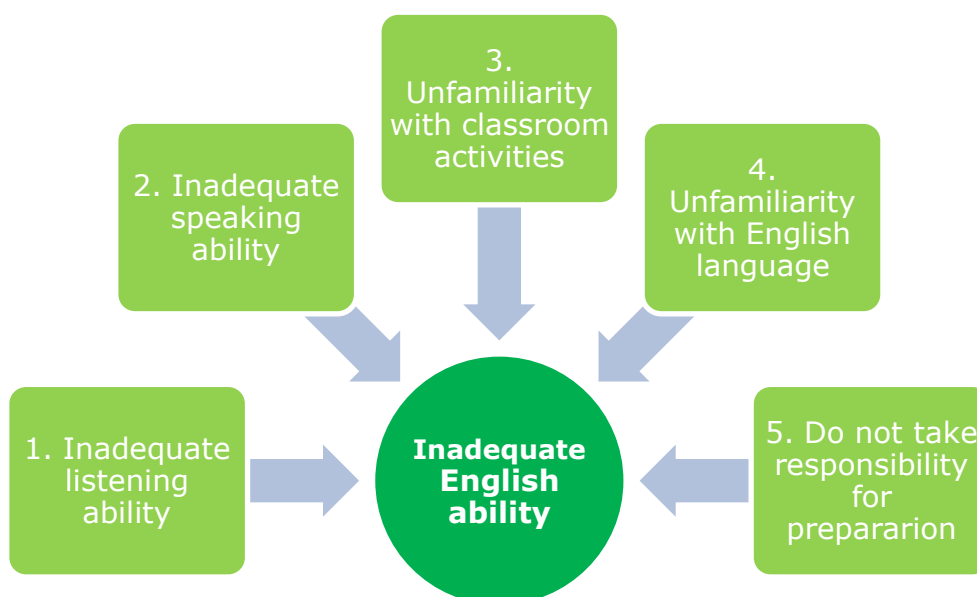
(2) [I] do not know if it is because they speak softly or they are afraid of mistakes being heard if they speak too loudly. They just always [speak] in whispers. Nevertheless, when you ask them to speak louder, they just start to get even more anxious (NET03).

She said that the second phenomenon was detected with only a few chances in her present class, which might result from its smaller class size around fifteen or twenty.

#### 5.2.2.3 Inadequate English ability

According to the teachers, students' lack of English skills prevents them from successfully achieving classroom tasks. Therefore, they seem to hold themselves back from participating in activities considered threatening. The diagram below shows the components of this theme.

Figure 5.14 The sub-themes of 'inadequate English ability'



### *Inadequate listening ability*

Regarding 'inadequate listening ability', students were found to have difficulty fully understanding people speaking in English, especially with fast pace and junctures. A teacher of an intermediate class thought that it was relatively easy to observe whether students feel anxious in speaking tasks, but not in listening, reading, and writing. Nonetheless, her students once shared with her the reasons why they felt anxious doing listening tasks or tests in the following dialogue.

NET06: Yes. There was one [student] saying 'Teacher, I could not understand that listening at all. He said 'I totally had no idea what it said...from the beginning to the end'.

R: Did he mention the reason?

NET06: Yes. I asked them the other day. Some...said that the speaking was too fast because there were some [questions] for dictation. Also, [they] had difficulty spelling some words...[Another reason] was about word junctures. [The sounds] were all stuck together. They could not understand them.

The teacher stated that the students did not understand the content until they had read the script.

### *Inadequate speaking ability*

'Inadequate speaking ability' mainly describes students' difficulty expressing their ideas or opinions in English. In 'face concerns' above, the second teacher (NET03) mentioned students' difficulty in

expressing their ideas in English when describing the first phenomenon. She clarified the connection between speaking English and students' anxiety when I recapped this with her:

They are related. That is, considering expressing [ideas], they perhaps feel 'I am unable to express all the ideas I want to say. Then, you want me to stand at the front' (.). Even when we speak Chinese, we feel nervous standing at the front. Then, there are so many things mixed up together. 'You want me to speak in English, [but] I am bad at it. Then, you want me to stand at the front and speak loudly (NET03).

This description demonstrates that the source of anxiety and anxiety about a situation do not stand together in a one-to-one relationship. In other words, there could be several sources contributing to a person's anxiety in a particular situation or one source is associated with several anxious situations.

#### *Unfamiliarity with classroom activities*

The third component suggests students' lack of experience in dealing with certain activities or relevant practices which are rarely carried out before university. One respondent discussed the sources of students' anxiety in such speaking related tasks as presenting on stage or being called on to speak. She basically proposed five main causes of negative emotions, one of which illustrated the problem of lacking experience in speaking publicly. In her own words, 'Basically, if we do not have much experience of speaking publicly, it is natural that we feel nervous. It seems that almost everyone has the same

[problem]. Thus, that may just be a very natural reaction' (NET08). Although this teacher appears to attribute anxiety to unfamiliarity with speaking publicly in general, there are even fewer opportunities for Taiwan's students to do so in English. Hence, arguably, students' anxiety could double in this situation.

#### *Unfamiliarity with English language*

Considering the fourth sub-theme, the teachers also ascribed students' anxieties partly to the problem of being unfamiliar with English itself or its properties like expressions and logic. An interviewee claimed that unfamiliarity due to a lack of practice was one of the main reasons why students felt anxious about speaking in English:

And, they lack practice because it is impossible for them to use the class [to practice how to speak]. It is fine if you speak in Chinese. If [they] need to speak in another language, [because] you do not know how to express it indeed and seldom practice it [speaking] at home,...you need to spend much time thinking until you realize how to say this sentence. This is also another [source of] anxiety. That is, they do not master speaking in public well. Also, [they are unfamiliar with] the logics of English and how to express [ideas in English]. They do not practice [them] enough, so they feel afraid and anxious (NET07).

English in Taiwan is neither an official nor a daily spoken language. The English classroom could be one of the few places where people have the chance to use the language. I would like to argue that this is one

reason why students are not motivated to practice English after class. Furthermore, the students in this group come from non-English related departments, which, of course, is not helpful for enhancing their interest in English. Under these circumstances, their unfamiliarity with English is understandable in a sense.

*Do not take responsibility for preparation*

The teachers thought that irresponsibility for preparation or review was an obvious reason for students' anxiety in some tasks. In her responses, one teacher discussed this problem by mentioning the cases of listening and speaking. Take listening for example, she gave her students the scripts for the coming listening test, but only a few people read them before the examination:

Concerning anxiety, it may be possible that they do not prepare for tests. Like listening tests, you tell them 'I have uploaded the scripts online'. They, in fact, did not read these audio scripts, but I actually tested them on the contents...Some of them, however, just do not [read them] (NET04).

Therefore, those students, according to her, showed their hopelessness and nervousness during the test:

Some earnest students looked up the words, but some didn't. I mean the latter just pretend that there is no such matter, so when they take the test [played once only],...they write the answers very nervously...[and] they can be [found] sighing (NET04).

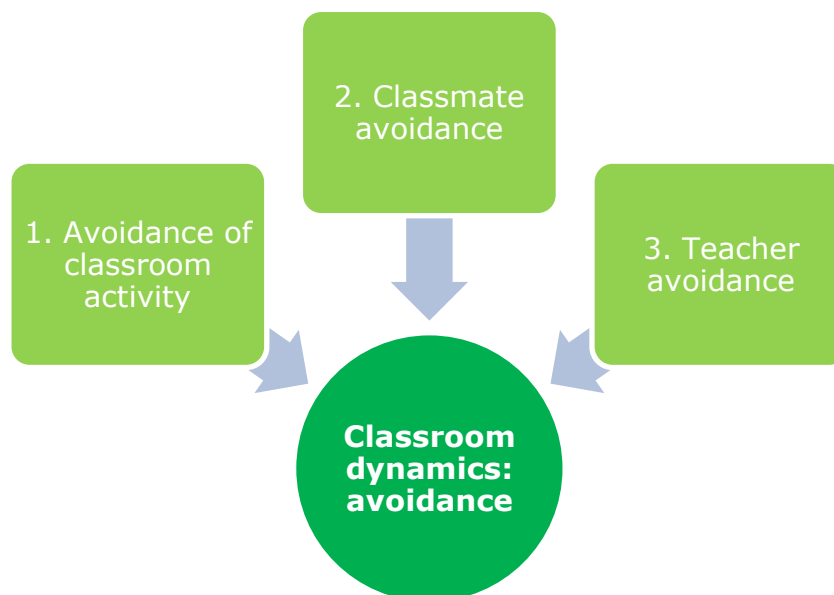
### 5.2.3 The effects of anxiety on students

The effect in Table 5.2 consists of (1) community dynamics: avoidance, (2) poor speaking performance, and (3) being propelled to work harder. Each of them also has several minor categories, illustrating more specific effects of anxiety. The descriptions to the sub-categories are below.

#### 5.2.3.1 Classroom dynamics: avoidance

'Avoidance' here means that students refused to interact with people in the learning context. There are even people preventing themselves from participating in classroom activities. The diagram below demonstrates the three items affiliated to 'avoidance'.

Figure 5.15 The sub-themes of 'avoidance'



### *Avoidance of classroom activities*

Students were perceived to have avoidance behavior in classroom situations where they felt anxious. A teacher claimed that anxious students did not speak in class: 'In fact, some anxious students' performance is actually quite good, but they are just particularly quiet' (NET04). She was aware that '[They] also sit in the last row. They do not speak. It is quite easy to ignore their existence. They speak in whispers' (NET04). She later described the anxious students' reactions when they were invited to share their thoughts:

When you want them to speak, they do not volunteer either. Also, you ask them to speak, but they just speak (.) in a manner of very low voice as if [they] are so unsure [of themselves]. However, their English is actually not bad (NET04).

Another teacher experienced that the called-on students directly answered 'I have no idea' to the question:

Some say 'I do not know or I have no idea or I have nothing to say'. In fact, they just want you to let them sit down immediately. In reality, I do not allow them [to skip the question]. I say 'You have to speak. I will give you some time...and come back to you [later] for your answer' (NET07).

Although this teacher wants her students to try rather than give up, the reason for their avoidance may not be related to answering questions itself, but such issues as concern about others' views or low self-perceptions. Therefore, it may be more important to think about

how to help anxious students free themselves from these burdens first. Additionally, the same teacher found that some anxious students did not grab the preparation time for the coming task:

Some of them are good. They try their best to prepare. Some still chat with classmates without sticking to the point or discuss [the topic] in Chinese even though they know they may be called on by the teacher (NET07).

She further added that '[They] use chatting to release their stress, so they seem very happy. However, they are still fearful of being called on. They will keep looking at the teacher [to see] if she notices them and thinking "Do not pick on me"' (NET07).

#### *Classmate avoidance*

Four teachers noticed anxious students' avoidance behavior towards their classmates while they were speaking on stage. The response from one summarizes the others' observations.

'In the last term, they could take a draft with them...In this term, basically, I do not allow them to get onto the stage with a draft. They will just look at the ceiling purposefully. Then, or they only look at their partner or me. They usually look at their partner relatively more often, and then they totally ignore the others down there' (NET04).

Interestingly, she claimed that their anxiety only lasted until they got off the stage, and had no impact on their interactions with the teacher and peers after the activity or task. This phenomenon suggests that



the status of foreign language (classroom) anxiety is situation-specific one. That is, once they are finished with the activity, they are free from the anxious feelings.

#### *Teacher avoidance*

Concerning 'teacher avoidance', it was observed that students with anxiety tried to escape their teachers' attention when on stage or when someone was needed to answer a question. A teacher described her students' nonverbal responses when a question was put to the whole class:

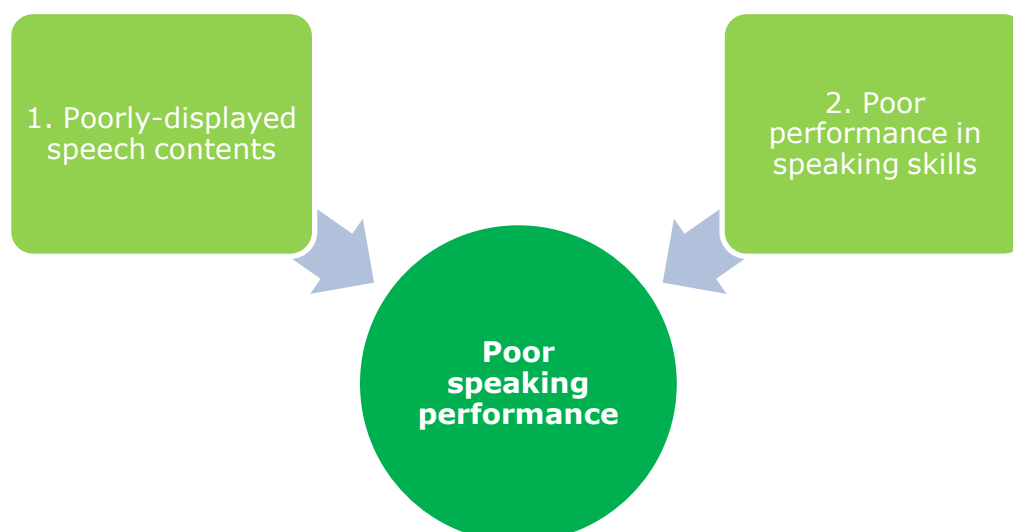
Usually, you can see whether...they are willing to raise their hands to answer questions. When they are called on, [you can see whether] they lower their heads and do not want to look at you or (.) I mean [when] you look at them, [you can see whether] they show a friendly face to you. Then, you will know if they are very anxious (NET06).

She further added 'When they dare not to look at you, you know that they must be very anxious. When it comes to volunteering, everyone just [expresses] "Teacher, no, no, do not ask me"...[They] do not want to raise their hands and look at you' (NET06).

#### 5.2.3.2 Poor speaking performance

The linked codes illustrated that the anxious feelings had fundamentally negative impacts on students' speaking production. 'What' and 'how' they present, as Figure 5.16 demonstrates, are the two aspects which the following sections consider.

Figure 5.16 The sub-themes of 'poor speaking performance'



#### *Poorly-displayed speech contents*

'Poorly-displayed speech contents' indicates that students have difficulty delivering well-organized content while speaking or giving a presentation with anxiety. An informant gave an example of anxious students' performance in oral practice or test via role play:

For example, in the situation of two people [conversing with each other], when your partner asks you [something], but you are unable to answer it, in fact everyone is looking at you. Thus, under this circumstance, their dialogue becomes especially short or you can see them whispering to each other (NET04).

Furthermore, She discovered, in terms of speaking tests, that 'the marks [can be affected] as the student's performance may not be as good as expected...They may speak without order' (NET04). I instantly probed into the meaning of 'speak without order'. She then explained

'You sometimes just have no idea what they are talking about or they totally misuse the tenses or the like. You just see two people talking to each other, but the content is very empty' (NET04).

#### *Poor performance in speaking skills*

This category otherwise concerns negative emotion that results in undesirable presentation/speaking skills, such as linguistic mistakes, poor fluency, and unusual articulation. According to one teacher, 'the most common [manifestation of anxiety] is that 'they just cannot speak properly' (NET03). She was later asked to explain the problem in detail, and it was then said 'Forgetting scripts is one. Then, they sometimes (.) It is likely that they make relatively more mistakes. As they have become flustered, they commit comparatively more errors in grammar or pronunciation' (NET03). Another teacher (NET08) mentioned some students' reaction to others' self-introductions in English and the problems caused by this later on. She found that their anxiety during oral activities reduced their spoken fluency:

Yes. They speak less smoothly. Their speaking may originally not be so ragged...Once the teacher calls on them to speak, they have had that nervous-making idea of how those good at English will think of them after listening to them. Hence, they are originally able to speak smoothly, but [their speech] becomes hesitant when they speak (NET08).

The other teacher, moreover, observed the changes in speech volume and pace in anxious students:

When some students get anxious, [they] speak particularly fast and loud. The more anxious they are, the faster they speak. The more anxious they are, the more high-pitched their voice is. [In addition,] some students are so nervous that their speech becomes barely audible (NET07).

#### 5.2.3.3 Being propelled to work harder

The results above suggest that learner anxiety itself negatively impacts on students in such aspects as sociability and cognition. However, they are likely to be propelled by their anxiety to put more effort into their learning. (Because this theme stands on its own, no diagram is drawn for reference.) A participant thought that anxiety could have both positive and negative effects on learning: 'some people will urge themselves to work harder,...but some shrink back or the like. [It] has both positive and negative sides' (NET02). She described its positive side effects by giving the example of a reading task:

They are concerned that they cannot understand the class or complete the activities or tasks or the like, so they are nervous. When they feel nervous, they will prepare for the class in advance. Therefore, this nervousness is a good thing for them. It happens because they are able to finish their reading or some given classroom activities when in class (NET02).

She, further, observed that these students normally performed better in class. Additionally, another teacher said that some students came to her and told her their learning related problems and worries. She especially remembered the case of a female student who made

apparent progress after coming to talk to her about her anxiety:

Her scores later became particularly good. I think that she might have put a lot of effort [into learning] herself later on. At the beginning she had been very nervous, and [said] 'Teacher, I found my speaking very poor. I felt that I dared not to speak and made many mistakes whenever I spoke on stage'...She said 'Teacher, what can I do?' Of course, I gave her some suggestions... When they talk to you, it means that they want to learn, but they are confronting some difficulties. So, they are usually able to make progress later, I think (NET06).

Apparently, these teachers are also aware of the positive effects of anxiety on students, i.e. facilitating anxiety. Although this anxiety is difficult to define in terms of degree, it is certain that making use of anxiety can help enhance students' learning outcomes. Importantly, when it comes to defining debilitating and facilitating anxiety, people may also need to focus on how much anxiety an individual can bear rather than anxiety itself.

It may be [more about] the difference in every individual's ability to bear stress psychologically. You may feel that your ability is not that good, but you still come to class to confront those who you think are superior [in English]. Some people can accept this kind of circumstance. This is anxiety, but they can accept it (NET08).

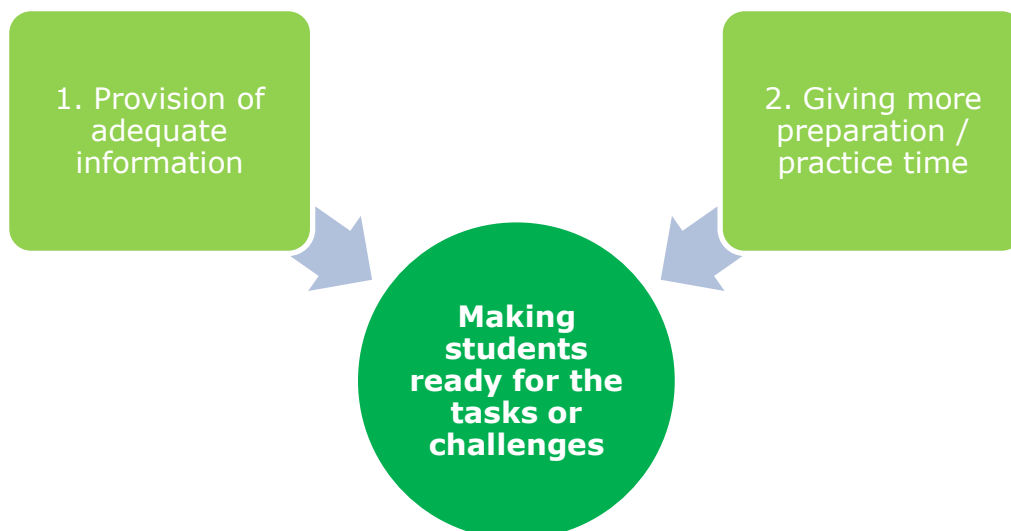
#### 5.2.4 The strategies used to address students' anxiety

The coping strategies for students' anxiety in Table 5.2 embraces (1) making students ready for the tasks or challenges, (2) making use of peers' influence, and (3) trying to inhibit students' negative emotions. Each also includes several minor categories, highlighting more specific coping tactics for students' anxiety. The descriptions of the sub-categories are below.

##### 5.2.4.1 Making students ready for the tasks or challenges

The teachers try to equip their students with the knowledge about and a clear mind for the ongoing activity. There are two sub-themes categorized into this major theme, with the details in the diagram below.

Figure 5.17 The sub-themes of 'making students ready for the tasks or challenges'



### *Provision of adequate information*

One third of the teachers informed their students about how an activity is preceded and why an act, i.e. teacher does grouping for them, is done in class. Below are the extracts from the respondents.

Sometimes [I] may invite the more competent students to do [the task] first. [That is,] they may answer [the question] or do the task first in order to let them [anxious ones] have the chance to look at other models or examples (NET03).

[Considering my sometimes random grouping of students], my experience shows me there is no problem as I did tell them the reason why I regrouped them [myself]: [I want to] give them an opportunity to talk to those with whom they are unfamiliar because the unfamiliar ones sometimes have some ideas that they (.) The peers students choose to sit with are the like-minded ones...If you discuss with those you never interact with, maybe you will get some enlightenment (NET08).

It seems that these teachers try to fill the uncertainty or confusion gap in (potentially) anxious students.

### *Giving more preparation/practice time*

Additionally, when anxious students had difficulty continuing a task or answering a question, they were given additional time to calm down and re-prepare rather than forced to complete the task straight away. In the words of two teachers,

If there is really a need, I will [say] sit down. I will directly tell them, for instance, 'I will come back to ask you again after

few minutes or everyone is finished'. That is, I give them more time, and let them look at how others do it (NET03).

I do let them feel that they are spared the embarrassment. For example, sometimes I ask them 'Do you still need a few [more] minutes or you still need to think about it?' (NET03).

If some of them are so anxious that they say they cannot speak now, then I will say 'You speak later or you go release your emotion first' or I will say 'Calm down'. I will not be so strict to them and say, for example, 'You must speak now' (NET07).

