

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING ON GRADE 10 STUDENTS AT SAINT JOSEPH BANGNA SCHOOL, THAILAND

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the study was to determine the reported foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students' and whether students who conferred with a partner before answering a question would report a significant decrease in foreign language classroom anxiety. The study focused on five objectives. The first objective was to discover the level of reported foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students studying English listening and speaking. The second objective was to compare the difference of foreign language classroom anxiety of the experimental group before and after learning through a cooperative learning approach. The third objective was to compare the difference of foreign language classroom anxiety of the control group before and after learning through an individual learning approach. The fourth objective was to compare the difference of the foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students between the experimental group and the control group after learning through two different learning approaches. The fifth objective was to compare the difference of the three specific anxieties, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of English classes of grade 10 students between the experimental group and the control group after learning through two different learning approaches. At the start of the study, the grade 10 students reported having a mid-level of foreign language classroom anxiety. Students who studied through a cooperative approach did not report a significant difference in foreign language classroom anxiety. Students who studied through an individual approach did not report a significant difference in foreign language classroom anxiety. Students who studied through a cooperative approach did not report a more significant decrease in foreign language classroom anxiety than those students who studied through an individual approach. There was no significant difference in communication apprehension between the group who studied through a cooperative approach and those who studied through an individual approach. There was a significant difference in fear of negative evaluation and fear of English classes between the group who studied through a cooperative approach and those who studied through an individual approach.

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## **Introduction**

The effects of anxiety on students is not a new phenomenon nor is it exclusive to the language arts, there is a great deal of research that has been conducted on classroom anxiety. Teachers, students, and researchers generally agree that anxiety does exist in the classroom and if it is too high, it will have a negative effect on the students' successes in a particular subject. In the mid 1980's a study found a correlation between foreign language anxiety and foreign language learning achievement (Horwitz, 1986) and since then, the idea of foreign language anxiety has received a great deal of attention.

Studies into foreign language anxiety have been conducted in numerous countries where students were learning Western languages such as French, Spanish, and English and non-Western languages including Japanese, Thai, and Korean. The studies indicated that anxiety in the foreign language classroom is not unique to specific cultures and that high levels of anxiety do negatively affect students' success in foreign language acquisition.

Thailand is a relatively unique country in South East Asia with regards to English learning. Thailand, unlike other countries in the region such as Singapore and Malaysia, was never colonized; a fact which Thais are proud of and as a result, Thailand is a country with one language and English, at best, will only be a second language (Wiriyachitra, 2002). Instructors of English in Thailand need to be aware that although the government recognizes the need for its population to be more English proficient, historically, many Thais are proud to have never needed a language other than Thai. It should be noted that younger generations of Thais are subjected to English through media such as the Internet and television.

There are critical economic reasons for Thai students to learn English. Thailand is a founder member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which today comprises of ten countries from the region. The aims and purposes of ASEAN include, encouraging economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the region.

The general secretary of ASEAN, H.E. Le Loung Minh stressed the importance of English, as the working language for the ASEAN, for bringing the community together, for interacting with one another, and for raising awareness of the ASEAN region (Minh, 2013).

Teachers of English listening at Saint Joseph Bangna School have observed that students who appear to struggle tend to ask to be excused from class, appear unmotivated, and are afraid to make mistakes. As the term progresses, the majority of the students realize that the teacher is not someone they should fear nor will their classmates ridicule them for making a mistake. However, for other students, the symptoms of anxiety appear to remain throughout the year.

The researcher of this study has observed some of the effects associated with anxiety including class avoidance and physical symptoms such as shaking and stuttering. The teachers of listening and speaking at Saint Joseph Bangna School are not Thai and perhaps the perceived observations of anxiety are not being caused by anxiety but are rather cultural differences between Thais and non-Thais. Therefore, it

was deemed beneficial to the students, teachers and Saint Joseph Bangna School to discover whether these symptoms could be attributed to anxiety or not.

## **Objectives**

The following objectives were considered for the study.

1. To discover the level of reported foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students studying English listening and speaking.
2. To compare the difference of the foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students studying English listening and speaking before and after learning through a cooperative learning approach in the experimental group.
3. To compare the difference of the foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students studying English listening and speaking before and after learning through an individual learning approach in the control group.
4. To compare the difference of the foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students between the experimental group and the control group after learning through two different learning approaches.
5. To compare the difference of the three specific anxieties of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of English classes of grade 10 students between the experimental group and the control group after learning through two different learning approaches.

