

An Investigation of Chinese Undergraduates' Foreign Language Anxiety: Changes and Differences

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This paper reports on the results of a study of Chinese EFL learners' degree of and changes in foreign language classroom anxiety over a term. A 36-item survey involving 934 first-year undergraduate non-English majors revealed that: (1) the whole sample, as well as the three university samples of males and females, were generally not anxious, felt confident and did not worry much about their performance in English class both at the beginning and toward the end of the term; (2) significant differences existed in all aspects of foreign language classroom anxiety between males and females and among students from different learning contexts in both phases; and (3) the whole sample became significantly less anxious, more confident and less worried about their performance in class over a term's learning, so did female respondents and the Beijing Union University sample. Based on these findings, some implications and suggestions for future research will be discussed.

Second/Foreign language (SL/FL) educators have long recognized that the essence of SL/FL learning is "the communication of personally meaningful and conversationally appropriate messages through unfamiliar syntactic, semantic, and phonological systems" (Horwitz, 1995, p. 573). The language learner must also deal with the stress and ambiguities of communicating within the parameters of an unfamiliar culture. Thus many SL/FL learners find the basic requirements of FL learning inherently stressful. This has been evidenced by numerous studies