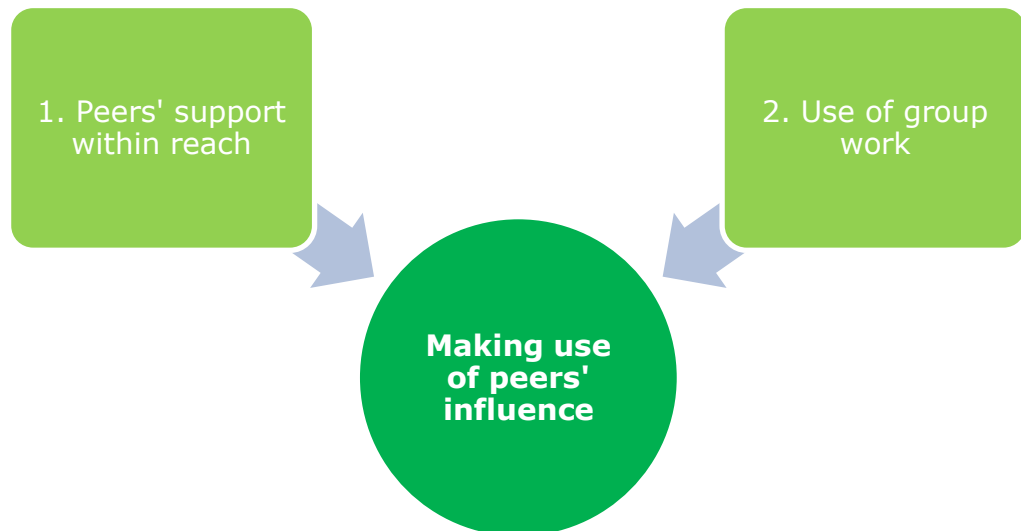
Although these teachers' way of acting seems positive, those who are asked to repeat the same action later in the same context may become even more anxious since they are not exempted from the situation.

#### 5.2.4.2 Making use of peers' influence

As the title implies, the teachers put mutual help between students to good use in the alleviation of students' anxiety in situations when they appeared to have no way out. The components which the above theme embraces are the concepts of 'immediacy' and 'community'. The relevant diagram is below:



Figure 5.18 The sub-themes of 'making use of peers' influence'



#### *Peers' support within reach*

When students cannot deal with a question or a task, three teachers indicated that they allowed or requested other students to help them. In other words, rescuers could be anyone sitting in the classroom, and were always there for those facing difficulties.

If I find that some students are so anxious that they cannot answer, I may give some (.). If I still want them to answer, I may give them hints...or I ask them to appeal to their group members for help or the like (NET02).

I know they can get anxious, so I never stop their classmates from helping them. I mean if they have someone who can help them. That person may be from the same team or even sometimes there has been someone telling them the answer further away. However, if they are still too anxious to hear it, I will tell them 'Your peer is telling you the answer and so you only need to repeat it, which is fine' (NET03).

When they cannot answer, I give them some hints or request [other] classmates [to help them]: 'Is there anyone who knows [the answer] or the like?'. Then, I give the answer at the end. That is, [I] do not want to make them feel that this course is terrifying (NET06).

### *Use of group work*

In terms of the group work, the concept is similar to the one above. Nevertheless, this sub-theme emphasizes that working as a group was considered to be one strategy for addressing students' actual or potential anxiety. The following comments clarify this.

Normally, I help them as much as possible. The best way is group work. When working individually, maybe sometimes they are unable to finish it on their own. If the situation permits, I employ group work as much as possible. Then, [they can] ask their classmates to help them...I think that they are relatively less anxious in that way (NET06).

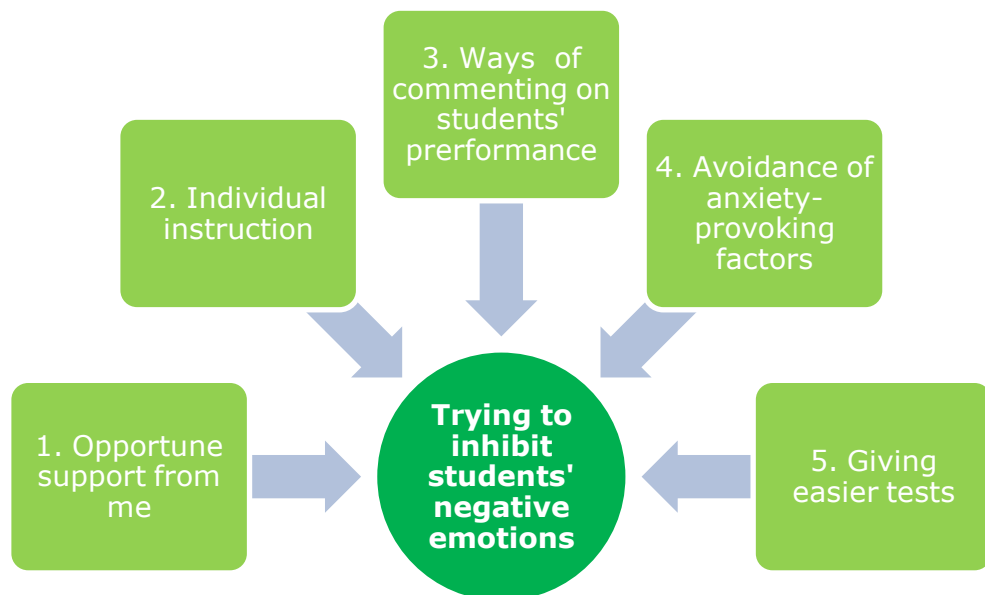
[I] also utilize peer pressure. I mean I may want them to do group work and come out to write something. Because sometimes they do not want to write or the like [or] feel it is boring in class. However, when it comes to working as a group, other peers will affect them. They will feel 'Ok, let's do it together then'...I rarely make them feel that this course is very stressful (NET06).

It is interesting to realize that group work is regarded as not only a medium for promoting collaborative learning, but also a tactic for mitigating learner anxiety in class.

#### 5.2.4.3 Trying to inhibit students' negative emotions

This theme mainly contains the ideas of precaution and compensation. In other words, the teachers not merely try to treat their students mildly during the learning process, but also give them a helping hand opportunely when they confront difficulties in performing activities or tasks. As Figure 5.19 displays, there are five specific strategies within this broad category.

Figure 5.19 The sub-themes of trying to inhibit students' negative emotions



##### *Opportune support from me*

Half the teachers expressed that they gave help to their students instantly when they encountered troubles, or actively asked them whether they needed help during their participation in activities. The relevant descriptions are below.

[When they cannot answer or speak,] you may use some questions to guide them to answer your questions. Then, they do not have to speak themselves from the beginning to the end. Or, for example, while they are describing an incident, I need to guess what they want to say. Then, I need to ask them 'Are you trying to say so and so?' They normally feel all you said is helpful. They will say 'Yes' to you. Then, you just tell them to repeat it again themselves (NET03).

They say 'Teacher, how do I answer this? I do not understand' Only when I am walking around, they will ask me, and I will give them hints or tell them the answer. Hence, their anxious feelings can be decreased...I know sometimes they act like this...When they are preparing, you walk around to see if they [have some blanks] filled in nothing. Then, you say to them...'Do you need any help?'. After they have tried once or twice, [they know that] the teacher does help them and so they dare to [ask me for help] (NET06).

Obviously, these teachers aim to give their students the impression of being approachable. That is, as teachers, they are willing to help students solve their leaning problems. There is no need to feel afraid of making mistakes or performing badly in class.

### *Individual instruction*

'Individual instruction' indicates that the teachers attempted to help the students with their emotional or learning problems on a one-to-one basis. The remarks from three teacher participants are below.

NET02: [As for] some students, I ask them to come to see me later.

...

R: What instruction do you normally give?

NET02: I will focus on what they should be equipped with and ask them [relevant] questions.

...

NET02: [I will] ask them again as I want to check they are really equipped with [the knowledge]. They feel nervous because of their incompetence or they cannot answer due to anxiety...If they aren't, I just teach them. If they are, I am fine.

In every session, there is always some time when you have to walk around to look at what these students are doing. So, when you discover [something wrong], you may actually need to chat with them a bit. Or, because they have been very nervous, you just do not talk to them in class, but ask them to come to you and have a chat with them in private. Sometimes this helps, but sometimes does not (NET03).

NET07: I always [alleviate their anxiety] after class. I do not do so on the spot. The more you say, the more anxious they are.

...

R: So, you do not deal with it in class.

NET07: If they are too anxious to speak, I will say '[you can] speak later' or 'I will give you another chance tomorrow' or 'Come to me after class to do it privately'.

...

NET07: ...They know that their score is a bit low or their performance sometimes (.) their performance in the midterm exam may not be good. Then, I will remind them or ask about their study methods. For some, I just start to chat with them by accident.

### *Ways of commenting on students' performance*

Three teachers described how they gave students feedback on their performance to prevent their students' learning anxiety.

NET04: ...If sometimes their performance is perhaps particularly poor, I may tell them 'You only have 30 seconds this time. If your test lasts two minutes (.)' Then, I let them know their [performance] like this is not ok.

R: But you do not directly say that [performance] like this is no good...

NET04: No. Then, I may say 'It would be better if you could add certain contents.

After [they] finish their presentation, I talk about the merits. I normally talk about the merits first, what is good, and what can be improved later...Mainly, at the beginning, [you] try not to first discuss their errors and make them brave to come out to speak more often...A little later, I can gradually add in some comments [for improvement] (NET06).

This stress is generated from their thought that their English [ability] seems to be inferior. Considering this type of stress, my personal experience is that [I] need to deal with it individually. For example, once this student performs well, [I] reward him or her publicly. [I] tell other classmates publicly that he or she spoke very well. I think that this is fairly helpful for students (NET08).

### *Avoidance of anxiety-provoking factors*

More than half of the teachers aimed to make students feel comfortable and secure within the classroom. More precisely, they tried to avoid potential factors which might provoke students' anxiety in various contexts:

I ask students to come up [to the stage] to...make sentences. However, I normally do not let students (.) I do not let them come up to write the sentences that I have not checked yet. I normally walk around ensuring their sentences are correct. I make it sure that they do not lose face when on stage (NET07).

NET08: About grouping, I usually let them

R: Choose [their own members] themselves?

NET08: Yes. They also sit with their own relatively familiar friends. Thus, in terms of my current class, there is no such follow-up situation [impacts on interactions] as you mentioned.

### *Giving easier tests*

Lastly, two teachers thought that making examinations or tests slightly easier could help arouse students' positive affect since test taking was perceived to be one of the main contexts where anxiety happened. In their own words,

NET06: For example, when a student was in the first year, their scores were always 70, 80 or so. However, now in Level 6 in the second year, suddenly, they always only get 50 or 60. They just start to

R: feel very anxious?

NET06: Yes. They feel why there is suddenly such a big difference [and so] start to feel unsure of themselves. I feel that sometimes we try not to make tests too difficult. I mean I do feel that you should give them the chance to feel that they still make some progress.

Because tests for them are a very important factor that causes stress and demotivation, I say if they do (.) The results of their mid/final exams are often bad, so I normally

give them relatively not difficult tests or, in speaking, although I score them, I tell them 'As long as you speak or perform fairly well, I normally do not give low scores'...I also tell them 'This way can help you perhaps compensate for poorer outcomes' (NET07).

### **5.3 Summary**

This chapter presented two sets of findings from interviews with the English teachers of either English majors or non-English majors. The significant themes of each aspect of anxiety—situation, source, effect, and coping strategy—were presented and illustrated with relevant extracts and commentaries. The teachers seemed quite sensitive to students' concerns although the anxious contexts revealed by them were comparatively general. In Chapter 6, I answer the research questions and discuss the findings.



## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### **6.0 Introduction**

This study aims to depict a rich picture of the various aspects of foreign language anxiety in the context of the Taiwanese tertiary EFL classroom. Precisely speaking, the goals are as follows: (1) to explore the situations, sources, effects of, and coping tactics for EFL anxiety experienced by the students and (2) to examine the instructors' perceptions of their students' anxiety and how they alleviate it. Chapters four and five have so far presented the results related to the aims above and the research questions in this study (see below). In this chapter, I will make comparisons between the student groups and the student and teacher groups in their perceptions of learner anxiety.

### **6.1 Research questions specific to students**

English major and non-major students, as revealed in Appendices 7 and 8, appeared to be remarkably similar to each other in most aspects of EFL anxiety examined in this study. In other words, it seemed to make little difference whether they were English major students or students of other subject areas who were required to take English courses as part of their degree. To uncover the reasons for the similarities in their responses required further unpacking of the data and some reflective thoughts. The research questions of this study are answered using tables comparing and contrasting the findings. The significant issues in each table are then discussed in detail.

### 6.1.1 RQ 1: When do Taiwanese university English major and non-major students feel anxious in their English class?

Some literature (e.g. Price 1991; Young 1990) regards anxious situations as the sources of anxiety about learning in the language classroom. This idea could be, however, disputable because a situation represents a context and a source an object which, e.g. low self-perception or poor English ability, engenders a learner's anxious feelings in certain contexts. In response to this research question, I collected data relating to the situations where the students become anxious.

The table below compares and contrasts the anxiety situations of English major and non-major students in their English classrooms.

Table 6.1 Comparison and contrast between English and non-English majors regarding the situations of anxiety

Major	English	✓/×	Non-English
(Sub-) Themes	1. Exposure in class		1. Exposure in class
	a. Spontaneous speaking in class	✓	a. Spontaneous speaking in class
	b. Speaking on stage	✓	b. Speaking on stage
	c. Awareness of oral performance problems	✓	c. Awareness of oral performance problems
	2. Learning in class: unpredictability		2. Learning in class: unpredictability
	a. Unexpected incidents	✓	a. Unexpected incidents
	b. Unknown consequences/ results	✓	b. Unknown consequences/ results

	3. Working with others different from me		3. Learning English in a formal classroom
	a. Working with advanced peers	×	a. English class in general
	b. Working with unfamiliar peers	×	b. English tests
		×	c. Working as a group
		×	d. Problems of absorbing knowledge

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the students' anxiety situations, and reported the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

The English major and non-major students, as revealed in Table 6.1, feel anxious in mostly the same classroom situations. As for the similarities, both groups had anxious reactions to the activities requiring them to speak, which probably has them exposed to the whole class. That is, they may feel 'conspicuous' and the environment can suddenly turns 'evaluative' as everyone in the classroom instantly shifts their attention to them (Daly 1991: 9-10). Thus, as stated by Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014: 4), language learners feel 'the most worry and concern' about speaking. This is also reflected in the items in the FLCAS and other situations than those in the ELCAS provided by the students in their interviews.

In addition, both groups of students felt anxious in unanticipated situations or about failing activities or the course. For example, they

are asked to answer a question for which they did not prepare ('unexpected incident') or they give a wrong answer to teacher's question after being called on and worry about what might happen after this ('unknown consequence'). It is not difficult to imagine that people normally feel panic when faced with ambiguous and/or novel situations, such as 'new situations', 'unfamiliar problems' or 'what is going to happen' (Daly 1991: 9-10). Nevertheless, the situation of 'unknown consequences/results' draws my attention in terms of why the students feel so concerned with the possibility of failing or not performing well. I wonder whether these situations carried the message of the students' lack of self-confidence and -efficacy in class.

With regard to the differences, one English major specifically highlighted her anxiety over working with more advanced and unfamiliar peers, whereas the non-major students seemed to feel more generalized anxiety only being in the formal English classroom. Although some students in both groups considered 'learning English in a formal classroom' to be anxiety-provoking, 'working as a group' for the non-English majors is not as contextually specific as 'working with others different from me' for the English majors. Nonetheless, it is surprising that group/pair work was reported as one of the classroom situations associated with anxiety because it is generally promoted and commonly used in language classrooms. This finding basically disagrees with Liu's (2006) finding that most of her Chinese university participants felt comfortable when working with their peers.

From the brief account of the table above, I have indicated several interesting or unexpected anxiety situations of the students, i.e.

speaking in class, unknown consequences/results, and group work. These three situations will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### *Speaking in class*

'Speaking in class' includes spontaneous speaking and speaking on stage. These may be the two most common, typical speaking related activities in the language classroom in Taiwan. However, as shown in the findings, many students expressed their anxiety over such types of classroom situations. These phenomena echo the discoveries of Liu (2006), Price (1991), and Young (1990). All of these scholars found that learner anxiety (mainly) occurred in giving oral performances at the front (i.e. 'speaking on stage'), and Liu also found in being picked on to respond or speak (i.e. 'spontaneous speaking in class'). Although the above situations represent two different contexts of speaking, they have a common characteristic. When involved in either, the student is the only person speaking and the rest listen. That is, the speaker is the focus in the classroom and probably feels that they are being evaluated by their classmates and teacher. These circumstances presumably contribute to the two anxiety-evoking factors of situational apprehension suggested by Daly (1991)—conspicuousness and evaluation (see Section 2.3).

Additionally, it is interesting that English majors reported anxious feelings about speaking in class since they spend much more time studying English. Of course, as Horwitz (2000) says, even advanced learners are likely to feel anxious in an L2 class. My participants,

however, mostly come from intermediate level classes or below. Moreover, although the English majors take courses in different areas of English study, the purpose is not to produce students equipped with English communicative ability. Thus, the teachers may not require their students to speak or create as many opportunities for them to speak as those in general English classes. These two circumstances may explain why some English major students struggle to speak in English in the class.

#### *Unknown consequences/results*

'Unknown consequences/results' refers to the students' anxiety or concern about performing poorly in class, for instance, being unable to answer the teacher's question, making mistakes, and/or, more seriously, failing the class. These unsuccessful attempts appear to be inevitable and common in the process of learning. As Horwitz et al. (1986: 128) indicate, 'second language communication entails risk-taking and is necessarily problematic'. However, it seems that the students consider wrongness unacceptable in learning or in class. Lower level students are, generally speaking, more worried about issues like failing the course or making no progress, perhaps due to their perception of their own incompetence.

One context worthy of attention is when they cannot or incorrectly respond to the teacher's question. It could be their teachers' reactions which play a critical role in the evocation of their anxiety. In fact, that was a relatively less mentioned and significant cause for their learning anxiety, and there seemed to be no complaints about their teachers'

correcting them harshly. Furthermore, the teachers of both groups provided opportune support in class as a coping strategy for their students' negative emotions (see Sections 5.1.4.3 and 5.2.4.3). Consequently, other factors may explain the case more convincingly than teachers themselves.

The characteristics of the situation suggest that the students are probably concerned about what their teachers may do and that everyone in the class is aware of their mistakes. These feelings probably correspond to two—ambiguity and conspicuousness—of the five attributes of anxiety-provoking situations, considered to induce people's situational apprehension (Daly, 1991). Moreover, making flawed responses seemingly diverges from the learners' learning beliefs and/or societal customs. More precisely, if one speaks up (actively), it means that he/she knows the answer (Jones, 2004) and is good enough (NET07: teacher interviewee). Therefore, feelings of embarrassment could be engendered in responding voluntarily and giving a wrong answer, let alone being called on to speak. That is, it seems that they feel forced to display their disadvantages.

In addition, their classroom experiences before university may also shed light on the above situation and 'unknown consequences/results' as a whole. The teachers normally assess their students' learning through such mechanisms as giving tests and calling on students to respond or write answers on the chalkboard. A common scenario could be that when students fail in activities or tests, their teachers say 'you were not attentive' or 'you did not study at home' or they are asked to correct their mistakes and copy relevant

texts in writing a few times. As a student interviewee (ENG09) said, 'it may be because I am afraid of being punished by the teacher' even though this hardly ever happens in university. It is reasonable to infer that both groups of students carried with them their past classroom experiences, and it could be difficult for them to abandon them.

To sum up, apart from individual features of the situations, the learners' English classroom anxiety is apparently not merely related to problems encountered in language learning, but also associated with their learning beliefs or customs and past classroom experience in general. These aspects have received less attention in related studies.

### *Working in groups*

Working in groups is a form of learning widely employed in language classrooms. It promotes social interaction and collaborative learning between peers. Students can make use of the chance to practice speaking English to each other. It seems that group work provides advantages and can positively influence students' learning. Some of my participants, however, shared with me their anxiety in the context of working with others as a group. In fact, this discovery is surprising and unanticipated, and there is little research into the interplay between learner anxiety and working in groups.

Nevertheless, if group work is thought of as being a social context, then experiencing anxiety would become normal and reasonable. Generally speaking, the findings of the relevant studies point to the negative relationship between FLA and collaborative learning. That is, those disliking cooperative learning are more likely to feel anxious



(Onwuegbuzie, et al. 1999); students from different levels of classes mostly felt less anxious when doing group work (Liu, 2006). By contrast, Duxbury and Tsai (2010) found in their Taiwanese students that the more frequently group work took place, the more anxious they were.

My study results are more similar to Liu's findings. Since my non-major students, rather than English major ones, were grouped into different classes by proficiency, the responses from each group echoed those of Liu's participants. In the non-major group, only a few people reported anxiety over group work. Due to the mixed levels in her class, one English major student revealed concerns about working with advanced and unfamiliar peers in particular, also mentioned by a few of Liu's students. Of the few mentioned in the non-major group, the only one concerned about working with advanced learners of English was in the highest level class.

From the discussion so far, working as a group is probably characterized by conspicuousness, evaluation, and/or novelty or ambiguity (Daly, 1991). Since each group member has the chance to express their thoughts, this creates a similar context to 'speaking in class' despite its smaller size. When working with (more) advanced and/or unfamiliar peers, certain members may experience discomfort or worries, such as (1) being conspicuous: their lower competence may become relatively apparent, (2) evaluation: they may feel judged on their English ability and responses, and/or (3) novelty or ambiguity: they may feel too distant to start a conversation or catch others' points easily.

Moreover, as group work requires interaction between group members, some problems could occur and establish a context of anxiety during the interactive process, e.g. peers' cold reactions to or feedback on ideas (NE09, see Section 5.2.1.1) or their insensitivity to others' difficulty in speaking (NE08, See Section 5.2.2.2). Compared with the merits of collaborative learning mentioned above, these issues appear to be less discussed so that little attention is paid to the question of students' emotions over working in groups. Importantly, no matter how many people feel uncomfortable working in a group, it should not be overlooked that even group work is anxiety-provoking for some students and this may negatively impact on the outcome of collaborative learning.