## **Literature Review**

### *Background of the School*

Saint Joseph Bangna is a private all girl Catholic school in Samut Prakarn on the outskirts of Bangkok, Thailand. The students range from grade 1 to grade 12. Saint Joseph Bangna is part of the St. Paul de Chartres Congregation, which was founded over 300 years ago in Levesville la Chenard, France.

Saint Joseph Bangna offers two programs, the English program and the Thai program. The students in the English program receive the majority of their lessons in English, while the Thai program only receive two periods of listening and speaking in English per week. At grade 10 students can choose a specific program to study including science, mathematics, and foreign languages. Regardless of the chosen program all grade 10 students receive two periods of fifty minutes English listening and speaking per week.

### *Anxiety*

As humans, we all experience anxiety which may stem from issues at work, school or relationships (Kelvins, 1997). Anxiety and fear are two familiar emotional states. However, defining what makes us anxious is more difficult than defining what makes us fearful. Anxiety is the feeling of apprehension, worry, and dread (Randall, 2007). The symptoms of anxiety therefore closely match those of fear.

An example of anxiety is a student who has to give a presentation; he has prepared meticulously and is a subject matter expert compared to their peers. Instead of being calm, the waiting student is suffering from anxiety (Ormrod, 2008). The

student is anxious because he is not sure of the outcome, but he cannot explicitly state why he is anxious and therefore the anxiety is considered objectless.

#### *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)*

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) refers to the anxiety students experience in the English classroom. There are conflicting views of whether FLCA is a unique anxiety or rather a manifestation of other anxieties. Horwitz stated that foreign language anxiety had a low correlation to trait anxiety so therefore was unique (Dörnyei, 2005). Sparks and Ganschow considered that language anxiety was a result of issues with the learners' cognitive abilities and therefore was a byproduct of this and therefore foreign language anxiety was not a specific anxiety (Dörnyei, 2005).

Horwitz et al. considered foreign language anxiety to be unique because foreign language learning is a unique process that addresses an individual's self-perceptions, beliefs and feelings (Aida, 1994). Typically, students in other classes are able to use their native language to express themselves clearly to the instructor or their peers. In a foreign language classroom, students' command of the language they are learning is less advanced. Students not being able to express themselves may become frustrated or anxious because they do not want to be judged foolish by their peers. Foreign language learners have a self-concept of their abilities and feel ashamed if they do not pronounce words exactly like the native speaker and this increases their anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

Learning a foreign language is unique to many other situations students find themselves. The students are required to learn declarative knowledge such as learning new vocabulary words which is similar to math learners remembering the operation order. The difference becomes apparent when the learners demonstrate their procedural knowledge.

Procedural knowledge can be demonstrated by math learners without their peers being present through completing exercises individually. A language learner demonstrating procedural knowledge, especially speaking, will perform in front of the teacher and probably their peers. Therefore, language learning is unique because of communication apprehension. Communication apprehension is unique to language learners. Foreign language learners have to perform the language in terms of oral tasks so therefore, communication apprehension in a foreign language classroom is different to other settings (Chan, & Wu 2004).

Regardless of whether FLA is truly a unique anxiety or rather a combination of other anxieties; numerous studies have identified a correlation between students who claim to suffer from foreign language anxiety and their successes learning the target language. A major finding in a study by Lin (2004) found that students with higher anxiety were more likely to receive lower grades.

#### *Measuring Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety*

In 1986 Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope developed the FLCAS a thirty-three question questionnaire which uses a five point Likert scale which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Learners answer questions regarding their emotions and habits in language classes. An example question from FLCAS is in language class, I can get so nervous, I forget things I know.

Once the FLCAS has been completed, an overall foreign language anxiety value is obtained. Researchers, including Horwitz (1986) categorized the questions from FLCAS into the various categories that make up foreign language anxiety, namely communication apprehension, anxiety fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Cao, 2011) that is referred to as the three factor model. Other researchers, such as Zhao (2007), added anxiety of English classes to make a model with four categories, referred to as the four factor model (Rokiah, Misieng, 2012).

#### Communication Anxiety

Communication anxiety is the uneasiness the students experience when they have to communicate in a foreign language in the classroom.

#### Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation refers to students being anxious when being evaluated or perceive they are being judged by others in the classroom.

#### Anxiety of English Classes

Anxiety of English Classes refers to the unique factors that happen in the English classroom that provokes anxiety.

#### *Factors that Affect Foreign Language Acquisition*

The observable symptoms of a student suffering from anxiety include difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, sweating, and class avoidance (Randall, 2007). Teachers and instructors need to be aware of the physical symptoms of anxiety so they can identify a student who may be suffering from anxiety and be able to better help them.

The physical symptoms also impact the student's success at learning a language. If a student is having difficulty concentrating or is being forgetful the learning process cannot be as effective. Class avoidance can include the student not going to class or making excuses to leave the room for example asking to go to the restroom. If students are removing themselves from the learning process, obviously their language skills cannot improve.

Students' success or failure in acquiring a second language is related to their aptitude which can be measured through testing and attitude which is related to affective variables (Krashen, 2002). The affective variables include the student's motivation, self-confidence, and their anxiety. The affective variables are factors that affect learning and can act as a filter which is known as the affective filter. The affective filter has been identified and studied to ascertain whether it affects foreign language learning.

The affective filter is a psychological filter which, when high because of factors including anxiety and stress, hinders language production (Krashen, 2002). Conversely, where the affective filter is low because of the absence of anxiety and the learner is motivated and confident, the learner is more likely to be effective at learning a foreign language.

### *Cooperative Learning*

Cooperative learning has been shown in several studies to develop learners' language proficiency and lower anxiety (Wichadee, 2010). A definition of cooperative learning is an instructional method where learners work in small groups or pairs to reach a common goal with the teacher facilitating (Lin, 2006). The learners need to work together, encourage one another, and be responsible for reaching the required goal.

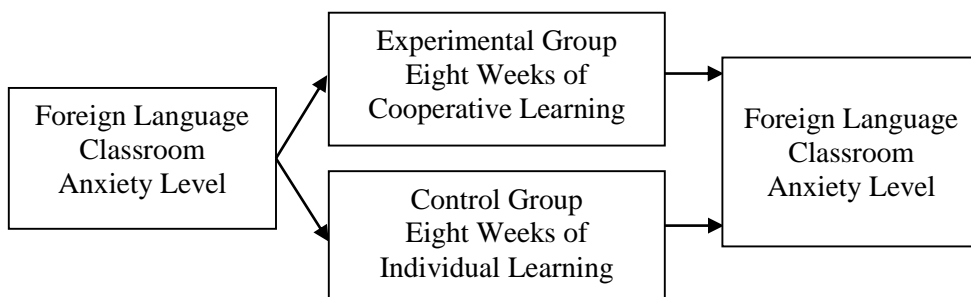
A study by Wichadee (2010) measured anxiety using the FLCAS while learners were engaged in cooperative learning and found that anxiety was reduced. Feedback from the learners included them not feeling nervous at all. Teachers are often limited with the classroom time they have with their students as well as how they can modify the environment because of administration or financial constraints. A readily available resource teachers will have are the students themselves and the actual relationship of the students can be used to reduce foreign classroom anxiety.

A technique that can be used in the cooperative classroom is Think-Pair-Share which was developed by Lyman in 1981. Firstly, the technique involves the teacher posing a question and giving the students adequate time to think or compose a reply. Secondly, the students share their answers or ideas with a partner and lastly, the pair shares their answers or ideas with larger groups or the entire class.

The benefits of teachers applying the Think-Pair-Share strategy were put forward by Millis (2009). Millis stated how extroverts in the classroom are often quick to answer questions posed by the teacher, which can allow anxious students to withdraw from communicating. In large classrooms where a teacher poses a question, often only one student is engaged. With the Think-Pair-Share strategy, all the class are required to prepare an idea or answer during the thinking stage and fifty percent of the students vocalizing their ideas or answer with their partner during the pairing stage.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Two classes of grade 10 students in the Thai program of St. Joseph Bangna were considered in the study. The students in the two classes completed a questionnaire at the start of the study in May 2013 and completed the same questionnaire eight weeks later. The difference between the results of the questionnaires was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in foreign language classroom anxiety.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

### **Method/Procedure**

The design for the research used a quasi-experimental between group designs to investigate the objectives. The data was collected through the use of an experiment. The instrument used was the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire which was translated into Thai and given to two grade 10 classes studying English listening and speaking at Saint Joseph Bangna School.