#### **6.1.2 RQ 2: What are the sources of anxiety of the students in question?**

With the aid of interviews, I detected several sources of anxiety from the data generated—nine themes from English majors and ten from non-majors. Broadly speaking, both student groups attributed their anxieties mostly to themselves, less so to their peers, teachers, or others like parents. In other words, the fluctuation in their anxiety largely depends on how they perceive themselves and interpret their surroundings in different classroom situations.

Table 6.2 below compares and contrasts the sources of anxiety of English major and non-major students in their English classrooms.

Table 6.2 Comparison and contrast between English and non-English majors regarding the sources of anxiety

Major	English	✓/×	Non-English
(Sub-) Themes	1. Concern about peers' judgments		1. Inadequate English ability
	a. Afraid of negative reactions—peers	×	a. Inadequate speaking ability
	b. Afraid of negative reactions—unfamiliar peers	×	b. Inadequate listening ability
	c. Afraid of negative reactions—advanced peers	×	c. Unfamiliarity with English language
	d. Feeling of being judged by peers	×	
	e. Feeling of being judged by unfamiliar peers	×	
	f. Peers' unpleasant behaviors	×	
	g. Face concerns	×	
	2. Negative self-perception of L2 learning		2. Negative self-perception of L2 learning
	a. Low self-confidence	✓	a. Low self-confidence
	b. Low self-efficacy	✓	b. Low self-efficacy
	a. Comparison with classmates	✓	c. Comparison with classmates
	3. Individual differences: learning behaviors		3. Academic expectations of themselves
	a. Learner beliefs	×	a. Desire for success
	b. Learner habits	×	b. Getting low academic scores

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the main themes and sub-themes of the causes of student anxiety as identified by each student groups, and demonstrated the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

The factors which contribute to the respective students' anxiety are apparently quite different although they both reported having low self in the learning process. Considering the sources of the English majors' anxiety, the students seem to be highly self-conscious and sensitive as they not only care about their classmates' reactions to them or their performance, including nonverbal behavior, but also point out specific people whom they considered threatening. This trigger corresponds to 'fear of negative evaluation' in Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLA theory, and is reported by other language learners studied (e.g. Price 1991; Williams and Andrade 2008). Nevertheless, there has been seemingly no research particularly indicating that advanced and/or unfamiliar peers can be perceived threat. One reason may be that the English major students were learning English in mixed level classes.

Moreover, both groups of students had negative perceptions of themselves during their learning in the classroom. It is perhaps not difficult to imagine that one can become relatively timid in a situation where they are unable to convince themselves of their being, for example, competent, promising or worthy. Although there is a need for more empirical studies of the self and learner anxiety, the literature so far has established that the relationship between them is negative.

That is, the lower the self, the higher the anxiety (e.g. Cheng 2001; Gkonou 2012; Sampasivam and Clément 2014). From the list of sources of anxiety (Young 1991a), it is also reasonable to infer that the self plays an essential role in language learning, especially concerning FLA. Due to the cause of 'comparison with classmates', it makes me wonder whether their (low) self is possibly partly shaped by the people around them.

The English majors also implied their learning beliefs and habits in the interviews. It seems that they put much emphasis on their linguistic fluency, grammar, and/or pronunciation. Horwitz (1987; 1988) developed the theory of learner belief, and suggested several problematic beliefs commonly expressed by language learners. A learner's beliefs probably mould his/her behavior (Horwitz 1987; Stevick 1980 cited in MacIntyre and Gregersen 2014: 34). Thus, their learning experiences can be unpleasant if they hold beliefs which are unrealistic (ibid. 1987; Horwitz et al. 2010; Young 1991).

Correct pronunciation appeared to be the biggest concern for both groups of students. Two of the English majors reported even more extreme beliefs—claiming the predominance of pronunciation as providing the first impression of the speaker's English ability (ENG01, Section: Learner beliefs) and being obsessed with standard pronunciation (ENG08, Section: Afraid of negative reactions—peers). This perhaps reveals that past or present teachers either had not discussed the issue of pronunciation and their relevant beliefs or emphasized the importance of pronunciation in L2 communication. Regarding learning habits, notwithstanding their similarity to beliefs,

few studies have discussed the connection between this learner characteristic and learner anxiety itself. Therefore, its formation and relationship to anxiety may be two promising issues to address in the future.

Considering the non-majors' concerns, aside from their low self, they were also partly attributed to their lack of English ability, especially speaking and listening. As the interviewees mostly came from low-level classes, it is probably not surprising that they felt anxious when participating in classroom activities with their limited English abilities. Such perceived inadequacies can be instantly associated with FL 'communication apprehension' (Horwitz et al. 1986)—the worry about whether bilateral understanding can be achieved in the L2. Furthermore, its close relationship to anxiety may be indirectly detected from Liu's (2006) discovery and Horwitz et al.'s (2010) statement: a connection (usually) exists between anxiety and low-level learners. As adult learners, their anxiety is possibly provoked more easily if they cannot communicate in the L2 as well as in their L1 (Horwitz et al. 1986), which also indicates the negative effect of linguistic incompetence on learner emotions.

In addition, 'unfamiliarity with English language' implies not merely an inability to manipulate English properly, but also their feeling of novelty—a trigger for anxiety (Daly 1991)—towards the language itself to some extent. From this, it may be inferred that the students perhaps have a lower tolerance of ambiguity for English itself, which negatively correlates with anxiety (Dewaele and Ip 2013), since they had been learning English for years.

Another intriguing source, 'academic expectations of themselves', perhaps creates the impression of the students' being perfectionists. However, the codes revealed seem to show that they hope for good outcomes within what they can control. Considering 'desire for success', it appears that the participants are still so motivated that they are willing to try their best to compensate for their inadequacy, and further expect positive results. Similarly, those reporting 'fear of getting low scores' as one cause of anxiety are, in fact, not chasing high scores, but want to grab the points they think that they should be able to earn. Therefore, these cases cannot be directly compared with those addressing perfectionism and anxiety (e.g. Gregersen and Horwitz 2002). Nevertheless, these concepts could be similar to each other in the sense of 'anxious to be good'.

Among the above sources of anxiety, aside from 'inadequate English ability', 'concern about peers' judgments' and 'negative self-perception of L2 learning' are probably the two most significant in explaining a number of anxiety situations presented in Section 6.1.1. Thus, they will be discussed further in the following sections.

#### *Concern about peers' judgments*

'Concern about peers' judgments' entails the students' feeling of being evaluated and their fear of negative reactions, and showing their disadvantages. These components not only correspond to Horwitz et al.'s (1986) concept of 'fear of negative evaluation' in the L2 context, but also indicate that learner anxiety is necessarily related to this concern.

Indeed, this dread of being (negatively) assessed is probably the most commonly reported source of anxiety in language learners (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002; Kitano 2001; Price 1991; Williams and Andrade 2008; Young 1990). From the viewpoint of verbal communication, spoken messages must carry the expression of self. Given the languages used, the learners, as young adults, may have no problem articulating their thoughts in their L1, but it could become challenging or difficult for them to do the same in the L2 due to such obstructions as 'uncertainty', 'unknown linguistic and social-cultural norms', and 'complex and non-spontaneous mental operations' (ibid.: 128). With the characters of being 'intelligent', 'socially-adept', and 'sensitive to different social-cultural mores' (ibid.), the sudden loss of communicative ability may bring them into the state of embarrassment or lead them to thoughts about how others will see them.

The language classroom context is an environment where students learn and are helped to learn and aim to acquire the language. Frequent use of the L2 is normal practice in order to strengthen their language skills. It is, thus, not unusual that learners make errors or mistakes and are reminded of the correct forms during the process of learning. Undoubtedly, formal tests are also given to examine students' progress. In other words, classroom practice consists of such activities as learning, practice, and assessment or evaluation. Under these circumstances, the teacher, as the most competent user, is regarded as the only evaluator and continually inspects his/her students' learning development. Nevertheless, the evaluation of peers



('real or imagined') also exists and is very likely to be perceived and taken seriously (Horwitz et al. 1986: 128; see ENG01: 'feeling of being judged by peers'). Since different forms of evaluation are inevitable and ubiquitous, a learner's language anxiety can increase as he/she perceives higher degrees of evaluation in class (Daly 1991). Arguably, my students were more concerned with the reactions of their classmates than their teacher in the learning context.

The students making up the class perhaps also hold the clue to the participants' tension here. Mixed level classes could make differences quite apparent to students in terms of English proficiency. This classroom condition is likely to put intangible pressure on some students, especially the lower level ones. That is, certain students probably become acutely sensitive to (perceived) evaluation. As Liu (2008) and Su (2010) reported, their students agreed that ability grouping is beneficial to their emotions, i.e. by decreasing anxiety and pressure and increasing confidence and motivation.

In line with Horwitz et al.'s claim above, the less competent learners perhaps regard more advanced peers as judges who are so knowledgeable that they can instantly detect errors and evaluate performances. This statement seems to be supported by Liu's discovery that her lower level students particularly felt more positive when learning with peers with similar levels of English. One student participant also explained that she was more willing to speak and had no related fears in her general English course where ability grouping is employed (ENG02, Section: Afraid of negative reactions—peers). It is believed that, thanks to this mechanism, the non-majors expressed

much less concern about peers' evaluation even though it was one source of their anxiety.

Furthermore, the only non-major respondent worrying about more advanced peers' evaluations was learning in the highest level class. Kulik (1992) argues that 'they may become less satisfied with themselves and experience a slight decline in the perception of their ability and self-confidence' (Cited in Liu 2008: 245). With this exceptional case, it is not difficult to imagine that certain students could suffer even more complicated emotions learning in the mixed class. Apparently, learner emotions, particularly anxiety, are connected to ability grouping. More research is, nevertheless, needed to better understand these issues as to why and how they interact.

Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) remark that learners with the three related apprehensions to FLA (see Section 2.2) are considered to place great importance on 'the "appearance" of their communication attempts' (p. 563). This concern with the appearance of communication may be particularly associated with their considerable sensitivity to others' evaluations in the class. As far as the English majors' case is concerned, considering the above association, it could be anticipated that the students have also been concerned about losing 'face' or their 'positive image' in this context. It seems, on the other hand, that the non-majors did not worry as did their counterparts.

Nevertheless, according to Dörnyei (2007 b) and Jones (2004), the language classroom certainly involves face-threatening risks for the learners as they need to communicate and interact with their

limited L2 proficiency. (This seems to imply that (1) the risk is so common that the explanation of it should not be limited to the culture to which the learners belong and (2) its relationship to L2 ability again indicates the situation-specific characteristic of FLA.) Jones (2004), furthermore, appears to demonstrate a close link among flawed performance, evaluation, and face: learners with face concerns have difficulty 'enduring negative evaluation from their peers that may come as a result of their mistakes or social awkwardness' (p. 36). It could be reasoned that the more one cares about others' evaluations, the more one is (considered to be) concerned about one's own image.

Apart from ability- and classroom-based considerations, the issue of face, culturally speaking, is especially emphasized in the social life of Chinese people (Hu et al. 2010; Jones 2004). They pay great attention to others' views of them in social contexts, which can eventually influence their self-construal. More precisely, according to Peng (2014), Chinese people stress the importance of protecting their face or positive image in public. They carefully inspect their behavior and peoples' impression of them when with others. Considering their other-oriented self-construal, 'negative attitudes and evaluations from others can impinge on one's [their] face and self-esteem' (p. 31).

Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, the English majors had relatively greater concern than the non-majors about peers' judgments in class. In other words, the mixed environment itself seemingly magnified the likelihood that the less proficient students have their disadvantages directly exposed to and examined by their (more advanced) peers. Apparently, this discovery implies that ability

grouping, the biggest difference between the two groups' classes, must moderate the connection between face protection and learner anxiety. It is, thus, argued that culture should not be considered 'a universal explanation of any learning and communication behavior' in the classroom, considering its changeability (Peng 2014: 31) and the given context. That is, culture should not be directly taken as the only indicator to explain all human behavior although it undoubtedly plays a significant role in people' social lives.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the culture which the learners embrace must have strengthened their sensitivity to others' evaluations of them as both groups of students had the same concerns despite the differences mentioned above. It could be, hence, worth studying the specific question of how the face culture of the Chinese affects their language learning inside and outside the classroom.

### *Negative self-perception of L2 learning*

The self or L2 self, such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, has been emphasized in SLA research in view of its significant impact on the learner's language learning process and outcome. How one sees oneself in the context seemingly determines whether one takes part in activities with or without concerns. Although the three selves above are undoubtedly associated with one another, the differences between them can still be seen from their definitions. Self-confidence concentrates on the rating of anxiety and proficiency, self-efficacy on the level of certainty about completing an activity or a task, and self-esteem on the evaluation of self-concepts. According to

the findings of my study, the anxious students reported a lack of self-confidence and self-efficacy during their participation in class. It is unsurprising that people who do not appreciate themselves, when faced with classroom situations, are very likely to feel anxious in the learning context.

Concerning the participants with low self-confidence, their status as the most anxious and lower level students may hold a clue to their lack of confidence. These two characteristics directly link to the definition of self-confidence above (see Section: low self-confidence). Arguably, it is quite easy for them to realize their own English competence level. As testing is inevitable in classroom learning (Aida 1994: 157), the results of each test or examination are probably able to inform them of their level of English. Due to their formality, students may take each result seriously and therefore if they usually get low marks, this could damage their confidence as a consequence.

Moreover, most universities in Taiwan now require their students to attain a certain level of English to graduate (Her et al. 2013; Lin 2015), so they need to either take approved English examinations themselves or the ones given by the institutions for the requirement. Explanation of what each score means in terms of proficiency level has usually been indicated, so they can perceive their proficiency levels immediately. Since the tests are official and credible, the scores could have a great impact on their L2 self, especially ability-specific confidence. That is, they will be officially recognized as either good or bad at English.

Additionally, whichever class the students were in, whether mixed

or non-mixed ability, their self-perceived competence is likely to be established by their surroundings, i.e. their peers in a mixed class and the level attached to a non-mixed one. Students in a mixed class can easily observe the difference between their peers in ability and so their self-perceptions may be instantly affected. As Student ENG02 said, 'I just feel that my level of English is not better than others...I may always be only able to use easily comprehensible words when speaking'. Furthermore, the level of class into which students are grouped directly labels them as, for example, competent or incompetent. This may reinforce their concept and others' impressions of how proficient they are, although placement according to level is considered helpful for alleviating anxiety (Liu 2008; Su 2010). Compared with low self-confident students, their opposites, indeed, 'perceive themselves as being relatively competent in their English ability' (Sampasivam and Clément 2014: 24).

Depending upon their particular L2 learning experiences and environment, the students may not be able to truly familiarize themselves with or become used to communicating in English. It is, therefore, not unusual for them to feel anxious when required to use the language in the class. As mentioned earlier, their communication ability is relatively limited in the L2, hence anxiety may result when they speak the language (Horwitz et al. 1986). It is reasonable to infer that this restriction could make them unsure of themselves in the classroom context. Both groups of students thought that lack of knowledge of English language was one of the reasons for their anxiety in class. One participant (NE11) stated: 'I mean when [I]

cannot completely use the most familiar thing [mother tongue] to speak..., [I] must feel anxiety to a certain extent’.

This also virtually points out that the students lack relevant practical experience in their daily lives, i.e. no authentic environment to practice English. It is, thus, predictable that a state of uncertainty could appear in them when communicating in English is required, which leads them to become nervous. The literature on anxiety and overseas experience shows that people having stayed in a country where the L2 is spoken, generally speaking, felt relatively relaxed in the classroom (Aida 1994; Matsuda and Gobel 2004; Onwegbuzie 1999). Aida (ibid.) explains that previous exposure to the language, culture, and people possibly contributes to positive feelings in the learning context (p.163). This consequence appears to indicate that practical experience, i.e. using the L2 outside the classroom, can make students feel surer of themselves when using the L2 in the classroom. In other words, the lack of an authentic environment in Taiwan is perhaps one factor contributing to their lack of confidence in manipulating the L2.

In addition, their classroom experience before university did not provide them with opportunities to strengthen their English skills, especially listening and speaking.

Secondary school English education [in Taiwan] has considerably centered on test-oriented and grammar instructions...rather than enhancing students’ English ability via a meaningful instruction of “reading, listening, speaking, writing, and translating” (Li 2008: 19).

Moreover, as stated in Section 1.3, Taiwanese students are used to listening to their teachers' lectures without giving any feedback. Therefore, they could feel comparatively unsure in their communicative university English classes. To sum up, (1) L2 proficiency is arguably the most significant factor here because the learning experience and environment are generally shared in Taiwan and (2) low self-confidence could be involved in the relationship between unfamiliarity and anxiety.

Self-efficacy could be thought of as the extended concept of self-confidence, but that focuses on 'how sure one is of being able to execute and/or accomplish a given task'. For example, if someone perceives him/herself as incompetent in English and anxious in speaking, this may, in turn, create self-doubt in their ability to carry out assigned activities or tasks in the class. As most of the participants are lower achievers, they may have had fewer successful experiences than the more advanced ones along their learning journey. From the codes generated, the students apparently expressed no firm beliefs in their capability in many classroom activities.

Bandura's (1997: 80) first source of efficacy explains that in order to establish sound self-efficacy, learners need to confront and overcome their difficulties and problems on the way to every success. Indeed, their responses seem to describe the obstacles which they usually encountered when participating in particular activities. I would argue that the students had experienced more so-called failures, i.e. flawed or poor performances, than successes in class. In the face of adversity, they might have (1) had no idea how to deal with problems,



(2) directly given up trying to find the solutions to them, or (3) tried to tackle them, but failed, in most cases. In other words, they seemed to have been unable to overcome obstacles to complete tasks successfully. Because self-efficacy, anxiety, and L2 achievement are consecutively negatively correlated with each other (Cheng 2001; Gkonou 2012; Gregersen and MacIntyre 2014: 3), it can be inferred that higher level students are basically relatively successful adversity conquerors in line with their higher self-efficacy and lower anxiety.

Apart from personal experiences, others' experiences can also function as the booster or destructor of a person's efficacy. When seeing that peers similar to them can (not) accomplish certain tasks, they will (not) believe that they can do them (Bandura 1997: 87). For instance, 'I worry about making mistakes because I think everyone does' (ENG06). In the light of the discussion above, the students may have fewer chances to witness their similar others' successes since the latter, also less competent students, are logically in the same predicament. Under the circumstances, they would find it difficult to robustly establish belief in their efficacy. Furthermore, it could be that the former only concentrate on the latter's flaws without assessing their overall performances as a whole. When one moves to higher levels, similar peers normally make fewer mistakes and experience more success and so he/she probably feels more self-efficacious. I, thus, assume that this second factor may work positively only on higher level students, such as intermediate or above, which requires further research.

Moreover, from Student ENG02's case in the above discussion of

self-confidence, I further argue that perceived differences between peers' performances may also have an effect on individual efficacy. Whenever lower achievers observe higher ones' failures and successes, they perhaps think that only people with their competency can make it or even more proficient ones do not perform well. The more similar students are, the more influential their failures and successes are (Bandura 1997: 87), but which characteristic, among the similarities, draws people's attention could be another area of investigation as the ability issue had commonly been mentioned by the participants and efficacy is clearly related to capability.

Others' comments on an individual's performances can play a powerful role in fostering or weakening self-efficacy. Although the words said may be the central factor, the speaker projects their effect. That is, the listener is likely to be verbally persuaded when the speaker is significant to him/her (Bandura 1997: 101). When it comes to classroom learning, the teacher's words and deeds appear to considerably influence the students' learning progress and thinking about life as the teacher is not only the instructor, but also the evaluator of the learners.

Horwitz et al. (1986: 128) point out that students in language classes are continually evaluated by their teacher—the only fluent speaker. Furthermore, teachers in Chinese culture are given high status as authorities or role models for students; the latter normally speak only when permitted or asked to (Peng 2014: 29-30). Teachers' comments and guidance could, therefore, have a great impact on students' perceptions of their own learning or performances. Take

self-efficacy for example, Mills (2014: 8) emphasizes the significance of teachers in enhancing learners' beliefs in their capability to succeed in different tasks. As noted by Student ENG06, she fully involved herself in English again after consulting her teacher about her problems and receiving encouragement from her. In fact, both groups of teachers reported, for example, providing students with opportune support and giving positive comments on their performance to curb any negative emotions. Nevertheless, the students still experienced anxiety, partly due to their lack of self-efficacy.

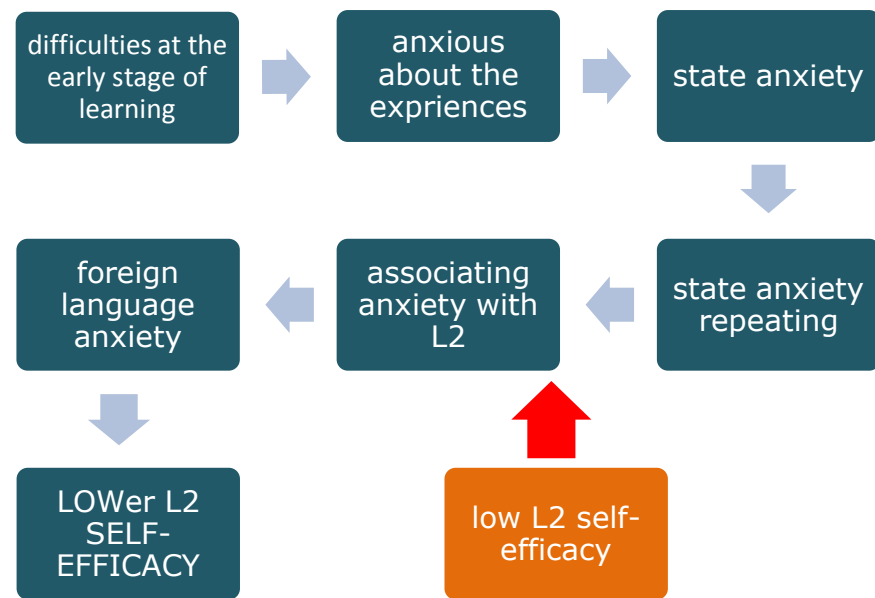
Considering this unanticipated development, I would argue that the students perhaps consider their peers to be comparatively significant others. Peers' evaluations may also cause apparent fluctuations in learning affect and emotions in a student (Horwitz et. al. 1986: 128). Based on my findings, the students were much more fearful of their peers' than teachers' negative feedback on their performance. Teacher NET08 explained that, from the psychological perspective, students of their age are particularly sensitive to their peers' views of them. As Student ENG08 responded, 'I am just afraid that they wonder why I speak so poorly and the like because we study in the same class after all'.