The FLCAS questionnaire is a 33-item questionnaire where participants respond to statements regarding their attitudes to learning a foreign language. A five point Likert scale is used with 1 being totally disagree to 5 being totally agree with the statements. The results of the FLCAS was categorized into low-level anxiety, mid-level anxiety, and high-level anxiety. The three categories range as following:

- 33 to 66 – low anxiety.
- 67 to 132 – mid-level anxiety.
- 133 to 165 – high-level anxiety.

To determine the mean level of foreign language classroom anxiety reported by the grade 10 students in the Thai program at the start of the semester, all one hundred and seventy-three (173) students from five classes completed the FLCAS questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were used as pre-test scores for the study. From the five classes which completed the FLCAS, the two classes with the closest levels of reported FLCA were chosen to be the sample for the study.

The two sample classes completed the FLCAS again at the end of the study after eight weeks. The completed questionnaires at the end of the study were used as post-test scores for the study.

The mean of the questionnaires completed by all one hundred and seventy-three (173) grade 10 students in the Thai program were used to determine the reported level of foreign language classroom anxiety. Paired sample two tailed t-tests were used to determine whether there was a significant difference in reported foreign language classroom anxiety at the beginning and the end of the study for the experimental and control groups. The independent sample one tailed t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the post-tests results of the experimental and control groups regarding their total reported foreign language classroom anxiety and the three specific anxieties of communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of English classes.

The reliability of the instrument was found using Cronbach's Alpha. The data gathered from the 82 students in the control and experimental groups resulted to Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.84.

### **Findings/Results**

From the analysis of the data, the findings were as follows:

1. The reported level of foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students studying English listening and speaking was 101, which indicated a mid-level of anxiety.
2. There was no significant decrease in the level of reported foreign language classroom anxiety over an eight week period for the students who were taught through a cooperative approach.

**Table 1: Experimental Group Paired Sample on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety before and after Learning through A Cooperative Learning Approach**

re-test		Post-test		Paired Diff.	
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t Value	Sig. (2- tailed)
99.29	15.27	98.54	15.99	0.463	0.646

3. There was no significant decrease in the reported level of reported foreign language classroom anxiety over an eight week period for the students who were taught through an individual approach.

**Table 2: Control Group Paired Sample on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety before and after Learning through An Individual Learning Approach**

Pre-test		Post-test		Paired Diff.	
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t Value	Sig. (2- tailed)
100.39	12.15	96.8	10.3	1.269	0.212

4. There was no significant difference in the reported level of foreign language classroom anxiety of grade 10 students studying English listening and speaking in the experimental group and those studying in the control group.

**Table 3: The Experimental and Control Group Independent Sample on The Post-test of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Results after Eight Weeks of Instruction**

Experimental Group		Control Group		t-test for Equality of Means	
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t Value	Sig. (1-tailed)
98.54	15.99	96.8	1.3	0.583	0.28

5. For the three specific anxieties between the control and experimental groups there was no significant difference in communication anxiety. There was a significant difference in the reported level of fear of negative evaluation and fear of English classes.

**Table 4: The Experimental and Control Group Independent Sample on the Post-test of three Specific Anxieties after Eight Weeks of Instruction**

Specific Anxiety	Experimental Group		Control Group		t-test for Equality of Means	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t value	Sig. (1 – tailed)
Communication apprehension	33.54	5.27	34.41	6.64	-0.663	0.25
Fear of negative evaluation	21.95	4.29	20.17	3.46	2.07	0.021
Fear of English classes	30.53	5.71	33.37	3.22	0.58	0



## Discussion

### *Think-Pair-Share and Reducing Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety*

The findings of the study do not support that exclusively employing the think-pair-share method significantly reduces foreign language classroom anxiety. Contrary to Lin's (2004) study, students who were able to confer with a peer did not report a significant reduction in foreign language classroom anxiety.

The study was undertaken at the start of the listening and speaking course where the focus was on learning new vocabulary through drilling, flash cards and a semi-competitive game, listening comprehension and replying to fifty common English questions. The researcher considered that compared to the other tasks the students would encounter later on in the course including poetry recital and presentations, the tasks, the students encountered during the study may not appear anxiety provoking. The assumption that the foreign language classroom anxiety did not decrease significantly because the activities encountered were not anxiety provoking is not supported by the study by Chan and Wu (2004) who reported that students answering questions as the most anxiety provoking situation. The study also found students considered competition in games is a source of anxiety because of the fear of letting their team down.

Each of the classes in the study had 41 students and despite the classrooms not being cramped, space to rearrange the seating was limited. The students were arranged in columns, with each column consisting of two students and one group of three. The students remained with the partner their homeroom teacher had paired them with. Students in other studies, including Wichadee (2010) and Lin (2006) allowed students to choose their own partner, to ensure they were comfortable working with their partner.

The study did not allow for the students to choose their own partner, so the possibility exists that the lack of choice given to the students impacted on their post-test scores of foreign language classroom anxiety. In a study, Burešová (2007) highlighted that not allowing students to choose their partner could result in pairs who do not get along, however often outside the classroom, individuals do not get to choose who they work with and therefore, it is not unreasonable for them to be paired by the teacher in the classroom.

### *Students conferring before answering is no more effective at reducing foreign language classroom anxiety than students answering as individuals*

The post-test scores between the students who were able to confer and those who answered individually were not significant. The questions from the FLCAS cover a diversity of factors including how the teacher corrects mistakes and how the participants perceive their own language skills. The narrow focus of the research of having students confer before answering may have been too subtle to show a significant difference between those students who answered after conferring and those who answered individually.

Scores of 4 or 5 for a question on the FLCAS indicates a high level of anxiety, whereas scores of 1 or 2 indicate a low anxiety. There were 41 students in each group; a score between 41 and 82 would point toward a low anxiety regarding the question,

while 164 to 205 would indicate a high anxiety. Scores of 83 to 163 for a question with show a mid-level of anxiety.

The questions the researcher considers could be affected by students conferring before answering are: (3) I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class, (9) I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class, (13) It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class and (33) I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.

The control group reported mid-levels of anxiety for the four questions the researcher considered to correlate to conferring before answering in the pre-test and post-test. Like the control group, the experimental group reported mid-levels of anxieties for three of the four questions in the pre-test and post-test. However, for the question *I worry about failing*, the scores increased from mid-level anxiety of 153 in the pre-test to high-anxiety of 170 in the post-test. Whether the increase in the level of anxiety in the experimental group regarding failing was facilitating or debilitating, in terms of the students' acquisition of learning English was untested.

Despite the strategy of having students conferring before answering not significantly reducing foreign language classroom anxiety, there was some anecdotal evidence that the strategy brought other benefits to the foreign language classroom. The students who were able to confer were unlikely to tell the teacher they did not know the answer and this helped with the overall flow of the lesson with students taking chances and answering questions. The atmosphere in the experimental group appeared to be more cooperative and when students had to form larger groups they seemed more eager to participate in classroom activities.

#### *The Stability of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety*

The findings of the study do not support the proposal that having students confer before answering significantly reduces foreign language classroom anxiety. The majority of the students were categorized as having a midlevel of foreign language classroom anxiety before the study and at the end of the study in both the experimental and the control group.

It was the first time the students had taken English listening and speaking classes and therefore, a midlevel foreign language classroom anxiety was not surprising. The tasks the students were required to undertake at the start of the semester were not dramatically different to what they had experienced in other classrooms and therefore, the familiarity of the lessons may have resulted in the reported anxiety remaining relatively stable.

Cheng (2001) explained how Gardner and MacIntyre considered second language anxiety to be a stable personality trait which occurs when the student has to use a language they are not proficient in. Few students in either the experimental or control groups were proficient in English. Considering that having students confer before answering was not found to be effective at reducing foreign language classroom anxiety, this study supports Gardner's and MacIntyre's idea that second language anxiety is stable and manifests when individuals are required to communicate in a second language they are not confident using.

### *Think-Pair-Share and its Effects on Negative Evaluation and Anxiety of English Classes*

Receiving negative evaluation from the teacher or peers can overwhelm students and therefore, teachers need to be sensitive when correcting errors (Yeh, 2008). The teacher was mindful of the impact error correction can have on students' attitudes towards classes.

The teacher was sensitive to student errors in both groups. From the start of the semester, the students were told and reminded how errors are a part of the learning process. It was stressed to the students that they should not feel embarrassed or ashamed if they made a mistake. Teachers have to make judgment calls when correcting student errors including when to correct the student and how to correct the student. In the listening and speaking classes, the teacher wanted to facilitate communication and small grammatical errors were not corrected. When students made an error answering a listening comprehension question or giving a definition, the teacher would acknowledge the student's answer and try to elicit a better answer by prompting the student.