When people face different situations, their physical and psychological reactions are virtually the most accurate measures indicating their perceptions of them. It is unsurprising that Bandura (1997: 106) identifies 'physiological and affective states' as the fourth source of self-efficacy. Nonetheless, there is mutual influence between the states and perceived efficacy since it is also noted by Bandura that

one's emotion during a task can be affected by his/her efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, different studies, as mentioned earlier, have revealed the negative correlation between L2 self-efficacy and learner anxiety (Cheng 2001) and that learners' lack of efficacy beliefs contributed to their learning anxiety in the L2 classroom (Gkonou 2012).

In the light of this, Bandura's causal relationship above is probably better interpreted as an accumulative effect here. The development of FLA delineated by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989: 272) and MacIntyre (1999: 30-1) may provide the context. Difficulties are inevitable at the beginning of language learning. A state anxiety could begin if learners start to react to these experiences anxiously. When their state anxiety repeatedly occurs, they start to link it to the L2. This association leads to their expectation of feeling anxious in the relevant contexts, i.e. FLA. As far as L2 self is concerned, their low self-efficacy could start from the formation of this connection because they are likely to instantly relate their anxieties to the inadequacy of their L2 ability. Their high anxiety in activities or tasks can then have a cumulative, recursive negative impact on their self-efficacy.

Figure 6.1 The formation of FLA and self-efficacy



Aside from these, 'comparison with peers' is another L2 self related source of anxiety reported by the students. This behavior could be quite normal in the language classroom because learners need to continually address different classroom situations in the L2. More precisely, whenever the learners present in class, the others 'are forced to' listen and detect the quality of their performance, and, further, are given the opportunity to reflect on that of their own one. A student's response suggests this: 'because I feel that my peers in class are all very competent, I myself feel that I speak disjointedly every time I speak' (ENG08).

There have been several studies either mentioning or revealing the phenomenon of comparison as one source of anxiety. Their learners' action in making comparisons seems to connote two situations: the evaluation of self-competence (Horwitz et al. 1986; Kitano 2001; Price 1991; Yan and Horwitz 2008) and competitiveness

(Yan and Horwitz 2008). In line with the former, my participants perceived themselves as inferior to their peers in English ability after seeing their classmates' performances either inside or outside the class. That is, they observed a competence gap between themselves and their peers and estimated their English proficiency levels through the mechanism of comparison.

Nevertheless, the English majors appeared more sensitive to the above source than the non-majors, according to the respective frequencies of the sub-category (E: 16; N: 2). It could be argued that the difference is attributable to the types of classes stated earlier where the respective groups learn. Due to the characteristics of mixed ability groups, the gaps in ability becomes so apparent that the students can be easily aware of them subconsciously, making instant comparisons between their and others' performances. However, in the case of same level classes, the situation is relatively mild.

In addition, Chinese people consider the self to be 'other-oriented' and 'defined by the surrounding relations' (Gao 1998: 164; Peng 2007: 251). The students' comparison behavior could be part of the formation process of their individual self. That is, they can position and understand themselves better through the procedure of comparison. It is explained by Sun (1991) that 'an individual self [in Chinese society] is incomplete and needs to be understood in relation to the other party' (cited in Peng 2014: 30-1). In other words, solidarity and social belongingness, through keeping a low profile for instance, are often endorsed by people believing in other-directed self-construal (ibid.: 31).

Take English majors' mixed classes for example, when some students felt themselves inferior at English to their peers, they could feel conspicuous and have no sense of belonging as the better performers are perhaps the only people about whom they are concerned. Their self is possibly reshaped into a low state, e.g. low self-confidence/-efficacy, as a consequence. By contrast, the non-majors' situation apparently produces scenes of consistency and harmony in terms of the level distribution in their classes. Put simply, the cultural belief above makes students inclined to be less assertive or act more or less the same as the others in class (ibid.).

It is arguable that the belief and the source could have simultaneously triggered the students' 'herd behavior'. Their anxiety may be associated with their pursuing the same level of performance as the better others without considering their own progress, due to their fear of being left behind. As Student NE04 responded, 'maybe in comparison to the more competent peers, I just feel that other classmates all speak very fluently and I should also do the same as well'. This extended behavior requires further research as she was the only one to mention this.

### **6.1.3 RQ 3: What effects does feeling anxious have on the students?**

This study adopted interview, not experiment, observation, or survey, as conducted in previous research, to examine the above question. I once worried that the students might have few comments on the impacts. However, the data collected revealed numerous

findings covering the dimensions of affective, cognitive, physical, and social effects (Gregersen and MacIntyre 2014: 6-8). This means that the learners themselves are able to demonstrate their sensitivity to and perception of the changes in them.

The table below compares and contrasts the effects of anxiety of English major and non-major students in their English classrooms.

Table 6.3 Comparison and contrast between English and non-English majors regarding the effects of anxiety

Major	English	✓/×	Non-English
(Sub-) Themes	1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance		1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance
	a. Avoidance of classroom activities	✓	a. Avoidance of classroom activities
	b. Avoidance of unfamiliar peers	✓	b. Classmate avoidance
	c. Avoidance of advanced peers	✓	c. Avoidance of advanced peers
	d. Teacher avoidance	✓	d. Teacher avoidance
	e. Avoidance of native English teachers	×	
	f. Avoidance of English native speakers	×	
	2. Poor speaking performance		2. Poor speaking performance
	a. Poorly-displayed speech contents	✓	a. Poorly-displayed speech contents
	b. Poor performance in speaking skills	✓	b. Poor performance in speaking skills



	3. Self-disapproval thoughts		3. Self-disapproval thoughts
	a. Self-deprecating cognition	✓	a. Self-deprecating cognition
	b. Self-questioning cognition	×	
	4. Being propelled to work harder	✓	4. Being propelled to work harder

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the effects on the students, and illustrated the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

Table 6.3 shows a high degree of similarity between the two groups of students' responses to the effects of anxiety on them in the learning process. This result may be unsurprising, considering the nature of anxiety itself. Spielberger (1983: 1) explains that 'anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system'. Since the system controls a person's physiological functions, psychological states can manifest themselves in subconscious behavior (Gregersen 2007: 210). The effects of anxiety could be, therefore, more or less the same for most people.

Both groups of students reported trying to avoid participating in anxiety-provoking activities or tasks and interacting with the people involved or those considered threatening. Many researchers also

discovered evasion related behavior in their anxious learners (Ely 1986; Gregersen 2005; Horwitz et al. 1986; Liu and Jackson 2008), but attention is mostly paid to their avoidance of classroom situations and/or the class itself. However, the students in this research not only spoke about their peers and teachers, but also pointed out specific types of them. It seems to me that they had relatively stronger resistance reaction to certain people in the classroom.

Whether the students were majoring in English subjects, they were all also aware that their anxious feelings did have a negative impact on their articulation and presentation in English, ranging from the ordering of subject content to the pronunciation of words. Macroscopically speaking, L2 learners with higher degrees of FLA are shown to make poorer L2 oral performances (Horwitz et al. 1986; Phillips 1992). Microscopically speaking, simplification and descriptiveness are the two main characteristics observed in anxious learners' oral presentations, such as less content, less complex sentences, and lack of fluency (ibid.; ibid.; MacIntyre and Gardner 1994). Eysenck (1979) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) explain that feeling anxious can generate thoughts unrelated to task in hand, which can then negatively influence the retrieval of the knowledge required for the task, which, in turn, lowers the quality of the performance. From these results and discussion, keeping calm may be the key to maintaining appropriate cognitive functioning for L2 development and performance.

Moreover, the students in both majors shared the same experience of self-disapproval in connection with their anxiety. There

has been little into this in anxious learners. The lack of relevant literature could be mainly attributed to the fact that 'tacit knowledge' is hardly visible unless it is spoken. Compared with the methods previously used, interviews in this study solved this problem by allowing me to (1) investigate and prompt unobservable things (see Patton 1990: 278), e.g., 'feelings, thoughts, and intentions' (ibid.), (2) probe an interviewee's 'thoughts, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings, and perspectives' and (3) obtain his/her 'versions and accounts of situations' (Wellington 2000: 71). Although the effect of self-disapproval appears to be overlooked, its traces can be found in Bandura's (1997) fourth source of self-efficacy (see Section 2.3) and Eysenck's (1979) anxiety related cognitive dysfunction (see Section 2.4.3).

Despite these negative effects, they simultaneously perceived that they were propelled to work harder by anxiety to some extent. Specifically, the arousal of anxiety made them use their initiative and realize what their drawbacks were and want to improve. Whether FLA is debilitating or facilitating normally depends on the quality of an anxious learner's L2 performance (Young 1991b: 58). Considering the findings of this study, anxiety could be considered facilitative when positive affect is triggered in the learners during their learning process. Among these effects, I discuss themes one and four in the following sections.

### *Classroom dynamics: avoidance*

L2 learning in the classroom involves interaction between peers, peers and teacher, and the environment itself. In the light of the FLCAS/ELCAS, every interactional situation has the potential to trigger anxious feelings in learners. It seems that avoidance is the most common and instant behavioral reaction to discomfort. As far as my participants are concerned, their avoidance behavior is quite pervasive and subtle as it involves not only the situation, but also the people in each context.

In terms of classroom participation, the literature shows that when students feel highly anxious, they do not tend to take risks and are unwilling to communicate in class (Ely 1986; Yan and Jackson 2008). More seriously, they are likely to skip classes or delay submitting their assignments (Horwitz et al. 1986: 126), or even 'drop out of language learning' (MacIntyre and Gregersen 2014: 3). Fortunately, no students in this study shared these experiences with me, one reason for which may be that their course is compulsory.

Concerning interpersonal interactions, apart from an unwillingness to communicate, the arousal of anxiety also imposes serious constraints on the learners' sociability in class (Ely 1986; Yan and Jackson 2008). Furthermore, it has specifically been found that anxious students prefer seats at the back (Horwitz et al 1986: 130) and have less eye contact with their teacher (Gregersen 2005). Some of my participants, coincidentally, reported having the same behavior as this.

Although avoidance behavior appears to be a natural reaction to

anxiety, I would argue that the situations and the people themselves are not the main 'targets' which the students in question seek to escape. It is the perceived sources of anxiety which they try to avoid because their concerns trigger the 'chain effect', comprising the cause, the setting, and the effect. For instance, one feels anxious when working with unfamiliar peers because one is afraid of negative reactions from them. One, thus, decides to keep quiet during group discussions (see ENG08: 'avoidance of unfamiliar peers'). In other words, if a learner is not afraid of negative reactions, one will surely join in the discussion and be at ease.

In addition, avoidance itself could be symbolic of a shield which protects anxious learners from 'harm' in this context. As long as they do not take risks or are unsociable or unwilling to communicate, they will be spared from anxious concerns, especially of showing their disadvantages or weaknesses in public and being reminded of their incompetence in the L2—whether real or self-perceived. Take face protection for example, Liu (2001: 204) explains that

Growing up in such a collective culture, Asian students tend to care more about their *Mianzi* [face] as their public image, and they tend to withdraw whenever they feel a threat to their *Mianzi*. Refraining from speaking up in class is therefore one of the strategies [instant reactions] Asian students employ [have] to save face, or maintain their *Mianzi*.

In view of this, it is essential to accurately recognize what learners are avoiding when the effects caused by anxiety are discussed. Otherwise, this behavior will persist if the situations are seen as the main culprit.

### *Being propelled to work harder*

This theme is the only positive effect of anxiety reported by both groups of students. In other words, the impacts of anxiety on their learning were generally perceived as negative. As stated by Jones, learners are likely to feel either debilitating or facilitating anxiety (also mentioned by Student NE05), but the former appears to be relatively more common (2004: 31). Specifically, it is agreed that high levels of anxiety correlate with low levels of learning (Gregersen and MacIntyre 2014: 1; Horwitz 2008:9; MacIntyre and Gregersen 2012: 103). In fact, there is little in the literature on facilitating language anxiety itself, perhaps because: (1) the extent to which anxiety is considered facilitative is still not clearly defined and (2) quantitative data are usually collected and analyzed to examine the relationship between FLA and L2 learning.

Regarding the first, I suggest that the focus may also need to be on the learners themselves when the two types of anxiety are discussed. The language performance of an anxious learner, as mentioned earlier, seemingly determines the function of his/her language anxiety.

A good performance...depends on enough anxiety to arouse the neuromuscular system to optimal levels of performance, but, at the same time, not so much that the complex neuromuscular systems underlying these skills are disrupted (Scovel 1991: 22).

Nevertheless, considering Student NE05's remarks (see Section 4.2.3.4) and Teacher NET08's (see Section 5.2.3.3), I started to wonder which—anxiety itself or the learner—should be emphasized if the aim now is to define the positive and negative aspects of anxiety. From the viewpoint of individual differences, I would argue that each individual's anxiety-bearing ability should not be ignored in the discussion of this issue. That is, the ability to bear stress can vary between individuals. Some people can bear a high level of anxiety and carry on with their work, whereas others cannot. This way of thinking is perhaps a new approach to explain and interpret the type of anxiety that a learner is experiencing. How to evaluate individual anxiety-bearing ability is another question to be studied.

Concerning the second reason, the association between anxiety and achievement is usually deduced from statistical results, and the correlation is generally negative. Although this seems to be supported by my study, considering the participants' English abilities, the interviews revealed the existence of facilitative anxiety as part of the students' learning process. Facilitative anxiety is, as previously stated, normally defined in relation to improved performance. Nevertheless, the same kind of anxiety in this research recognized the increased positive affect toward learning due to the arousal of anxiety. This detailed finding is unlikely to emerge from related quantitative studies, but only through the advantages of the interview as a research method. There appears to be no doubt that high levels of anxiety can lead to poor learning outcomes, but this does not mean that the anxiety trigger must negatively influence every aspect of learning in

class. I, therefore, argue that whether anxiety is considered helpful or harmful should also take the process of learning into consideration, not only the results of learning.

In addition, the students who reported wanting to make improvements after experiencing anxiety in a particular situation gave the impression of still being motivated and optimistic about their learning. Although they did not deny the negative impact of anxiety on their performances in class, most of them thought that the onset of anxiety indicated the inadequacy of their ability and made them realize what needed to be improved.

When getting anxious, you know what you feel anxious about; you will feel that you yourself are perhaps still, in fact, incapable. Then,...I mean [you] may recall the previous embarrassing situation, and [tell yourself] that the same situation must not happen again. What I can do is just try to urge myself to work harder (ENG02).

Furthermore, it was found that the English majors who felt demotivated due to anxiety had not expressed any intention/desire to improve themselves. This supports the claim at the beginning of this paragraph. There is no way to make the same comparison in the non-English majors' data since no one in this group expressed demotivation as an effect of anxiety. It could be presumed that these students are still motivated at least to some extent.



#### 6.1.4 RQ 4: How do the students cope with feelings of anxiety?

Most of the students had employed some strategies to deal with their language anxiety at different times inside or outside the classroom. This maybe leads people to the thought that their tactics must be multifarious to some extent. However, the table below has presented almost all the coping methods used for the alleviation of anxiety. It seems that these strategies are so common and predictable that the students impressed on me the limited development of their coping tactics for learning anxiety. This could be partly attributed to the fact that they have no spare time to deal with anxiety during class (ENG08; ENG09) or it does not continue after the activity or class (ENG08; NE04; NE09; NE11).

Table 6.4 below compares and contrasts the coping tactics for anxiety of English major and non-major students in their English classrooms.

Table 6.4 Comparison and contrast between English and non-English majors regarding coping tactics for anxiety

Major	English	✓/×	Non-English
	1. Relaxation techniques		1. Relaxation techniques
	a. Doing leisure activities	×	
	b. Refreshing physiological functioning	×	
	c. Releasing psychophysical tension	✓	c. Releasing psychophysical tension
	d. Positive self-talk	✓	d. Positive self-talk

	e. Positive thinking	×	
	2. Gaining support from others		2. Gaining support from others
	a. Gaining positive feedback from peers	✓	a. Gaining positive feedback from peers
	b. Chatting with someone	✓	b. Chatting with peers
	c. seeking help from peers	✓	c. Seeking help from peers
	3. Readiness for activities		3. Confrontation with anxious situations
	a. Problem-preventing strategy for presentations	×	a. Direct confrontation
	b. Preparation	×	b. Problem-solving strategy use

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the strategies adopted by the students, and illustrated the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

As the table above shows, the students implemented almost the same coping strategies as each other. The main difference was in the problem tackling related strategies. There is very little in the literature investigating how anxious learners cope with foreign language anxiety. Compared with the findings of the existing studies (Kondo and Yang 2004; Marwan 2007; Wei 2013), this research appears to display more detailed categorization of the reported strategies. The latter, nevertheless, consist partly of the former.

Regarding the similarities, it is not surprising to be informed of the

use of relaxation techniques for dealing with nervousness by the students of both majors. This method was also reported by the above scholars' participants as one of their coping strategies. As mentioned earlier, anxiety itself is associated with the arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Spielberger 1983) and neuromuscular system (Scovel 1991). It is, therefore, necessary for those experiencing anxiety to readjust their physical and psychological functioning in order to release the disorder of these two systems and achieve emotional balance.

As can be seen, the English majors used relatively more relaxation techniques than the non-majors. The former's first strategy mainly tackles their anxiety in individual learning after class. Moreover, both groups adopted deep breathing and self-consoling with positive words when feeling anxious during classroom activities. Only one student (ENG04 from English department) positively reshaped his thinking about encountering difficulties in English learning by reflecting on his L1 learning experience, i.e. 'positive thinking' (also revealed by Kondo and Yang 2004; Marwan 2007; Wei 2013). This perhaps reminded him that having problems is simply part of the learning process.

Apart from these 'self-rescue' strategies, both groups of students also turned to their peers for help with their emotional problems when in class. This strategy use may seem questionable as the students, generally speaking, are fearful of receiving their peers' negative judgments. Although further research is required to understand this apparently paradoxical behavior, the students certainly tried to make

use of their surrounding resources to instantly help themselves. It is normal that students usually prefer to sit or form a group with their close friends or familiar peers. Consequently, these are the peers whom they probably turn to for help, hence the students' strategic action becomes reasonable in the above situation. They considered these people to be relatively reliable and understanding.

As for the strategies themselves, each seemingly tries to alleviate the students' anxiety in different ways. 'Gaining positive feedback' here functions as a medium of confirmation. From their responses in the interviews, it seems that they wanted to assure themselves of their social belongingness and the maintenance of their positive image (see Sections 4.1.4.2 and 4.2.4.2). These two concepts, as discussed in Section 6.1.2, play significant roles in the fluctuations of learning anxiety. The students also liked to have a quick chat with their classmates if their anxiety was roused. They either talked about irrelevant topics or shared their nervous feelings in conversation. These two behaviors probably serve two main functions: (1) they shift attention to irrelevances (Student ENG01) and (2) impede the accumulation of smoldering anxiety.

Moreover, when facing difficulties or problems during activities, they instantly asked their peers to help them out so as not to keep themselves enmeshed in their predicament. They apparently considered solving their problems as a first priority and their peers to be the people who could offer the support needed. That is, once the barriers were removed, they could carry out the activities unfettered. It has been reported that Japanese (Kondo and Yang 2004),

Indonesian (Marwan 2007), and Chinese (Wei 2013) university students also tried to mitigate their English anxiety by seeking support from their peers. Less so the Japanese, the Indonesian and the Chinese were mostly found to employ this tactic.

Because the Japanese students were asked to share the strategies they used from junior high school to university, it is likely that the strategies provided might only link to one period of time. This is considered as one reason for the difference in the research findings from the other two studies. Nevertheless, my study produced the same result as Marwan's (2007) and Wei's (2013). Because cooperative learning is generally promoted in tertiary education, students probably become accustomed to making use of support from one another.

As for the dissimilarities, it appears that the two groups of students took different approaches when on their own and faced with problems during classroom activities. The English major students tended to prevent potential problems (in presentations), but the non-majors seemingly preferred to keep their wits about them. More precisely, the former were aware of their difficulties and tried to adopt different ways to approach presentations or the class. The latter did not, however, think of solutions until (their) problems appeared.

Concerning the differences found between the two groups, their respective majors may offer the explanation. As English majors, they spend relatively more time with English and so have more opportunities to realize any difficulties and think of feasible precautions to cope with them. For non-majors, English is only a

subject unrelated to their specialties, so they may not consider their English learning so carefully. They, thus, adopted the attitude of keeping their wits about them. (Although 'preparation' was also generated from the non-majors' data, only one student (NE05) provided relevant information.) Moreover, according to Kondo and Yang (2004) and Wei (2013), 'preparation' was the most popular strategy used to deal with anxiety. Among the three studies cited above, only Wei mentioned 'problem solving' as one coping strategy of his students', but it was finally excluded due to few users. Since these researchers only investigated their students' coping strategies, I argue that their students, without recalling their anxious situations, might only be able to share general strategies (c.f. my study). That is, their students would not carefully think about how they coped with anxiety in certain specific and troubling classroom situations.