For the specific anxiety factor fear of negative evaluation, there was a significant difference, between the post-test scores between the experimental and control group. The control group reported a lower level of foreign language classroom anxiety than the experimental group. The difference in fear of negative evaluation although significant only varied by one point.

It was expected that the students in the experimental group would have reported a lower level of fear of negative evaluation than the control group. The researcher considered that the students would experience less anxiety through the think-pair-share method because would they be more confident of their reply being correct and any perceived evaluation would be on the pair not the individual.

For the specific anxiety factor fear of English classes, there was a significant difference, between the post-test scores between the experimental and control group. The experimental group reported a lower level of fear of English classes than the control group.

The fear of English classes include the specific anxieties students associate with going to and during English classes. Oxford (1997) noted how cooperative learning encourages students to like school more, and increases their intrinsic motivation. The questions that are associated with fear of English classes include, (5) It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes, (17) I often feel like not going to my English class, and (28) When I'm on my way to English, I feel sure and relaxed. The students in the experimental may have had a more positive outlook than the control group regarding listening and speaking because they were able to confer with a partner.

## **Recommendations**

### *Recommendations for Foreign Language Teachers*

The researcher considers the questions on the FLCAS to be both valid and suitable to determine whether foreign language classroom anxiety exists. The distribution, collection, and scoring of the FLCAS questionnaires is relatively straight forward and

quick. It is recommended that teachers distribute the FLCAS to take a snapshot of foreign language classroom anxiety and determine whether any students report suffering from foreign language classroom anxiety.

If students are found to suffer from foreign language classroom anxiety, the teacher should consider whether to take direct or indirect action. The teacher could help the student cope with the anxiety or make the learning environment less anxiety provoking (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). A combination of helping students to cope with their anxiety as well as the teacher making the classroom atmosphere less anxiety provoking is recommended to produce low foreign language anxiety classrooms.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Originally the study was expected to last six weeks, however due to class cancellations the study was concluded in the eighth week of the semester. During the eight weeks the students were required to orally answer either after conferring with a partner or individually to listening comprehension questions, vocabulary definitions and opinions.

With both classes having 43 students and the teacher employing a random method of choosing a student to answer a question, it is questionable whether the students in the experimental group experienced the cooperate method sufficiently for the technique to be effective. A student in the control group had a one in forty-three chance of being asked to communicate while a student in the experimental group had a one in twenty-one chance of being called upon. Therefore, the students in the experimental group may have felt more anxious than the students in the control group because they had more chance of being called upon to orally communicate in the classroom.

The school where the study was conducted, like the majority of schools in Thailand, employs a no fail policy, which ensures all students achieve a passing grade over the course of the semester. Despite the FLCAS mainly focusing on affective factors, students may not deem questions such as (10) *I worry about the consequences of failing my English class* and (22) *I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English test* relevant because they are aware they will pass the course regardless of their effort or achievements. A similar study in a school where students can fail a listening and speaking course may produce different results.

A longitudinal study over the academic year would have allowed the experimental group more chances of experiencing the technique of conferring with a partner before speaking. The repeated measures of foreign language classroom anxiety throughout the semester may have shown differences in specific foreign language anxieties. For example, would test anxiety for of the students have increased before a test?

From the five classes available for the study, the two with the closest means of foreign language classroom anxiety were chosen. The two sample classes both had a midlevel of foreign language classroom anxiety. The researcher was unaware of whether the reported anxiety was facilitating or debilitating. If the midlevel of foreign language classroom anxiety was prompting facilitating than the teacher would be ill-

advised to want to reduce it. Future researchers could use questionnaires or interviews to determine whether the anxiety is facilitating or debilitating.

A potential variable between foreign language classroom anxieties are the scores achieved by the students. The students' level of English proficiency was not tested before the start of the study. A general observation from the two classes and anecdotal evidence suggest that the experimental group were more comfortable to offer answers and opinions and more students appeared to achieve higher scores. A further study could investigate whether student achievement in listening and speaking is significantly improved as a result of having students confer before answering.

The research found that students with a midlevel foreign language classroom anxiety did not show a significant decrease if they were able to confer with a partner. A midlevel of foreign language anxiety classroom may be common and not necessarily require the teacher to attempt to reduce it. Another study could use a group with high foreign language classroom anxiety to determine if the strategy of having students conferring before answering would significantly reduce foreign language classroom anxiety.

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