### *Reflections on the strategies employed*

The coping strategies revealed by several studies seem to overlap with one another, and it appears that all relate specifically to anxious situations only. I argue that these students were not consciously aware of the sources of their own anxiety. They always referred to and attempted to merely treat the symptoms, but not the root causes of their anxiety, i.e. what I call 'surface tackling'. I suggest that they should deal with their anxiety the other way around, i.e. 'deep tackling', if they want to get rid of or mitigate their anxiety effectively. Otherwise, they may find that they unceasingly address their anxiety in class as one source could provoke anxiety in several classroom

situations. This perhaps explains Kondo and Yang's (2004) result that the frequencies of the reported strategies did not significantly correlate with the degrees of FLA.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the strategies identified is still not known. It is, nevertheless, arguable that overlapping or popular strategies should not be considered as necessarily effective in dispelling anxious feelings. Of course, such tactics may be effective in certain situations. However, their effectiveness becomes uncertain in the view of the above argument. As far as my study is concerned, the students still experienced high levels of anxiety in their English classes, even though they reported using various coping strategies to overcome their anxious emotions.

## **6.2 Research question specific to teachers**

The overlapping percentages, macroscopically speaking, were quite high in the raw comparisons of the themes generated from the data of the students and teachers of the respective majors. There was 71% overlap between the English majors' and their teachers' themes; there was 77% between the non-majors' and their teachers'. Both groups of teachers were believed to be sensitive to the issue since the significant items were all included in the overlapping themes.

### **6.2.1 RQ 5: To what extent are teachers aware of students' anxiety and how do they deal with it?**

As there are two sets of comparisons and contrasts between the English majors and their teachers and the non-majors and their teachers, this question will be developed in two sections for each group. Furthermore, due to the similarity of the coping strategies used by both groups of teachers, their strategies are then discussed together in the other section.

#### **6.2.1.1 The English majors' and their teachers' perceptions of FLA**

This section has three subsections, devoted to the three main aspects of anxiety—situation, source, and effect.

##### *Situations of anxiety*

There were, generally speaking, no huge differences between the themes generated from the students' and teachers' interview data. Nevertheless, the students seem to describe certain situations in more detail, e.g. 'when the teacher wants me to answer an open-ended



question' (ENG08). There is no doubt that those with personal experience of specific anxiety-causing situations would be able to provide more specific information. It is still reasonable to assume, however, that the teachers were sensitive to the anxious situations of their students to a certain extent.

Table 6.5 below compares and contrasts the anxiety situations perceived respectively by the English major students and their teachers in their English classrooms.

Table 6.5 Comparison and contrast between English majors and their teachers regarding the situations of anxiety

English Major	Student	✓/×	Teacher
(Sub-) Themes	1. Exposure in class		1. Exposure in class
	a. Spontaneous speaking in class	✓	a. Spontaneous speaking in class
	b. Speaking on stage	✓	b. Speaking on stage
	c. Awareness of oral performance problems	✓	c. Awareness of oral performance problems
	2. Learning in class: unpredictability		2. Learning English in a formal classroom
	a. Unexpected incidents	×	a. English tests
	b. Unknown consequences/ results	×	b. Competitive activities
		×	c. Time-limited preparation
	3. Working with others different from me	✓	d. Working as a group

	a. Working with advanced peers	×	
	b. Working with unfamiliar peers	×	

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes concerning the perceived anxious situations, and reported the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

The teachers and students, as can be seen, have fairly different perceptions of anxious situations in class. In terms of common areas, the students had themselves found feeling anxious in speaking related activities, particularly 'being called on to speak' and 'speaking on stage'. Due to the natures of exposure and performance of the above activities, it seems reasonable that the teachers will have observed and realized the greatest concerns of their students (and most language learners) in the class.

Both groups of participants (teachers of English majors and their students) also reported that learner anxiety could occur in the situation of working in groups. When inspected carefully, the codes in each theme had discussed different social issues. Although they both indicated other group members as the problem, the students seemingly pointed to their status, whereas the teachers indicated students' negative impressions of certain peers. Teachers might have heard their students complain about another member's undesirable acts during the group work. However, it could be difficult for the

teachers to understand how group members interpreted the relationships between each other.

I would argue that the situations reported by both students and teachers are common and normal in group work, especially when students are grouped by their teacher for classroom activities. As Teacher ET05 pointed out, '...because teachers are in charge of lecturing only. [It is difficult for them to know] those personal issues. Grouping seems very easy, but, in fact, there are many problems in it'. Indeed, the situations described by the students are also based on the context of being grouped by the teacher.

As for the differences, the students expressed their concerns about confronting the situations which they had not anticipated and the unknown consequences of their imperfect performances in class. Although these two sub-themes were also generated from the teachers' data, the teachers failed to provide such detailed unpredictable situation data as the students. Considering the excerpts provided in Section 4.1.1.2, their insensitivity may, arguably, be attributed to such factors as (1) only the students could say what was truly unexpected for them and (2) failing to perform well may be tolerated by the teachers, but the students could have taken a different view. It is, nevertheless, also possible that the teachers had (unconsciously) classified specific situations into general, representative ones. For example, 'speaking poorly' (Teacher ET01) probably include situations like 'forget my prepared stuff in the oral test' (Student ENG02).

Additionally, the teachers appeared relatively sensitive to their

students' anxiety about formal classroom learning. Although they did not particularly speak of whether their students liked or disliked their classes, they had found that the latter responded negatively to the 'routines' in a language class. There seems to be no doubt that students feel anxious about or in taking tests because the results directly influence their academic performance for the course. Furthermore, they need to complete their tests within a limited period of time. Ohata's (2005) teacher participants also recognized that language tests were definitely one of the anxiety-evoking situations for students.

Moreover, their students were observed to experience anxiety during their preparation for forthcoming activities in class. Because the length of preparation time is usually controlled, they needed to do their best to get themselves ready within the time given. Time pressure is, therefore, inevitable, especially when the time given is considered insufficient or shorter than usual. The teachers also reported that their students become tense when participating in competitive activities. Nonetheless, these are normally designed to make the class fun and motivate the students to learn. The English major students in my study also revealed their anxiety in the situations of test taking and preparing for classroom activities.

### *Sources of anxiety*

Considering the respective lists of themes and the table below, the teachers are believed to have demonstrated sensitivity to the sources of their students' anxiety, for it appears that they were aware

of the significant concerns of the latter. Table 6.6 below compares and contrasts the sources of anxiety reported respectively by the English major students and their teachers in their English classrooms.

Table 6.6 Comparison and contrast between English majors and their teachers regarding the sources of anxiety

English Major	Student	✓/x	Teacher
(Sub-) Themes	1. Concern about peers' judgments		1. Concern about peers' judgments
	a. Afraid of negative reactions—peers	✓	a. Afraid of negative reactions—peers
	b. Afraid of negative reactions—unfamiliar peers	✓	b. Afraid of negative reactions—unfamiliar peers
	c. Afraid of negative reactions—advanced peers	x	
	d. Feeling of being judged by peers	x	
	e. Feeling of being judged by unfamiliar peers	x	
	f. Peers' unpleasant behaviors	x	
	g. Face concerns	✓	c. Face concerns
	2. Negative self-perception of L2 learning		2. Negative self-perception of L2 learning
	a. Low self-confidence	✓	a. Low self-confidence
	b. Low self-efficacy	✓	b. Low self-efficacy
	a. Comparison with classmates	✓	c. Comparison with classmates

	3. Individual differences: learning behaviors		3. Poor relationship between group members
	a. Learner beliefs	×	
	b. Learner habits	×	

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the given attributions, and revealed the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

Apparently, the teachers were well-informed about their students being concerned with their peers' reactions to their performance or projecting a positive image while they are involved in classroom activities. As the teachers had also been language learners and shared the same culture as the students, it is not unexpected that the teachers were able to detect the relevant fears or worries of the learners. The students' low self was also suggested to negatively impact on their emotions in different learning situations. The same issues emerged, such as 'lack of confidence' and 'low self-esteem', when eight university teachers in Taiwan shared with Liu (2012) their views on students' FLA. The current teacher participants further noticed that student anxiety was triggered by the competence gap which they found after making comparisons with others. These problems were, meanwhile, revealed in the interviews by the student participants themselves.

However, the teachers did not mention any relevant causes to the

students' learner beliefs or learning habits. Because these come from inner thoughts and personal actions, they may be difficult to detect if not displayed or spoken about directly. This suggests that teachers should also take notice of students' related behavior. If these are not helpful for their language development, they should offer prompt and proper guidance. Concerning the issues of group members, as stated earlier, although both teachers and students identified working in groups as an anxious situation, their stories told were different from each other. The students attributed the very situation mainly to their fear of negative comments from their advanced or unfamiliar peers.

#### *Effects of anxiety*

There is, broadly speaking, only one difference between the total themes generated from the respective groups' data, that is to say, the teachers did not mention discovering the effect of self-deprecation in their students. Table 6.7 below compares and contrasts the selected effects of anxiety unveiled respectively by the English majors and their teachers in their English classrooms.

Table 6.7 Comparison and contrast between the English majors and their teachers regarding the effects of anxiety

English Major	Student	✓/×	Teacher
(Sub-) Themes	1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance		1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance
	a. Avoidance of classroom activities	✓	a. Avoidance of classroom activities
	b. Avoidance of unfamiliar peers	✓	b. Classmate avoidance

	c. Avoidance of advanced peers	✓	
	d. Teacher avoidance	✓	c. Teacher avoidance
	e. Avoidance of native English teacher	×	
	f. Avoidance of English native speakers	×	
	2. Poor speaking performance		2. Alteration of psychophysical conditions
	a. Poorly-displayed speech contents	×	a. Acts against classroom conventions
	b. Poor performance in speaking skills	×	b. Facial expression
		×	c. Consulting teacher about their work
		×	d. Demotivation
		×	5. Perception of unfair treatment
	3. Self-disapproval thoughts		
	a. Self-deprecating cognition	×	
	b. Self-questioning cognition	×	
	4. Being propelled to work harder	✓	4. Being propelled to work harder

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the effects on the students, and demonstrated the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).



In line with the students' avoidance behaviors, the teachers noticed that the anxious students tended to escape participating in (speaking related) activities and interacting with their classmates and teachers in class. Nevertheless, they also shared with me some additional situations which were relevant, but not mentioned by the students. For instance, some students might even skip class and not complete assignments or tasks (Horwitz et al. 1986: 126; Teacher ET03). The same teacher further pointed out that they rarely turned up for tutorials, let alone had less interaction with her after class. Although she was not responsible for the current student participants, these experiences were worth illustrating as references to the cohorts' avoidance behavior.

Moreover, the students were conscious of how their anxiety negatively influenced their speaking and presenting (in English). The teachers were quite sensitive to the above effects on their students, which are arguably the most apparent indicators of anxiety for language teachers. I, nonetheless, presented the theme of 'alteration of psychophysical conditions' in the table as some of the sub-themes were interesting and not reported in previous studies. Apart from inhibiting behavior like lowering head and stiff sitting posture (Gregersen 2005), the teachers also discovered changes in the anxious students' facial expressions. Although they seemed to have difficulty depicting their faces in words, it is surprising that the teachers had made such detailed observations.

Furthermore, they found it interesting that some anxious students came to them as a matter of urgency to consult them about

their learning or poor performance. It may be that those learners had anxiety-related characteristics like being perfectionists, having higher academic expectations, low self-perceptions, or a personality that tends to worry. More importantly, I argue that the teachers themselves were not the source of the above students' anxiety, otherwise they would not dare to talk to their teachers. It should be the very issues that concerned them, so they wanted to obtain answers to their questions from their instructors. With problems like low self, it seems to be expected that their teachers have observed demotivation, i.e. no interest in or patience for learning, in some anxious students. As pointed out, the relationship between the L2 self and motivation proves to be positive (Bandura 1997: 3; Sampasivam and Clément 2014: 24).

In addition, anxious students were found likely to consider the teachers' aims or requests as objectionable. It is difficult to explain how the process works, but, according to one Taiwanese proverb, 'no good words will be said when one is angry'. That is, emotions can influence not only an individual's way of looking at an event, but also their cognitive functions for work. Eysenck's (1979) states that anxiety can generate 'task-irrelevant information', which shifts one's focus away from the matter in hand. Moreover, although the teachers did not observe any anxious student self-deprecation, they should take this into account when addressing students' FLA due to the significant, recursive connection between self and anxiety.

By contrast, both the students and teachers acknowledged the positive impact of anxiety on the former's learning, i.e. facilitating

anxiety. Aside from the situations provided by the students, the teachers further revealed that anxiety made some students relatively conscientious about preparing for and participating in classroom activities. Students were even found to perform better or talk much more on stage when experiencing anxiety. These outcomes appear to conflict with the negative effects presented above, especially those from the student participants. I would argue that the teachers report these influences on the basis of the general scenario seen in class, so the level of student anxiety is unknown. Such positive behavior, theoretically speaking, will not manifest themselves if an individual feels highly anxious in class (Scovel 1991: 22).

Nevertheless, three teachers (ET01; ET03; ET04) clearly stated that anxiety can have a positive and negative impact on classroom learning, also agreed by the teachers in the studies of Ohata (2005), Liu (2012), and Trang et al. (2013). Two teachers (ET01; ET04) even thought that small amounts of anxiety are necessary in class to make students pay attention to their participation in class as a whole. EFL teachers in Taiwan also support this viewpoint, and call this anxiety 'challenge' or 'appropriate worry' (Liu 2012). However, Horwitz points out that anxiety is inherent in the process of learning languages, therefore bigger problems may appear if teachers excessively 'make use of anxiety' in class (1990 cited in Oxford 1990: 60-1; 2014).

### 6.2.1.2 The non-majors' and their teachers' perceptions of FLA

This section is also further divided into three main subsections as Section 6.2.1.1 above, i.e. situations, sources, and effects of anxiety.

#### *Situations of anxiety*

There are some overlaps in the perceptions of anxious situations between the students and the teachers. Although the teachers could not provide specific situations as did the students, they still observed the significant (collective) ones, such as speaking activities, poor performances, and English tests.

Table 6.8 below compares and contrasts the anxiety situations perceived respectively by the non-English major students and their teachers in their English classrooms.

Table 6.8 Comparison and contrast between non-English majors and their teachers regarding the situations of anxiety

Non-English Major	Student	✓/×	Teacher
(Sub-) Themes	1. Exposure in class		1. Exposure in class
	a. Spontaneous speaking in class	✓	a. Spontaneous speaking in class
	b. Speaking on stage	✓	b. Speaking on stage
	c. Awareness of oral performance problems	✓	c. Awareness of oral performance problems
	2. Learning in class: unpredictability		2. Learning in class: unpredictability
	a. Unexpected incidents	✓	a. Unexpected incidents
	b. Unknown consequences/results	✓	b. Unknown consequences/results

	3. Learning English in a formal classroom		
	a. English class in general	×	
	b. English tests	×	
	c. Working as a group	×	
	d. Problems of absorbing knowledge	×	

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the perceived anxious situations, and reported the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

The teachers discovered that their students were quite sensitive to speaking related activities, especially being called on to speak, volunteering answers, and making a presentation on stage. These were all also reported by the student participants. Teacher NET 06 stated that 'you can only see if they are anxious when they are speaking... [, but] are relatively unable to see it when doing the others [listening, reading, and writing]'. That is, speaking, compared with the other skills, is such an overt performance that the instructors can relatively easily detect the manifestation of anxiety in their students.

As for the unpredictable situations, one teacher revealed students' dislike of changes outside the normal class routine, but the students' reference to unexpected incident further included their sudden loss of ability to address the current situation. I would argue that the teachers' activities or lessons were suitable for their students' level of

learning. It is, however, the students themselves who should be responsible for their anxiety as they were still able to deal with the situation to some extent. The teachers noticed that their students were fearful of failing the course or giving poor performances, which was shared by the student participants. A teacher (NET04) thought that their concerns were based on such issues as 'this is a four/five credit course' and/or 'they actually did not study'.

Although the students' last theme did not appear in the teachers' column, 'English tests' and 'working as a group' were both generated from the teachers' data. Concerning the latter, three students (one advanced student and two elementary ones) spoke of speaking in group discussions and cooperating with another peer in a writing task. Only one teacher (teaching an advanced class), however, revealed working in groups for a task in general. That is, the teachers might underestimate the possibility of learning anxiety occurring in the above situation.

Furthermore, the students felt annoyed about acquiring English properties like vocabulary and grammar. Their instructors should, therefore, share some learning strategies with them. The students also expressed negative feelings about their class, which was not raised by the teachers. As the teachers might not know about students' behavior in other classes, they presumably had no way to make a comparison. Yet, the students could suggest their general perceptions after comparing their feelings in the English class with those in other classes. This anxiety is assumed to be a product compiled from various anxious situations in a sense.

### *Sources of anxiety*

The teachers provided various sources of their students' anxiety in class. Although their respective lists of themes did not completely overlap each other, the teachers reported most of the themes generated from the students' data. Therefore, the teachers, as did English majors' teachers, also demonstrated high levels of sensitivity to their students' concerns.

Table 6.9 below compares and contrasts the sources of anxiety revealed respectively by the non-major students and their teachers in their English classrooms.

Table 6.9 Comparison and contrast between non-English majors and their teachers regarding the sources of anxiety

<b>Non-English Major</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>✓/×</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
<b>(Sub-) Themes</b>	1. Inadequate English ability		1. Inadequate English ability
	a. Inadequate speaking ability	✓	a. Inadequate speaking ability
	b. Inadequate listening ability	✓	b. Inadequate listening ability
	c. Unfamiliarity with English language	✓	c. Unfamiliarity with English language
		×	d. Unfamiliarity with classroom activities
		×	e. Do not take responsibility for preparation
	2. Negative self-perception of L2 learning		2. Negative self-perception of L2 learning

	a. Low self-confidence	✓	a. Low self-confidence
	b. Low self-efficacy	✓	b. Low self-efficacy
	a. Comparison with classmates	✓	c. Comparison with classmates
	3. Academic expectations of themselves		3. Concern with peers' judgments
	a. Desire for success	×	a. Afraid of negative reactions—peers
	b. Getting low academic scores	×	b. Afraid of negative reactions—advanced peers
		×	c. Face concerns

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the given sources, and revealed the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

Both groups of participants believed that the limits to their linguistic competence contributed to learner anxiety in certain classroom situations. Among the specific factors provided, the teachers additionally discovered that students' anxiety was also due to their lack of experience in speaking publicly. Nevertheless, the only teacher who said this was teaching English in the highest level class. I suggest that other levels of students probably also have the same problem—even though it was not mentioned—since Taiwanese students are usually trained to listen rather than speak in class.

Students' anxiety was, furthermore, linked to their failing to



prepare themselves for classroom activities either at home or in class. This has also been suggested by other university English teachers in Taiwan (Liu 2012). For example, a teacher (NET04) provided her students with test scripts before a listening test, but some did not even read them so that they were found to be nervous and sighing in the test. Because the students taught were non-English majors, many of them were perhaps uninterested in English itself. The lack of preparation may, thus, be simultaneously considered as a kind of avoidance originating from dislike. In addition, the students and the teachers both agreed that the perceived self could have a significant impact on the students' emotions in class, that is to say, a negative correlation was found between the learner's self and anxiety.

Regarding the discrete themes, the students expressed their desire to perform well and the fear of getting low scores for activities, tasks, and/or tests. In fact, only one teacher related self-expectation ('desire for success') to her students' learning anxiety. However, five students from three different levels of class spoke of either the former or the latter. This seems to indicate the teachers' lack of sensitivity to the fact that certain seemingly positive thoughts could also lead to negative emotions. On the other hand, the teachers thought that their students were sensitive to peers' comments about them or their performances. The students, indeed, also raised the same issue during the interviews, but, as discussed in Section 6.1.2, their level of concern might not have been as great as considered by the teachers. Furthermore, face protection seemed to be relatively less of a concern to the students. That is, the teachers had probably overlooked the

positive influence of ability grouping on their students' concerns.

### *Effects of anxiety*

The teachers performed acute sensitivity to the manifestations of learning anxiety of their students, according to the match between their respective themes generated. Table 6.10 below compares and contrasts the selected effects of anxiety unveiled respectively by the non-English majors and their teachers in their English classrooms.

Table 6.10 Comparison and contrast between non-English majors and their teachers regarding the effects of anxiety

Non-English Major	Student	✓/x	Teacher
(Sub-) Themes	1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance		1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance
	a. Avoidance of classroom activities	✓	a. Avoidance of classroom activities
	b. Classmate avoidance	✓	b. Classmate avoidance
	c. Avoidance of advanced peers	✓	
	d. Teacher avoidance	✓	c. Teacher avoidance
	2. Poor speaking performance		2. Poor speaking performance
	a. Poorly-displayed speech contents	✓	a. Poorly-displayed speech contents
	b. Poor performance in speaking skills	✓	b. Poor performance in speaking skills
	3. Self-disapproval thoughts	x	

	a. Self-deprecating cognition		
	4. Being propelled to work harder	✓	3. Being propelled to work harder

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the effects on the students, and demonstrated the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

Avoidance may be the most apparent reaction to anxiety. When students felt anxious, it was reported that they tried to avoid participating in the activities, especially speaking, and interacting with their peers and/or teacher during the process or in class. The teachers further found such behavior as 'skipping the class', 'sleeping in class', or 'distracting the class' in some anxious students. Due to the negative impact of anxiety on cognitive functioning, it was small wonder that both groups of participants revealed how anxiety ruined learners' performances in speaking and presenting. Moreover, although the teachers did not identify the effect of self-deprecation, two teachers mentioned self-questioning about belonging to a particular group or level of class. This finding was based on their students' behaviors and voices in classroom activities.

Nevertheless, the teachers did not deny the possibility of the positive effects of anxiety. In line with the English majors' teachers' revelations, the non-English majors' ones also pointed out that anxiety made their students not merely more involved in classroom

activities, but also want to improve. Therefore, all the teachers believed that anxiety had both positive and negative effects on learning, and some of them (e.g. NET03 and NET04) also held the view that an appropriate level of anxiety in class made students more attentive during their classroom activities. Furthermore, Teacher NET03 stated that anxiety was inevitable in class as every activity, such as assignment, test, and Q&A, was potentially anxiety-provoking.

#### 6.2.1.3 The teachers' strategies for their students' FLA

In search of relevant literature, there seemed to be no studies specifically on language teachers' coping strategies for their students' FLA. Horwitz (2008: 11) and Oxford and Ehrman (1993: 188) emphasize the importance of teachers' understanding their students' individual differences in order to provide effective instruction. It is arguable that the tactics employed could also serve as an indicator of teachers' sensitivity to students' FLA. Although the issue was a subordinate question here, the table and discussion below may enlighten the understanding of this topic.

Table 6.11 below compares and contrasts the coping strategies for students' anxiety employed respectively by the two groups of teachers in their English classrooms.

Table 6.11 Strategies used respectively by the English majors' teachers and the non majors' ones

Teacher	English majors'	✓/×	Non-English majors'
<b>(Sub-) Themes</b>	1. Establishing a positive relationship		1. Making use of peers' influence
	a. Relationship building	×	a. Peers' support within reach
	b. Maintaining positive classroom atmosphere	×	b. Use of group work
	2. Making students ready for the tasks or challenges		2. Making students ready for the tasks or challenges
	a. Provision of adequate information	✓	a. Provision of adequate information
	b. Giving (more) practice/preparation time	✓	b. Giving (more) practice/preparation time
	3. Trying to inhibit students' negative emotions		3. Trying to inhibit students' negative emotions
	a. opportune support from teacher	✓	a. opportune support from teacher
	b. Individual instruction	✓	b. Individual instruction
	c. Ways of commenting on students' performances	✓	c. Ways of commenting on students' performances
	d. Avoidance of anxiety-provoking factors	✓	d. Avoidance of anxiety-provoking factors
		×	e. Giving easier tests

Note. ✓: same/similar; ×: different

Within this table, I have listed the representative themes and their sub-themes of the tactics used on their students, and demonstrated the results from the comparisons and contrasts between them with the marks—tick (✓: same) and cross (×: different).

The teaching behaviors revealed in the table are common and familiar to teachers in classroom teaching. The strategies used by each group were quite similar to each other. The English majors' teachers (3 out of 5) tried to establish a rapport and relaxed atmosphere at the outset and/or during the class. The latter strategy was also reported to be mostly preferred or used by Ohata's (2005) teacher participants. Although the non-English major teachers also employed those strategies, only two of six teachers gave this information. Broadly speaking, the above tactics dealt with the problems of unfamiliarity and non-belongingness. (The teacher of student ENG08 who raised the issue of unfamiliarity did not mention using the above strategies.)

The non-English majors' teachers did not stop students from obtaining help from their peers when they confronted problems during activities (alone). Group work made help seeking easier for students, and was considered to enhance the activeness of group members. Even though the other group of teachers did not regard the above as coping strategies for anxiety, these were, undoubtedly, also implemented in their classes according to the interviews with the students and teachers. The strategies seem aimed at preventing students from exposure to, for example, ambiguity and losing face. Meanwhile, both groups of students also reported mitigating their

anxiety by gaining support from their peers.

In addition, the teachers of both student groups gave adequate relevant information before (certain) activities started. Once most students had difficulty in doing a task, they instantly demonstrated how to do it (with a more competent student). Furthermore, practice or preparation time was usually given for the coming activities. Nevertheless, one strategy seemed to make students more anxious. The student participants did not like their teachers to come back to them to ask again the question which they had previously failed to answer correctly. According to the teachers (ET01; NET03; NET04), the idea behind this strategy was to calm their students down and give them more time to think about the answer. The reason for their dislike of this strategy is probably because it exposed them publicly and made them confront their concerns again.

Apart from this, both groups of teachers also tried to prevent their students from being distracted by anxiety during their participation in class. They appeared to be thoughtful of whether their students needed help from them and therefore offered help to them when appropriate or necessary. Some teachers (e.g. NET02; NET03; NET07) even showed their concern for the students in need by chatting to them about their problems after class. In order to maintain the students' positive self-perception, the teachers focused on their merits rather than only the problems when giving feedback on their performances.

Moreover, both sets of teachers made classroom activities more flexible, friendly, and negotiable, e.g. students were allowed to select

their own group members (ET04; NET03; NET08). One teacher (NET07) even asked certain students' permission for using their sentences as examples for error discussion in class, which is considered to show respect to her students and protect them from losing face. All this demonstrates the teachers' sophisticated sensitivity to their students' concerns and worries in class. Regarding 'giving easier tests', the teachers of the English majors did not mention using this method, but those of non-majors employed it to encourage the students and show that they were making progress or they still had a chance to compensate for previous poor performance.

#### *Reflections on the strategies employed*

The teachers, apparently, had such acute sensitivity to their students learning emotions in their classes that they could instantly detect their needs and actively give them support. That is, the teachers tried to act as facilitators rather than evaluators in class, and risk-taking was encouraged during the students' participation in the classroom activities. It is, thus, assumed that their teaching approach is quite student-centered.

Moreover, as experienced teachers, they demonstrated how coping strategies were part of their classroom instruction. In other words, certain instructions, arguably speaking, achieved two purposes: teaching and comforting. Most importantly, unlike the students, the teachers seemed inclined to deal with the root causes of students' anxiety in certain classroom situations—'deep tackling', instead of abandoning activities when anxiety occurred. I would argue that this



may explain why the students appeared to attribute their emotional problems to themselves, as mentioned in Section 6.1.2.

### **6.3 Summary**

This chapter provided and discussed the answers to the research questions, with the sections devoted to the answers to the questions. I compared the significant situations, sources, effects of, and coping strategies for anxiety of the two groups of students for research questions 1-4. Another series of comparisons was made between the students and the teachers for question 5. I then discussed the key issues of each aspect of anxiety after each comparison. Chapter 7 summarizes the key findings, discusses the contributions, limitations and implications of this study, and suggests some topics for further research.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

### **7.0 Introduction**

This chapter first provides a summary of the research findings. I then present the contributions and limitations of the study, followed by the implications of the study for tertiary students, teachers, and departments in Taiwan. I conclude by suggesting some additional issues for future research.

### **7.1 Summary of key findings**

Chapter 6 referred back to the aims and discussed the findings of the study in the order of the research questions. To fulfill the aims and answer the questions, the research was conducted with tertiary students and teachers of EFL in Taiwan. Through the adoption of sequential quasi-mixed methods, I made use of the ELCAS to select the most anxious students and interviewed them. However, the teacher participants were only interviewed to detect their sensitivity to students' learning anxiety in the English classroom.

The primary findings of this study can be summarized in the five bullet points below:

- The English major and non-major students were similar to each other in the investigated aspects of anxiety, except for the sources of their anxiety.
- The students reported a number of strategies, but most of these only helped them cope with individual anxious situations, not the root causes of their anxiety.

- The English majors and their teachers had similar perceptions of anxiety in class although the latter revealed less specific situations than the former.
- The similarity was also quite high between the non-English majors' and their teachers' perceptions of their anxiety. These teachers also reported relatively broader contexts than their students.
- Both groups of teachers employed quite diverse strategies for reducing students' anxiety. Their tactics demonstrated their attempts to address problems at their sources.

More precisely, both the student groups experienced anxiety mainly in situations involving them participating in speaking related activities, and when encountering unpredictable incidents. They also had problems with working in groups, but the English majors particularly pointed out the types of group members considered anxiety-provoking. Although the English major and non-major students attributed their own learning anxieties to fairly different factors, they both considered their negative perception of their L2 self as one significant cause. The former also linked their anxiety in class to their serious concerns about peers' judgments, whereas the latter thought that their lack of English competence played another important role in the arousal of their anxiety. When it comes to the effects of anxiety, both groups of students reported trying to avoid classroom activities and (certain) people in their class. They not only had difficulty presenting and speaking in English adequately, but also deprecated and/or questioned themselves about their performance. However, anxiety also benefitted them by making them realize their

inadequacy and motivating them to improve. In order to mitigate their anxiety, they made use of relaxation techniques and tried to gain support from the people around them. Moreover, the English majors tended to prepare for classroom activities, while the non-majors chose to confront their anxiety and solve their problem directly in its context.

Regarding the English major's teachers' perceptions of the students' anxiety, the teachers also observed their fear of speaking English in class and unease about working with (certain) others. Rather than unpredictable situations, they were more sensitive to the students' anxiety in the routines of classroom learning like taking tests and time-limited preparation. In line with the students' responses, the teachers stated that their anxiety could be attributed mainly to their worries about negative evaluation from peers and low self-perception as L2 learners. When the students feel anxious, the teachers discovered some changes in them. Specifically, they avoided participating in activities and interacting with others in class. Apart from poor speaking performance, the teachers further found some behaviors not mentioned by the students, such as 'consulting the teacher about their work' and 'perceiving unfair treatment'. Meanwhile, anxiety was considered to make the students attentive to their preparation for and participation in activities. Of course, the positive effect reported by the students was also realized by the teachers. The teachers' strategies for coping with students' anxiety were carried out through the class. They tended to encourage the building of positive relationships between different individuals and/or a pleasant learning atmosphere in class. They also attempted to prepare their students for

activities or tasks by providing them with the relevant information and giving them time to practice beforehand. Moreover, they tried to be caring and encouraging during activities to inhibit their students' negative emotions.

As regards the non-English major's teachers' perceptions of the students' anxiety, the teachers revealed the same anxious situations as the students, i.e. speaking related activities and unpredictable incidents. In line with the non-majors' perception of the sources of their anxiety, the teachers indicated that poor English ability and low self-perception were two significant contributors to their anxiety in the classroom. Concerns about peers' judgments were considered to be another factor even though this was not emphasized by the students. Influenced by anxiety, the students, according to the teachers, adopted avoidance behavior towards activities, peers, and/or the teacher. The teachers also found the students unable to perform properly in terms of the content of spoken utterances as well as general speaking skills. The students were also perceived to devote themselves to classroom activities and self-improvement. Like the English majors' teachers, the non-English majors' teachers gave their students guidance before or during activities when necessary. Practice/preparation time was allowed for the coming tasks. They also tried to impress upon their students that they were caring and supportive in class, especially during activities. Additionally, the teachers created an environment where peers could instantly help each other if they encountered difficulties in completing activities. All these were considered as alleviation strategies for learner anxiety.

## **7.2 Contributions of the study**

The results of the investigations of the five research questions make several contributions to the fields of language learner affect and emotions, especially foreign language anxiety itself, and EFL teaching and learning, in particular, at tertiary level in Taiwan. The specific contributions are outlined below.

First, the adoption of interviews as a method in this study helped not only contextualize the different aspects of learner anxiety, which is rarely achieved in quantitative FLA research, but also illustrate the students' and teachers' ability to reflect on their relevant experience of learner emotions in the language classroom context. Of course, their inner thoughts, such as self-deprecation, are easier to detect or understand from interview than observation, for instance.

Second, the scope of this study covers all the dimensions of learner anxiety and different participants' perceptions of them, which is different from most related studies. This provides a comprehensive understanding of language anxiety alone. That is, an overview is presented of knowledge of learner anxiety from the situations, sources, effects, to coping strategies used.

Third, comparing English majors' perceptions with those of non-majors has provided new insights into the similarities and differences between students of distinctive disciplines in learning English as a foreign language, in particular their emotional responses in class. These could be especially important for their teachers as they may be assigned to teach both types of students in the same semester. By understanding their respective characteristics, their instructors can

opportunistically adjust their class instruction if necessary.

Fourth, comparing students' perceptions with those of teachers has provided an understanding of how well the latter know about the former in the context of learner emotions. The responses from the teacher participants also bridge the existing gap in the FLA literature concerning language teachers' perceptions of the various aspects of learner anxiety. According to the study results, Taiwanese tertiary teachers have demonstrated their sensitivity to students' emotional responses to learning in the English classroom.

Fifth, almost all of the FLA studies concentrate on only one or two dimensions of anxiety, and simply report the themes generated from the data collected. In contrast, this study not merely investigated and discussed all the aspects of anxiety, but also pointed out the more significant themes of individual phases. This can provide university learners and teachers in Taiwan with solid ideas about what they should place more emphasis on while addressing or discussing learner anxiety.

Sixth, there were, broadly speaking, no significant differences between the coping strategies revealed in this study and other studies. Nevertheless, this study attempted to carry out a more sophisticated categorization of the coping tactics used by the student participants. It also found that most tactics are employed to tackle the anxious situations themselves rather than the sources of anxiety, which has not been discussed in the literature to my knowledge. Additionally, the students' problem-preventing/-solving strategies have not been mentioned in the similar projects cited.

Seventh, although several projects have investigated how language learners cope with their anxiety in class, there is no literature on whether or how teachers deal with students' anxiety in the language classroom. This study makes the first attempt to explore this issue, and discovered that the strategies employed are not merely part of the teachers' instruction practices, but they also try to tackle the sources of their students' anxiety.

Eighth, this research has revealed that working in groups can be one of the anxious situations in the classroom. The perceived sources of this anxiety are also stated at the same time. Although only some student and teacher participants reported and few studies had mentioned this situation, this research broadens the potential contexts of anxiety in language learning. The possible sources associated with this anxiety are discussed here for the first time.

Ninth, whether anxiety is debilitating or facilitating is normally determined by anxious learners' language performance. The findings of this study, nevertheless, expand the definition of facilitating anxiety by including the positive effects of anxiety on learner affect during classroom learning.

### **7.3 Limitations of the study**

Even though the data collected provide answers to the research questions and some new insights into foreign language anxiety, there are still several limitations to this research. Fure major restrictions are discussed below.



First, some of the student interviewees were not ranked within the top ten most anxious students. With the help of the questionnaire, I was informed of the subjects' degrees of anxiety and found out who were the ten most anxious students. I then contacted these students in person to invite them for a follow-up interview, but it was inevitable that some of them rejected my invitation due to personal reasons. Therefore, what I could do was to contact the next persons in rank in order to meet my research design. This difficulty did not cause concerns about the non-English majors' degrees of anxiety because these were still close to 4 or above, which shows high anxiety. In contrast, as the highest anxiety level among the English majors' was 4.03, the distribution of the students' anxiety levels fell between 3 and 4. These learners might be considered not anxious enough to provide abundant and representative information. However, in line with the data generated from the non-majors' interviews, the data from the majors provided a positive contribution to answering the research questions.

Second, the average duration of students' interviews lasted approximately one hour and forty minutes, which was much longer than the planned length—one hour. This problem could be attributed to one main and one minor factors : (1) there were too many warm-up and indirectly research-question-relevant enquiries before the main body of interview questions; (2) Some students had difficulty understanding and answering the question about anxious learners' perceptions of themselves mainly because 'perception of self' in Mandarin (自我感知/自我的感覺與認知) is not easy to express in spoken

Chinese, therefore I spent some time explaining it. Although the time spent on the warm-up questions was no longer than that on the main ones, this might have impacted on the interviewees' thinking about the later questions due to, for instance, tiredness or loss of attention. However, from the data collected and the findings presented, it is believed that the students still managed to share with me as many experiences as they could in response to the main questions. It is also worth noting that the students provided some useful information for the answers to the research questions during the warm-up. Nevertheless, I suggest (1) that the time spent on and the number of warm-up questions should be decreased and (2) that the length of an interview should be kept within an hour to prevent the above problem from happening, partly because a session usually lasts between 50 and 60 minutes at universities in Taiwan, so that is what students are used to.

Third, only 318 out of 649 returned questionnaires were considered valid on the basis of the selection criteria. Three possible reasons for this result could be as follows: (1) I should have done the distribution work myself to encourage the students to respond. However, due to the constraints discussed in Section 3.3.5, I was unable to administer all the questionnaires in person. Nevertheless, I did my best to have the student participants informed of my intentions if the teacher was the distributor, (2) there were too many questions in the questionnaire. This might have influenced their attitude when responding. Nonetheless, in order to make the items reflect tertiary learners' classroom experiences, I still decided to expand the number

of items in the scale, and (3) the research topic or the questionnaire did not successfully arouse the interest of some students, therefore they did not fill in the scale carefully. Considering the number of target interviewees required, the number of valid questionnaires was large enough. Nevertheless, the population density at each anxiety level may have increased if more valid responses had been received. Arguably, this can ensure that there are enough human resources when some people reject the invitation to an interview.

Fourth, the teacher interviewees were basically those who taught the student interviewees. Of course, rejection is sometimes inevitable during recruitment. As there were many classes at each level for non-major students, it was easier to find another teacher if my invitation to participate was not accepted. However, considering the problems in recruiting English majors' teachers, I decided to recruit teachers who had taught English skills to English majors before to make the number of English-majors' teacher interviewees close to that of non-majors'. Although some did not teach the current students, it seems from the results that students enrolling in different academic years were perceived to share similar learning behaviors.

#### **7.4 Implications of the study**

Several implications drawn from this study are presented in the following sub-sections. These sections provide different suggestions respectively for tertiary students and teachers of EFL and the department responsible for students' English courses.

#### 7.4.1 What should Taiwanese tertiary learners of English do to cope with their anxiety?

This study has shown the pervasiveness of anxiety related issues in the language classroom. It, therefore, becomes essential for learners to recognize the influence of emotions, especially negative ones, on their learning although the states are situation-specific. In other words, they need to be fully aware of the potential existence of them in every part of the process. As long as they can understand and take them seriously, they can learn how to manipulate and use them to improve the quality of their learning.

As far as anxiety is concerned, students should be alert in class to and bear in mind what causes their anxiety and how anxiety influences their learning in the classroom. There is no doubt that the tertiary students had a good perception of their learning emotions in class, according to the interview responses. It is, nevertheless, even more critical that they demonstrate acute consciousness of the relevant issues during class, therefore they can be more prepared for the possibility of encountering anxiety. This can help them think in advance about feasible solutions to potential problems. They may try to keep a weekly journal to record and reflect on their learning conditions, especially emotional fluctuations, in the class, which can reinforce their awareness and understanding of them. Of course, if they have difficulty getting themselves out of predicaments, they should actively consult their teachers about their difficulties as the latter, especially the non-native teachers, are advanced, experienced language learners themselves.

With the sources of their anxiety in mind, students could develop coping strategies for anxiety which directly tackle the causes rather than specific situations. Considering the themes specific to strategies, the participants apparently only tended to deal with the feelings when they arose and anxious situations. This may be one reason why they still felt quite anxious in classroom situations. In order to effectively deal with anxiety, tertiary learners need to have a clear insight into the root causes of their anxiety, and then think of techniques which can effectively remove the sources or at least mitigate them to some extent. Logically speaking, one source of anxiety can trigger a learner's anxiety in various classroom activities or situations or several sources provoke a similar response in one situation. That is, if students can successfully address the root causes, it is not difficult to imagine that their learning in different situations could be quite emotionally positive.

The participants also reported that (facilitating) anxiety made them realize their drawbacks in learning and want to make improvements. When students have the same anxiety as the above, they should think of this kind of anxiety as excitement or hope as this emotion directly informs them of what they can do to improve. It is then necessary for them to note down the disadvantages, analyze the problems, take proper action, and evaluate the outcomes. If they have tried and made no successful attempt with these methods, they should instantly discuss with their teachers alternative approaches to adopt for their learning and problems. They can also book a consultation for their concerns with the language center of the

university. More importantly, they should try to enhance and maintain their positive affect, i.e. eagerness to improve, by setting doable goals and rewarding their efforts at each stage of the process illustrated above.

The participants were mostly identified as low-level learners of English, and they had negative perceptions of themselves in the L2 learning. Considering their comparing themselves with others in language ability, other-directed self, and potential herding behaviors, the cohorts should first face and recognize the gap between themselves and others in English competence in a positive manner. Second, they need to have a good look at what makes them different in ability. Third, it is critical that they do not expect themselves to perform as well as the more advanced peers. More anxiety may otherwise be created if they find it difficult to achieve. Fourth, they should evaluate their performance in accordance with their own English competence, which could build up the basis of the positive self. Fifth, an attempt should be then made to improve their English ability step by step. By doing this, they can compare themselves with earlier selves and so detect their progress relatively easily. This would help them gradually establish their self-confidence and –efficacy.

#### 7.4.2 What else can Taiwanese tertiary teachers do to reduce their student's anxiety?

From the discussion of the teacher participants' coping strategies for their students' anxiety, it is apparent that the former were quite aware of the (potential) difficulties which the students might

encounter in the language class, and tried to integrate support into their teaching. Nevertheless, learners' inner thoughts like learning beliefs and so-called unexpected incidents are still hardly knowable if students do not speak of them. In order to enhance their understanding of learner anxiety, it is suggested that tertiary teachers of English discuss the relevant issues with their students in class. The focus of the topic does not necessarily limit itself to learning anxiety, but learner affect and emotions in general, since they undoubtedly influence one another as discussed in Chapter 2. Open discussion serves several purposes: (1) teachers can examine or reinforce their sensitivity to students' needs, (2) students' attention can be drawn to the importance of affect and emotions in language learning, (3) students in class can understand that certain problems are possibly shared by many others, (4) students and the teacher can discuss together how positive states can be maintained and negative ones avoided, and (5) teachers give the impression of their willingness to listen to and try to understand their students. This not only develops a rapport between students and the teacher, but also gives the teacher the chance to evaluate their instructions and make adjustments if necessary.

The teacher can also ask or encourage their students to form a study group involving those who are capable to help the others and those who need help. Due to the student participants' concerns about advanced and unfamiliar peers' views of them, the mechanism of study groups, with its nature of supply and demand, can promote positive interactions and mutual understanding between the

facilitators and the students in need. This way of learning may shorten the distance between the more competent and less competent students, and further mitigate the latter's worries. The former can also have the chance to empathize with the latter. Of course, the less proficient learners can improve their English ability with facilitation. Facilitators can also become aware of their misconceptions when they attempt to explain to others.

Working in groups was revealed to be one of the anxious situations according to some of the student and teacher participants. This problem was mainly linked with the fact that it was the teacher who divided students into groups. The most straightforward solution is for the teacher to let the students choose their own group members. If the teacher decides to have their students grouped, the former may better inform the latter of the purpose for their doing this (see NET08 in Section 6.2.4.1) and take into account such issues as who can or should be grouped together, at what point it is appropriate for the teacher to do the grouping, and how many people there should be in each group. Although group composition is generally hardly perfect, the above questions may provide the teacher with some ideas of how to form a well-functioning group.

Students in this study did not like the teacher to call on them again to answer the same question if they failed to answer the first time. It may be better to invite the less anxious, but more capable, students to respond to the question. Afterwards, the teacher can ask the whole class whether there is anyone who still has a problem with the question. Teachers should also express their willingness to help in



private if those with difficulty do not want to consult them in class. The teacher can ask the student failing to answer whether he/she now understands the question and answer and to demonstrate if s/he does. This not only keeps the student inconspicuous, but also confirms that they have learnt the knowledge.

In addition, the teacher can create opportunities for students to encourage one another by asking or inviting them to make positive comments on their peers' performance in class. Although evaluation is inevitable in the language classroom, feedback does not always have to be criticism. Because students do value peers' views of them, the act of encouragement may boost their self-confidence and self-efficacy in those short of these, and mitigate certain students' concerns about others' negative judgments.

#### 7.4.3 What can the academic unit in charge of students' English course do to alleviate their learning anxiety?

The aims of this study did not consider the influence of ability grouping on learner anxiety, but it is arguable that placement made a difference to the sources of anxiety of the non-English major students. Specifically, they did not have serious concerns about their peers' negative judgments of them due to the similarity between them and their peers in English ability. Although the mechanism cannot eliminate all the causes of anxiety, the main concerns left are more associated with learners' competence. This can only be improved by their further efforts at learning and practicing. Furthermore, Liu's (2008) and Su's (2010) students also expressed the benefits brought

by ability grouping to their learning affect and emotions in class. Therefore, if the unit does not apply ability grouping in their English courses, they should plan to put it into practice from now on. When they group students into different class levels, they should particularly ensure that the English proficiencies of students within a classroom are as similar as possible. Otherwise, the lower ability students are still likely to worry about others', e.g. the superior ones' reactions.

## **7.5 Suggestions for future research**

In the light of the limitations and findings above, this section proposes some recommendations for future investigations in the avenue of language learner emotions, particularly FLA.

### *Solidification of the study results*

As this study is ground-breaking in comparing the perceptions of language anxiety of two different groups of people, there is a great need to carry out the same or similar investigations to support the discoveries of this study. This is essential when it comes to defining the gap between students' and teachers' perceptions of learning anxiety, considering Oxford and Ehrman's (1993: 188) and Horwitz's (2008: 11) emphasis on the importance of teachers' sound understanding of their students.

### *Prior learning experiences and FLA*

Further research on sources of anxiety should not only focus on the classroom context, but also enquire into the situation of learners'

prior learning and life experiences, i.e. how these are related to the sources of and further trigger anxiety in classroom situations. As tertiary learners in Taiwan have been learning English since primary school, some of their concerns were apparently associated with their learning culture and history.

#### *Learning anxiety in group work*

With its merits, collaborative learning is quite a common way of learning in the language classroom. Nevertheless, some of the students and teachers reported working in groups as one of the anxious situations, the main causes of which were also mentioned in the interviews. As this study does not focus on the topic of cooperative learning and this finding is quite surprising, future studies should place their focus on the context of group work and look into the interplay between learner anxiety and working as a group, especially the aspects of sources, effects of, and coping strategies for anxiety.

#### *Learner's learning habit and FLA*

Learning habit was considered to be one of the sources of anxiety. Notwithstanding its similarity to belief, few relevant studies have discussed the connection between this learner characteristic (habits) and learner anxiety itself. Therefore, its formation and relationship to anxiety may be two promising questions to be addressed in the future.

### *Ability grouping (placement) and FLA*

The English majors were virtually much more concerned about peers' judgments and keen to compare with their peers in English competence than the non-majors. It appears that whether peers' English proficiencies are similar plays a significant role in the discrepancies above. Indeed, ability grouping was implemented in the non-majors' English class rather than the majors'. Although some studies revealed their participants' positive affect and emotions towards ability grouping, their aim was not to explore the interaction between anxiety and ability grouping. Therefore, more research is needed to better understand these issues as to why and how they interact.

### *Chinese culture and FLA*

The self and face threats are apparently two factors generally considered to impact on learners' emotions in classroom learning. These two contributors were also reported by both the student and teacher participants. Due to the culture in which the participants are immersed—the other-directed self and face protection, there is no doubt that the learners' sensitivity must be strengthened to others' evaluations on them. It could be, therefore, worth investigating how the above culture affects Taiwanese students' language learning both inside and outside the classroom.

### *Anxiety-bearing ability*

Facilitating anxiety is argued to exist, but still not solidly defined, in language learning. A student and a teacher participants suggested that the focus may be shifted to learners themselves when debilitating and facilitating anxieties are discussed. That is, the approach to this issue can be taken from the perspective of an individual's ability to bear anxiety. How to evaluate individual anxiety-bearing ability is, thus, another question to be studied.

### *The effectiveness of coping strategies for anxiety*

The students provided a number of coping tactics for their anxiety in class. Kando and Yang (2004), nevertheless, revealed that the frequencies of the reported strategies did not significantly correlate with the degrees of FLA. Additional research is, therefore, necessary to determine with certainty the effectiveness of the individual coping strategies. This question is also applied to the teachers' strategies for dealing with students' anxiety. By knowing their effectiveness, the students and the teachers can decide whether there is a need to develop other helpful tactics.

### *Which one, major or ability, matters more in FLA?*

The data from the respective major students demonstrated a high degree of similarity to each other in different aspects of anxiety. The participants were the most anxious students in their respective majors, and most of them were classified as elementary level learners. These seem to indicate that anxiety level and English competence, rather

than being an English major or not, play relatively significant roles in the issues of learner anxiety. Future research is apparently needed to continue this investigation.

## **7.6 Lessons learnt**

According to my prior experience in the EFL class, it seemed to me that the teachers usually only raised such issues as learner motivation and/or strategy use, but anxiety or other emotional states, when some students learnt or did not learn the language well. I, therefore, had never considered how learning emotions can pervasively influence a learner's language development before reviewing the literature and conducting this research.

During my data collection, I doubted my ability to collect the target amounts of data as I had no experience of conducting a big project, but the completion suggested that I should have been more confident in myself. I was also once concerned whether my participants were sensitive enough to share with me the details of what they had (emotionally) experienced when in the class as their, especially the students', awareness of it might not be raised enough. Nevertheless, the data generated demonstrated that the students and teachers were able to provide me with such detailed descriptions of their (emotional) experiences in learning and teaching. Moreover, data analysis is never an easy and simple task, but, through the process, I found myself to have the potential for coping with details and interpreting discoveries.

From the findings of this study, learner anxiety itself is,

undoubtedly, a complicated construct, and its impact on language learning is as significant as that of other types of affect. Importantly, the teacher participants' acute sensitivity makes me rethink the controversial issue that there is normally a gap in the teacher's understanding of their students. It was also surprising that the sources of anxiety are multifarious and that the teacher did not appear to be the main stressor, considering their evaluative role in the context. Thus, I would like to suggest again that EFL teachers should discuss the related issues with their students to equip them with the ability to address their own negative learning emotions.

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## Appendix 1

### Participation consent form (questionnaire)

**Project Title:** Leaner Anxiety and EFL Learning: A Study of Tertiary Students' and Teachers' Perceptions in Taiwan

**Researcher's Name:** Chieh-Hsiang Chuang

**Supervisors' names:** Dr. Barbara Sinclair & Dr. Max Biddulph

- I have read the Research Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that questionnaire data will be securely stored in forms of hard and electronic copies of tables and figures. All information collected through questionnaires will only be accessed and viewed by the researcher, and his supervisors if requested, and remain strictly confidential.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher and supervisors if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvements in the research

**Signed:** ..... **(research participant)**

**Print Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

#### **Contact Details**

**Researcher:** Chieh-Hsiang Chuang (0911-12xxxx;  
ttxcc20@nottingham.ac.uk)

**Supervisors:** Dr. Barbara Sinclair ([barbara.sinclair@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:barbara.sinclair@nottingham.ac.uk))  
Dr. Max Biddulph ([max.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:max.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk))

**School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:**  
[educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix 2

### English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

To whom it may concern

I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, UK. I am now conducting research on Taiwanese university students' English learning anxiety in the formal instruction context. This study intends to answer the questions about the students' sources of, effects of and coping tactics for English learning anxiety in their English classrooms. As the very start of this research, this questionnaire plays a very important role, especially in finding out the causes and levels of the students' anxiety in their English classrooms. Hence, I need your help in order to complete part of my research. Your participation is voluntary in nature. Yet, I would like to encourage you to participate in this research since, through this process, you may learn more about your own English learning. Your responses will help make this research more complete and valid.

Thanks for your time and participation

Researcher: Chieh-Hsiang Chuang  
Email 1: ttxcc20@nottingham.ac.uk  
Email 2: home0807@gmail.com  
Date: 12/2011



### **Reminders:**

- (1) Your responses here should be based on your experiences in the first and second year **General English** courses.
- (2) You will be expected to provide your background information, responses to the statements, and contact information.
- (3) There will be 17 questions asking about your background information. Please tick/circle/write where appropriate.
- (4) You will then need to go through 60 statements in total and respond to them by choosing a specific number from 1 (Not At All) to 5 (Extremely).
- (5) It should take you approximately 25 minutes to complete this questionnaire.
- (6) Your every response will have an influence on the result. Therefore, please make sure you have responded to each statement before you hand in the questionnaire.
- (7) Your contact information will be used by the researcher only and kept confidential. Importantly, I would be grateful if you could leave your phone number or e-mail so that I may contact you for a possible interview.
- (8) Finally, please make sure you read the attached information sheet and sign the attached consent form if you agree to take part.

***Thank you. Please turn to the next page and respond to the questions and statements. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.***

## Part 1: Background Information

*(Please tick /circle/write where appropriate.)*

1. What gender are you?     ☐ Male            ☐ Female
2. Which department are you studying in?.....
3. Which group are you in now for your English course? .....
4. Have you ever visited an English-speaking country?  
(including travelling and study tour)  
☐ Yes, for how long?.....     ☐ No
5. Have you ever studied in an English-speaking country?  
☐ Yes, for how long?.....     ☐ No
6. Have you ever been taught by native-speaking English teachers?  
☐ Yes, for how long?.....     ☐ No
7. What average score would you expect to get for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year English course?  
☐ Below 60    ☐ 61~70    ☐ 71~80    ☐ 81~90  
☐ 91 and above
8. What is your favorite activity format in the English classroom?  
☐ Work independently    ☐ Work in pairs  
☐ Work in small groups    ☐ Work with the whole class
9. How long have you been learning English so far?.....years
10. How much time do you spend in the self-access English learning centre in a typical week? .....hours
11. How much time do you spend practising English after school in a typical week? .....hours

**Questions from 12 to 17 are presented on the next page.**

***Please continue to complete this part.***

### 1.1 Attitude towards English Learning Conditions

(Please tick where appropriate.)

Agreement Level Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
12. I feel confident in my English ability.					
13. I have the aptitude for learning English.					
14. I care about almost every mistake I make when using English.					
15. I have the ability to perform most activities in my English class well.					
16. My English ability is, generally speaking, better than my classmates.					
17. I would prefer to listen rather than speak in my English class.					

***Please turn to the next page for Part 2.***

**Part 2: Anxiety-provoking situations in your college English classroom** *(Please tick where appropriate.)*

Anxiety Levels Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
1. I feel unsure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.					
2. I worry about making mistakes in English class.					
3. I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English class.					
4. It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in the English class.					
5. I get tense and nervous when I have to discuss things in English within a group.					
6. I feel nervous when I need to speak to my classmates in English.					

Anxiety Levels Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
7. I feel anxious when my classmates speak to me in English.					
8. I am at ease during tests in my English class.					
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.					
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.					
11. In English class, I get nervous when I suddenly forget things I know.					
12. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.					
13. I feel at ease speaking English with native speakers.					
14. I get upset when I do not get what the teacher is correcting.					

Anxiety Levels  Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
15. Even If I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it.					
16. I feel like going to my English class.					
17. I feel confident when I speak in my English class.					
18. I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.					
19. I feel tense when I am called on in my English class.					
20. The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.					
21. I feel nervous when I speak to my teacher in English.					
22. I feel stressed When "only English" is allowed in the classroom.					

Anxiety Levels Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
23. I feel self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.					
24. My English class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.					
25. I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.					
26. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.					
27. I feel sure and relaxed when I am on my way to English class.					
28. I get nervous when I do not understand every word my English teacher says.					
29. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.					

Anxiety Levels Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
30. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.					
31. I feel comfortable around native speakers of English.					
32. I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions for which I have not prepared in advance.					
33. I feel concerned that I do not make progress on my test results.					
34. It makes me uncomfortable whenever my English teacher corrects my mistakes.					
35. Even if I do not fully understand my teacher in the English class, I feel at ease about it.					



Anxiety Levels Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
36. I feel tense when I take a listening test with various accents presented.					
37. I worry about how my teacher will treat me when I do not understand my teacher's question and so give a wrong answer.					
38. I feel excited when I take an oral test through role play.					
39. I feel anxious when I come across unfamiliar English vocabulary in my English test.					
40. I look forward to attending every English class.					
41. I feel nervous when my teacher speaks to me in English.					

Anxiety Levels  Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
42. I feel tense when students are randomly called on to answer questions.					
43. I feel ashamed when my speaking is not fluent enough.					
44. I feel confident of understanding my teacher's instructions in English.					
45. I am afraid others will disapprove of me when I do not do well in an English test.					
46. I feel nervous when I make mistakes in English class.					
47. I feel tense when the listening test is played once only					

Anxiety Levels Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
48. I feel comfortable when a native speaker of English comes to talk to me.					
49. I feel stressed when I take an oral test that requires spontaneous speech.					
50. I am afraid that I cannot finish my English test in time.					
51. I am afraid others will laugh at me whenever I speak English.					
52. I am afraid my teacher will pick on me when I do not pronounce English well.					
53. I start to panic when I cannot follow the pace of a listening test.					
54. I am confident I can understand what people say in English to me.					

Anxiety Levels  Anxiety Situations	1 Not At All	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extremely
55. I get tense whenever I take an English test.					
56. I feel calm when I respond to my teacher's questions in English.					
57. I feel anxious when there are various types of questions in a listening test.					
58. I worry about what the other members think of me when I speak in a group discussion.					
59. I feel anxious when I have to immediately talk about the reading I have just finished.					
60. I am afraid my classmates will have a negative impression of me when I do not pronounce English well.					

***Please turn to the next page for Part 3.***

### **Part 3: Contact Information**

1. Last name: ..... (*Chinese/English*)

Surname: .....

2. Class: .....

3. Email: .....

Tel:.....(*Either email or phone number is fine.*)

## (Mandarin)

各位親愛的學弟妹好

我是目前就讀於英國諾丁漢大學教育學院的博士研究生。我正針對台灣大學生在正式英語課堂環境中所產生的學習焦慮進行研究。這項研究試圖對台灣大學生在他/她們英語課堂中所產生之英語學習焦慮的來源、影響與對其處理方式等問題進行探究。這份問卷，作為這項研究的開端，扮演著非常重要的角色，特別是在了解台灣大學生在英語課堂中焦慮的情境與其焦慮的程度。因此，為了完成我部分的研究，我非常需要您的協助。參與填寫此份問卷完全採自願制。然而，在這裡，我想要鼓勵您參與這項研究，因為透過這次的參與，您將有機會更加了解自己英語學習的過程。您的寶貴意見將使這次的研究更加完整與有效。

感謝您的時間與參與

研究者：莊傑翔

信箱 1：ttxcc20@nottingham.ac.uk

信箱 2：home0807@gmail.com

日期：2011 年 12 月

**作答提示：**

- (1) 請依據您從大一到目前上一般英文(聽、說、讀、寫)課程的經驗來對問卷裡的題目進行作答。
- (2) 在填寫問卷的過程中，您將遇到以下三種題型：個人背景資料、學習情境焦慮程度、聯絡資料。
- (3) 在個人背景資料的部分，您將有十七道題需要完成。屆時，請在適當的地方打勾或寫下您的答案。
- (4) 接下來，您將經歷六十道題。您將對每一題的學習情境做『焦慮程度』的選擇，1：『一點也不』、2：『有一點』、3：『普通』、4：『非常』、5：『極度』。
- (5) 這份問卷將花上您大約 25 分鐘左右的時間填寫。
- (6) 您的每一個答覆都將對問卷結果產生影響。因此，在您繳交問卷前，請再一次確認您已回答問卷裡的每一道題。
- (7) 您的聯絡資料將只被此研究的研究者使用並且受到保密。更重要地，我將會很感謝您，如果您能夠留下您的電話或電子信箱讓我以後能夠方便聯絡到您來參與未來可能的面談。
- (8) 最後，請務必確定已閱讀過研究簡介。如果您同意參與此研究，也請您務必確認已簽署同意書。

**感謝您。現在，您可以翻到下一頁開始進行問卷填寫。如果您在填寫過中，有任何問題，請不要客氣並隨時發問或與我聯絡。**

## 第一部分：

### 1.1 背景資料 (請在適當的地方打勾或寫下您的答案)

1. 請問您的性別是： ☐ 男性 ☐ 女性
2. 請問您目前就讀的科系是： \_\_\_\_\_
3. 請問您目前『大二英文(聽/說/讀/寫)』課程的組別是：  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. 請問您是否曾到過英語系國家？(包括旅遊、遊學、居住)  
☐ 是，多久？\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 否
5. 請問您是否曾在英語系國家求學？  
☐ 是，多久？\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 否
6. 請問您是否上過外籍英語教師的課？  
☐ 是，多久？\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 否
7. 請問您預期您大二英文課程(聽/說/讀/寫)的學年平均會獲得幾分？  
☐ 60 分或以下 ☐ 61~70 分 ☐ 71~80 分 ☐ 81~90 分 ☐ 91 分或以上
8. 在英語課堂中，請問您最喜歡的課堂活動模式是？  
☐ 一個人 ☐ 兩人一組 ☐ 三人以上小組 ☐ 全班一起
9. 截至目前為止，請問您已學過幾年英文？ \_\_\_\_\_ 年
10. 請問您花多少時間在英語自學(診斷)中心學習？一個禮拜平均 \_\_\_\_\_ 小時
11. 請問您放學後花多少時間練習英文？一個禮拜平均 \_\_\_\_\_ 小時

### 1.2 英語學習狀況之態度 (請在適當的地方打勾)

1=非常不同意; 2=不同意; 3=沒意見; 4=同意; 5=非常同意

	1	2	3	4	5
12. 我對自己的英文能力有信心。					
13. 我有學英文的資質。					
14. 使用英文時，我會介意幾乎每一個我犯的錯誤。					
15. 我能夠在英語課堂大部分的活動中表現得不錯。					
16. 總的來說，我的英文能力比班上的同學好。					
17. 上英文課時，我傾向於聆聽而不是開口發言。					



第二部分：大學英語課堂學習情境之焦慮程度（請在適當的地方打勾）

<div>焦慮程度</div> <div>英語課堂情境</div>	一點也不 ①	有一點 ②	普通 ③	非常 ④	極度 ⑤
1. 在英語課堂上發言時，我對自己感到沒信心。					
2. 上英語課時，我擔心犯錯。					
3. 上英語課時，當我知道我即將被老師叫起來發言時，我會發抖。					
4. 當我聽不懂英文老師在說些什麼時，我會感到害怕。					
5. 當我必須用英語在組內討論東西時，我會感到慌張。					
6. 當我需用英語與我的同學說話時，我會感到緊張。					
7. 當我的同學用英語與我說話時，我會感到焦慮。					
8. 在英語課堂上考英文時，我感到輕鬆自在。					
9. 在英語課堂上，當我沒經準備就得發言時，我會開始感到恐慌。					
10. 我會擔憂英語課沒通過的後果。					
11. 在英語課堂上，當我突然忘記我知道的東西時，我會感到緊張。					
12. 要我在英語課堂上主動回答問題，我會感到不好意思。					
13. 跟英語為母語的人士交談時，我感到自在。					
14. 當我不明白我的英語老師在糾正我什麼時，我會感到懊惱。					

<div>焦慮程度</div> <div>英語課堂情境</div>	一點也不	有一點	普通	非常	極度
	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. 上英語課時，即使我已準備得很好，我仍感到焦慮。					
16. 我想去上英語課。					
17. 我在英語課堂上發言的時候感覺有自信。					
18. 我害怕我的英語老師隨時準備糾正我所犯的每一個錯誤。					
19. 在英語課堂上，當我被點到起來發言時，我會感到緊張。					
20. 考英文前，我越複習越感到混亂。					
21. 當我用英語與老師說話時，我會感到緊張。					
22. 當老師規定在英語課堂上只能說英語時，我會感到壓力。					
23. 在全班其他同學面前講英語時，我會感到難為情。					
24. 英語課程進行得太快以至於我擔心會跟不上。					
25. 跟其他科目的課堂比起來，英語課讓我感到緊張。					
26. 在英語課堂上發言時，我會感到緊張與混亂。					
27. 在去學校上英語課的路上，我覺得自在與平靜。					
28. 當我沒聽懂英語老師所講的每一個字時，我會感到焦慮。					
29. 學英文必須學那麼多的文法讓我感到吃不消。					
30. 當我說英文時，我害怕其他的同學會笑我。					

<div>焦慮程度</div> <div>英語課堂情境</div>	一點也不 ①	有一點 ②	普通 ③	非常 ④	極度 ⑤
31. 跟英語母語人士在一起時，我覺得輕鬆自在。					
32. 當英語老師問到我事先沒準備到的問題時，我會感到緊張。					
33. 我會擔憂我的英語考試結果沒有進步。					
34. 每當我的英語老師糾正我的英語錯誤時會讓我感到不自在。					
35. 上英語課時，即使我不完全聽懂我的英文老師講的東西，我仍感到心情自在。					
36. 當英語聽力考試裡出現多種不同的口音時，我會感到慌張。					
37. 當我聽不懂英語老師的問題而給錯答案時，我擔心老師會怎麼對待我。					
38. 當我的口語考試是以『role play』的方式進行時，我覺得興奮。					
39. 當我在英語考試中遇到不熟悉的單字時，我會感到焦慮。					
40. 我期待去上每一節英語課。					
41. 當我的英文老師用英語與我說話時，我會感到緊張。					
42. 當英語老師隨意點同學起來回答問題時，我會感到不知所措。					
43. 當我的英語講得不是很流利時，我會覺得丟臉。					
44. 我感到有信心聽得懂英文老師用全英語上的課。					

<div>焦慮程度</div> <div>英語課堂情境</div>	一點也不 ①	有一點 ②	普通 ③	非常 ④	極度 ⑤
45. 當我英文考試考糟時，我害怕別人會看不起我。					
46. 當我在英語課堂上犯英語錯誤時，我會感到緊張不安。					
47. 當聽力考試的內容只播放一次時，我感到慌張。					
48. 當有一個英語為母語的人士走過來與我說話時，我感到自在。					
49. 當口語考試要求我即席演講時，我會感到壓力大。					
50. 我會害怕我無法在規定的時間內完成英語考試。					
51. 每當我講英語時，我怕別人會嘲笑我。					
52. 當我英語發音沒發好時，我怕我的英語老師會挑剔我。					
53. 當我跟不上聽力考試的速度時，我會開始感到恐慌。					
54. 我有信心聽得懂人家用英語說的話。					
55. 每當我考英文考試時，我會感到焦慮。					
56. 當我用英語回答我的英語老師問的問題時，我感到心情鎮靜。					
57. 當聽力考試裡出現各種不同的題型時，我會感到惶恐。					
58. 當我用英語在小組討論裡發言時，我會擔心其他的組員對我有什麼樣的評價。					
59. 當我必須馬上用英文談論我剛閱讀完的文章時，我會感到焦慮。					
60. 當我英語發音沒有發好時，我害怕我的同學會對我留下不好的印象。					

問卷尚未結束，請翻至下一頁，填寫您的聯絡資料，感恩！

### 第三部分：個人/聯繫資料

**Note.** 請參看上面『提醒 (7)』留下個人資料的原因。之後的面談，將預計在 2012 年的四月間開始進行。如果屆時需要您的協助，我將以您所留下的聯絡方式與您聯繫。謝謝！

1. 姓名：\_\_\_\_\_（中英文皆可）
2. 班級：\_\_\_\_\_（科系班級）
3. 信箱：\_\_\_\_\_
- 手機：\_\_\_\_\_（請依照您的意願留下信箱或手機）
4. 大專英檢成績：\_\_\_\_\_（以最近的一次為依據）

這份問卷到此結束！感謝您的時間與參與。您的答覆，包括個人聯繫料，我將盡我所能做到保密工作，並確保您提供的所有資料只會用在這項中。

### Appendix 3

#### Participation consent from (student interview)

**Project Title:** Learner Anxiety and EFL Learning: A Study of Tertiary Students' and Teachers' Perceptions in Taiwan

**Researcher's Name:** Chieh-Hsiang Chuang

**Supervisors' names:** Dr. Barbara Sinclair & Dr. Max Biddulph

- I have read the Research Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand I will be audio-taped during the interview.
- I understand that interview data will be securely stored in forms of hard and electronic copies of transcripts. All information collected during interviews will only be accessed and viewed by the researcher, and his supervisors if requested, and remain strictly confidential.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher and supervisors if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvements in the research

**Signed:** ..... (research participant)

**Print Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

#### **Contact Details**

**Researcher:** Chieh-Hsiang Chuang (0911-12xxxx;  
txcc20@nottingham.ac.uk)

**Supervisors:** Dr. Barbara Sinclair ([barbara.sinclair@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:barbara.sinclair@nottingham.ac.uk))  
Dr. Max Biddulph ([max.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:max.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk))

**School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:**  
[educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix 4

### Interview protocol (students)

#### **Part 1**

1. How long have you been learning English so far?
2. How do you feel about learning English?
3. What are the differences between learning English in high school and learning English now?
4. What level of English would you expect yourself to achieve at the end of your college life? Why?

#### **Part 2**

1. How would you describe your own behaviours and feelings when in your current English classroom?
2. Who affects you the most emotionally when learning or using English? Why?
  - Your English teacher, your classmates or native speakers?

3. In terms of English Language Proficiency Level, who do you think may get anxious more easily? Why?
4. Do you have any experience of being taught English by native speakers?
  - Yes: could you tell me if there are any differences in being taught by a Taiwanese English teacher and native-speaking English teacher? What? Which one do you like? → 4.1
  - No: 4.1

4.1 To what extent do you think that having had experiences of interacting with native speakers might affect students' emotions when they are faced with various English classroom situations and activities? How?

5. How would you say those reacting to English classroom situations or activities more negatively perceive themselves (in such aspects as English ability, performance, or attitudes toward self)? How do you think such feelings about the self and levels of anxiety are related?

**Would you please read through your questionnaire again?**

**The interview will continue after you have finished.**

6. After reading through your own questionnaire, is there any classroom situation bothering you which you particularly want to share with me and tell me why you have that anxious emotion in that situation? (What would you say about the sources of your anxiety about learning English?)

7. Apart from the situations in the questionnaire, is there any other situation that makes you anxious which you would like to mention in this interview?

8. To what extent do you think the sources of your anxiety might be related to your past learning experience or life experience? How are they related?

9. When you feel anxious in classroom activities, do you feel any changes going on inside or outside your body?

- How about your learning achievement?

- How about your language use

(e.g. content/structure/completeness)?

- How about your interactions with your classmates or teachers or the environment?

- How about your perception/concept of self in learning English?

- Is there still any other effect you particularly want to share with me?

10. When you feel anxious in the learning context, do you do anything to make yourself feel better? (*You may explain this Q by referring to your questionnaire.*)

Yes— What? Why? Where does this strategy come from? How effective is it?

No— Why?

11. Overall, how do you see the atmosphere of your English classroom? To what extent do you think it should change? How? Why?



**Part3**

12. This almost the end of our interview. We have discussed some relevant issues to your anxiety about learning English in your classroom. Before I turn off my recorder, is there anything we've missed that you would like to talk about?

## Appendix 5

### Participation consent form (teacher interview)

**Project Title:** Learner anxiety and EFL Learning: A Study of Tertiary  
Students' and Teachers' Perceptions in Taiwan

**Researcher's Name:** Chieh-Hsiang Chuang

**Supervisors' names:** Dr. Barbara Sinclair & Dr. Max Biddulph

- I have read the Research Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand I will be audio-taped during the interview.
- I understand that interview data will be securely stored in forms of hard and electronic copies of transcripts. All information collected during interviews will only be accessed and viewed by the researcher, and his supervisors if requested, and remain strictly confidential.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher and supervisors if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvements in the research

**Signed:** ..... (research participant)

**Print Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

#### **Contact Details**

**Researcher:** Chieh-Hsiang Chuang (0911-12xxxx;  
txxcc20@nottingham.ac.uk)

**Supervisors:** Dr. Barbara Sinclair ([barbara.sinclair@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:barbara.sinclair@nottingham.ac.uk))  
Dr. Max Biddulph ([max.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:max.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk))

**School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:**  
[educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix 6

### Interview protocol (teachers)

1. How long have you been teaching English so far?  
What brought you to English teaching?
2. In addition to college students, have you ever taught learners of English in other education levels?  
What are the differences and challenges?
3. How do you think emotional reactions may influence student's English learning?
4. At college level, what English level of learners would you expect to have more evident anxious feelings? Why?
5. What concept of self have you found from the students who have anxious reactions to English classroom situations/activities?  
What kind of connection would you say those concepts of self and English learning anxiety have? Please explain.
6. What role do you think anxiety plays in a college English classroom?
7. What classroom situations/activities do you think are anxiety-provoking for college students?
8. Where do you think college students' anxiety about learning English comes from?
9. Are you aware of how anxiety manifests itself in those who are feeling anxious? (What evidence of anxiety have you noticed in learners of English in college level?)
10. Do you try to help students reduce learning anxiety in the English classroom?  
*YES*—What? Why? How? How effective is it? *NO*—Why not?
11. Is there anything we've missed that you would like to share?

## Appendix 7

### Themes generated from English majors' data

Aspects (of anxiety)	Situation	Source	Effect	Coping strategy
Themes	1. Learning in class: unpredictability	1. Academic expectations of themselves	1. Cognitive processing dysfunction	1. Gaining support from others
	2. Learning English in a formal classroom	2. Inadequate English ability	2. Being propelled to work harder	2. Relaxation techniques
	3. Communication apprehension with more advanced speakers of English	3. Concern about peers' judgments	3. Classroom dynamics: Avoidance	3. Readiness for activities
	4. Exposure in class	4. Teacher's teaching style	4. Poor speaking performance	
	5. Working with others different from me	5. Concern about teacher's judgments	5. Alteration of psychophysical conditions	
	6. Teacher interventions	6. Negative self-perception of L2 learning	6. Self-disapproving thoughts	
		7. Individual differences: learning behaviors		
		8. Personal issues about learning		
		9. Parental pressure		

## Appendix 8 Themes generated from non-majors' data

Aspects (of anxiety)	Situation	Source	Effect	Coping strategy
Themes	1. Learning in class: unpredictability	1. Personal issues about learning	1. Self-deprecating thoughts	1. Relaxation techniques
	2. Exposure in class	2. Negative self-perception of L2 learning	2. Cognitive processing dysfunction	2. Readiness for activities
	3. Learning English in a formal classroom	3. Concern about teacher's judgments	3. Poor speaking performance	3. Confronting anxious situations
	4. Communication apprehension with more advanced speakers of English	4. Concern about peers' judgments	4. Alteration of psychophysical conditions	4. Gaining support from others
	5. Communication apprehension with classmates	5. Inadequate English ability	5. Being propelled to work hard	
	6. Teacher's intervention	6. Teacher's teaching behavior	6. Classroom dynamics: avoidance	
		7. Individual differences: learning behaviors		
		8. Academic expectations of themselves		
		9. Uncooperative group members		
		10. Class size		

Appendix 9  
Themes generated from English majors' teachers' data

Aspects (of anxiety)	Situation	Source	Effect	Coping strategy for student anxiety
Themes	1. Learning English in a formal classroom	1. Poor relationship between group members	1. Classroom dynamics: avoidance	1. Making students ready for the tasks/ challenges
	2. Exposure in class	2. Personal issues about leaning	2. Poor speaking performance	2. Establishing a positive relationship
	3. Teacher interventions	3. Negative self-perception of L2 learning	3. Alteration of psycho-physical conditions	3. Counseling
	4. Learning in class: unpredictability	4. Concern about peers' judgments	4. Cognitive processing dysfunction	4. Trying to inhibit student's negative emotions
		5. Concern about teacher's judgments	5. Being propelled to work harder	5. Giving students control
		6. Inadequate English ability		
		7. Academic expectations of themselves		
		8. Task/test design		

Appendix 10  
Themes generated from non-majors' teachers' data

Aspects (of anxiety)	Situation	Source	Effect	Coping strategy for student anxiety
<b>Themes</b>	1. Learning English in a formal classroom	1. Concern about peers' judgments	1. Poor speaking performance	1. Motivating via rewarding scores
	2. Learning in class: unpredictability	2. Negative self-Perception of L2 learning	2. Classroom dynamics: avoidance	2. Making students ready for the tasks/ Challenges
	3. Exposure in class	3. Inadequate English ability	3. Alternation of psycho-physical conditions	3. Counseling
	4. Teacher interventions	4. Poor relationship between group members	4. Cognitive processing dysfunction	4. Establishing a positive relationship
		5. Personal issues about learning	5. Being propelled to work harder	5. Trying to inhibit students' negative emotions
		6. Concern about teacher's judgments		6. Making use of peer influence
		7. Academic expectations of themselves	6. Self-disapproving thoughts	7. Giving students control

## Appendix 11 Students' sample transcript (Mandarin)

**R:** 我想要問你一下就是說你到目前為止就是英文大概學了幾年

**NE03:** 九年

**R:** 大概是從

**NE03:** 小六

**R:** 小六開始 ok 那就是說你到現 你學英文到現在 那你對學英文有什麼要的感受 這件事情

**NE03:** 就是好像變成是必要學吧 就是就會一直學下去阿 就是感覺每一個環境都需要英文 然後就會 就還是你知道就好像是必要就要一直學這樣子

**R:** 那就你個人自己的心情感受呢 就是說對學英文這件事帶給你什麼樣的

**NE03:** 就也不排斥耶

**R:** ok 不排斥是說不會討厭他嗎

**NE03:** 對 不討厭

**R:** 那你覺得 像說我們談比較接近的時間的英文課好了 就像說 因為你現在大二阿 那你應該對高中的課程應該還 就是英文課應該還記得((Laugh))就是不會離得太遠

**NE03:** 可是就我們高中老師他是補習班的老師所以他教的就是很 就是感覺不是很正式的那種英文 所以我們還是等於就是都自己念這樣

**R:** 喔 ok 那你覺得就是說你高中上的英文課跟大學上的英文課程有什麼 你覺得有什麼差別阿

**NE03:** 因為我們高中選的那些課好像比較簡單 就很簡單 所以就根本也沒學到什麼 然後上大學之後反而就是我們老師給的 就是大一那個老師給的單字就比較難 對 就感覺比較吃力這樣

**R:** 那你剛才講說高中上的比較 說用的課本比較簡單 是一般學校用的課本嗎

**NE03:** 好像也是學校用的課本可是就我們選 就不知道為什麼我們學校選那一些就是很簡單的

**R:** 就是那個出版社嗎

**NE03:** 對 就是比較很簡單

**R:** ok 那老師的教法呢 就是說你覺得大學跟高中

**NE03:** 喔 你說高中跟大學(.)就高中老師就是比較制式在上課阿 對 大學就是補充東西真的很多 就是大一的那個老師 對

**R:** 那像說高中會有什麼課堂活動嗎還是

**NE03:** 因為我們就是 我是餐飲科所以他會穿插就是餐飲的東西這樣子 然後大學就沒有 就是按照課本 就是課本上什麼就上什麼 比較不會有課外活動

**R:** 你說高中嗎

**NE03:** 高中是就會穿插一些我們專業科目的東西 然後大學就是 大家就是直接用什麼課本阿所以就是比較 就是按照課本上課這樣



(English)

**R:** I want to ask you how long you have been learning English so far.

**NE03:** Nine years

**R:** since when?

**NE03:** Grade six

**R:** Since grade six. Ok. Because you have been learning English for some years, what do you feel about learning English itself?

**NE03:** It seems that English has become something I need to learn. I mean I will keep learning, and I feel that English is needed in every context. That is, still, you know, it seems necessary to keep learning it.

**R:** How about your own personal feelings? I mean, what influence does learning English have on you emotionally?

**NE03:** I have no objection to it.

**R:** Ok. Is no objection equal to no hate?

**NE03:** Yes, no hate.

**R:** Do you think (.) Ok, let's talk about your prior English class. Like (.) Because you are now in the second year, you should still have some memory of your English class in senior high school, right? I mean it was not that long time ago.

**NE03:** Our high school English teacher was from a supplementary school, so his teaching was not very (.) I mean the English taught felt not the very formal kind. Thus, we still studied it on our own basically.

**R:** Ok. Do you perceive any differences between English class in high school and that at university?

**NE03:** Because the textbooks chosen by our high school seemed to be easier, we had not really learnt something. However, after entering the university, the contents taught by the teachers (.) The vocabulary taught by the teacher in the first year was more difficult. Yes, I found learning a bit more strenuous.

**R:** You just said that the content in high school was more (.) You said that the textbooks used were easier. Are they the ones generally used?

**NE03:** They seemed to be also used by some other schools. However, we just chose (.) I do not know why our school chose those easy (.)

**R:** You mean publisher?

**NE03:** Yes, they were relatively easy.

**R:** Ok. How about the teachers' teaching methods, i.e. between high school and university?

**NE03:** You said high school and university (.) The teachers in high school took the standardized approach to teaching English. However, the teachers at university, especially the teacher in the first year, did provide students with much more knowledge.

**R:** Did you have any classroom activities in senior high school?

**NE03:** Because we were (.) I was tourism major, so the teacher would add in some tourism-related content. However, this does not happen at university. The teaching is only based on the textbook. That is, the teacher teaches us by following the content in the book. We do not seem to have classroom activities.

**R:** You mean high school?

**NE03:** In high school, the teacher would add in our own major-related content. However, at university, the teacher just relies on the textbook, so it is more (.) The teaching is based on the content in the textbook.

## Appendix 12 Teachers' sample transcript (Mandarin)

**R:** 老師你到目前英文教多久了

**ET05:** 二十幾年 要怎麼算 算教大學嗎

**R:** 不一定 就是說

**ET05:** 喔 那久囉 很久 從大學畢業吧 從大學畢業 除了中間三年在美國 其他時間都在教 這樣幾年啊 大學畢業 我今年五十三歲 我大學畢業幾年 算二十三 好了 那這樣幾年 三十年喔 差不多 三十年

**R:** 那老師為什麼會想要做這份工作 就是說英語教學的工作

**ET05:** 因為喜歡教學啊 喜歡英文 喜歡英文 enjoy teaching 這樣

**R:** 那是從大學就

**ET05:** 從以前就喜歡教學這件事 因為我爸爸是老師 大概耳濡目然吧

**R:** 那老師除了現在教大學的以外 還有沒有交過其他年齡層的

**ET05:** 有兩個家教 然後我有教過很多種別的 我除了在學校裡面教 我教過很多別的 公司行號的 什麼空中大學的 什麼open university的啦 或是some companies的training啦 市政府的

**R:** 然後小孩子的 高中有嗎

**ET05:** government 小朋友的

**R:** 中學的有嗎

**ET05:** 是只現在嗎還是以前

**R:** 沒有 以前

**ET05:** 以前是從小學開始教起 我也教過補習班 白天上班晚上教補習班 還有教家教 然後補習班cram school 好多年喔 出國前 出國後回來我就沒有教補習班了 因為有家教國中生高中生小學生都有 推廣教育 電信局 電信公司 中國石油 化學公司 台電 空大 中國國際商銀 要想起來 可能還有很多忘記了 還有市政府的 一直到今年都還有教到市政府的 我很喜歡教這些不太一樣的東西

**R:** 所以老師大部份應該 教比較多的應該是成人的吧 就是說比例上啦

**ET05:** 對啦 現在啦 這幾年 早期比較多小孩 比較小的

**R:** 那老師你在教小孩跟大人的英文的時候有沒有遇到一些挑戰啊

**ET05:** 挑戰當然都是不同啊 小孩你就要像小孩啊

**R:** 怎麼說

**ET05:** 因為當大人當慣了 不會當小孩了啊 所以跟小孩講話方式跟跟大人講話方式就會不同 那大人通常比較緊張 我喜歡教初級的大人 就是那個英文程度比較差的 要比較沒有安全感的 就尤其是初級beginners 他們彼此環境的陌生產生不安的感覺這種的在初級會非常多 我覺得我是很適合教這樣的人

**R:** 那是什麼樣的原因就是老師會覺得你自己比較

**ET05:** 我也不知道 可能輔導活動參加多了吧 不知道 我覺得我那部份很容易 handle 對我很簡單 然後一下子大概兩個禮拜之內 他們就互相會非常熟悉

(English)

**R:** How long have you been teaching English so far?

**ET05:** More than 20 years. How do you calculate the years? Only at university?

**R:** Not necessarily so. I mean (.)

**ET05:** Ok, then it is long, very long. I have been teaching English since I graduated from the university. Except for three years in the US, I have spent the rest of the time teaching. So, how many years in total? After graduating from the university, I am now 53 years old, how many years has it been since I graduated from the university? Lets' make it 23 years. So, how many years? It is 30 years.

**R:** What brought you to this job? I mean English teaching.

**ET05:** It is because I like teaching and English. I like English and enjoy teaching.

**R:** So, since you studied at university (.)

**ET05:** I have been enjoying teaching because my dad was a teacher. I think it is probably because I was imperceptibly influenced by him.

**R:** Except university students, have you ever taught students of other ages?

**ET05:** I had two one-to-one tutoring jobs. I also had experiences with many different kinds of students. Except the experience in schools, I had other experiences with employees of a company and the city government, students of Open University, or in some companies' training sessions.

**R:** And children. How about senior high school?

**ET05:** government and children

**R:** How about high school?

**ET05:** You mean now or in the past?

**R:** In the past

**ET05:** I first taught in a primary school. I also taught in cram schools. I worked in the morning and taught in a cram school in the evening. I also had the experience of being a tutor and taught in cram schools. I had taught in these for many years before I went abroad. After coming back, I did not carry on my teaching in cram schools. I tutored both primary and secondary school students. I also had students from a continuing education center, Taiwan Telecom, CPC corporation, Taiwan power company, and Mega Bank. There may be still many forgotten. I

also had students from city government, and I am still teaching them this year. I really like to teach these different kinds of people.

**R:** So, the people you have taught mostly should be adults. I mean in terms of percentage.

**ET05:** Yes, nowadays, the recent years. I taught children more in the earlier stage of my teaching career.

**R:** Have you ever encountered any challenges when teaching children and adults?

**ET05:** The challenges are, of course, different. When teaching children, I need to be like kids.

**R:** Why?

**ET05:** Because I am used to being an adult, I do not know how to be a kid. The way of talking to kids would be different from to adults. Adults are normally more nervous. I like to teach elementary level adult learners, i.e. with lower English competence and sense of security. Especially the beginners, it is quite normal to see people unfamiliar with the environment feel less secure. There are many of this kind in the elementary level class. I find myself quite suitable for teaching these people.

**R:** What makes you think that you are suitable for this?

**ET05:** I do not know. I think it is because I have attended many counseling activities myself. I do not know. I find myself handle that part very easily. Within two weeks, they would know each other well.