ENDOGENOUS MECHANISM OF BUSINESS ENGLISH LEARNING ANXIETY

Feiwu Li

Abstract

Many business English learners suffer from fear or anxiety in the course of learning. From the perspective of teaching practice, this paper empirically analyses business English anxiety and its influencing factors, and discusses how business English anxiety affects the teaching of business English. The research data were collected through a questionnaire survey on three universities at different levels in China. The respondents cover both English majors and non-English majors. Through statistical analysis of the data, it is concluded that the business English anxiety of college students is influenced to different degrees by endogenous factors like self-efficacy, motivation, attribution and view of business English; Business English anxiety is mainly influenced by learner factors, followed by teacher factors, other factors, and peer factors; there are significant differences in Business English learning anxiety between different genders and between different language levels, but no significant differences between English majors and non-English majors. The research findings shed important new lights on business English learning and teaching.

Key words: Business English, Learning Anxiety, Endogenous Mechanism, Questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

With the development of the global economy, culture and information technology, exchanges between countries around the world have become increasingly frequent. Language, as a medium and carrier for cultural communication in various countries, plays a very important role. Only by learning the language of a country can we understand its culture (Fuertes-Olivera, & Gómez-Martínez, 2004; White, 2010). In this regard, the importance of business English is very prominent. Business English teaching has been receiving more and more attention in China (Zhang, 2013). Before the 1970s, the study of individual learner differences mainly focused on intelligence and language skills, ignoring the emotional factors (Trinder, 2002; Chung, 2013). However, due to the development of humanistic psychology, it is far from enough to explain the particularity and complexity of complexity of business English learning from the perspective of cognition. The language teaching gradually shifts from teacher-oriented to student-oriented mode (Nickerson, 2015). Therefore, more researchers are paying attention to emotional problems in Business English teaching (Parks & Raymond, 2004).

Due to the exam stress and learning burden under the exam-oriented education system, the anxiety of English learners is increasingly serious. Business English has become a highly anxious subject in many disciplines (Vallance, 1997; Shrestha, 2017). Anxiety is not only an emotional factor, but also one of the important variables for studying individual differences. It has become one of the research hotspots by scholars at home and abroad (Moscariello, 2009; Kheirbek, Drew, Burghardt et al., 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to study the emotional factors of Business English anxiety.

In order to stimulate college students'
enthusiasm for Business English and improve their ability to learn, Business English teachers should attach more importance to the complexity and particularity of the Business English learning process and the emotional factors in second language acquisition (Hawley, Grissom, & Dohanich, 2011). On this basis, flexible use of teaching methods can effectively organize Business English teaching activities and establish a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, which shall effectively alleviate students’ Business English anxiety to a certain extent (Lovibond, Saunders, Weidemann et al., 2008; File & Mabbutt, 2010).

This study aims to investigate the Business English anxiety of college students from the perspective of teaching practice, conduct empirical research on business English anxiety and its influencing factors, and explore its significance to Business English teaching.

ENDOGENOUS FACTORS AFFECTING BUSINESS ENGLISH LEARNING ANXIETY

Among the endogenous factors, the self-efficacy, learning motivation, positive and negative attribution of Business English students can cause English learning anxiety to a certain extent. However, there have been few empirical studies in this area; also, the comprehensive study showed that multiple endogenous factors had little impact on English learning anxiety. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the main factors affecting college students’ English learning anxiety from the aspects of self-efficacy, attribution, motivation, knowledge and learning views of English learning. Figure 1 shows the endogenous factors affecting business English learning anxiety.

![Endogenous factors affecting Business English learning anxiety](image)

**EXPERIMENTAL STUDY**

**Research objects**

In this study, the research objects were selected from three universities at different levels (the 211 or 985 national key university, or provincial university) in XX city, and data were collected by random sampling. It is worth mentioning that both English majors and non-English majors were included. A total of 690 questionnaires were distributed, 50% for males and females respectively. In addition, the ratio of English to non-English majors was 1:2, which was 230 and 460 respectively. The number of students in each category is shown in Table 1. The English level classification standard of the research objects is shown in Table 2.

| Grade     | College Category | Gender | Major | English Level |
|-----------|------------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| Freshman  | 985              | male   | English | High    |
| Sophomore | 53               | 51     | 54    | 72       |
| Junior    | 49               | 51     | 51    | 73       |
| Senior    | 28               | 42     | 33    | 55       |
| Master's degree | 64        | 65     | 76    | 102      |
| Total     | 216              | 234    | 240   | 345      |

| Score    | Low Level | Middle Level | High Level |
|----------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| TEM4     | ≤60       | 60-74        | ≥75        |
| CET4     | ≤497      | 497-602      | ≥603       |
| CET6     | ≤425      | 425-496      | ≥497       |
| IELTS    | ≤6        | 6            | ≥6.5       |
| TOEFL    | ≤72       | 72-95        | ≥96        |
Business English anxiety types of college students

The descriptive statistics of the Business English Anxiety Questionnaire are shown in Table 3. Table 3 shows that the average business English anxiety of college students was 3.00, indicating that they have moderate anxiety when studying business English.

In terms of content validity, the variables were subjected to KMO and Bartlett spherical tests using SPSS, as shown in Table 4. Table 4 shows that there are obvious structural and correlation between the variables in the questionnaire scale.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the Business English Anxiety Questionnaire

| Classification of Business English Anxiety | Item                                      | Mean | Standard deviation | Total mean |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|------------|
| Examination anxiety                       | A2 (Test General Anxiety)                 | 3.15 | 1.16               | 2.71       |
|                                           | A7 (Anxiety before Examination)           | 2.54 | 1.13               |            |
|                                           | A12 (Anxiety in Examination)              | 2.45 | 1.11               |            |
|                                           | A18 (Posttest Anxiety)                    | 2.69 | 1.26               |            |
|                                           | A1 (Fear of making mistakes)              | 3.10 | 1.18               |            |
|                                           | A11 (Fear of correcting mistakes)         | 2.65 | 1.12               | 2.76       |
|                                           | A17 (Worrying about the progress of class)| 2.53 | 1.09               |            |
|                                           | A3 (Listening Test Anxiety)               | 3.81 | 1.17               |            |
| Negative Assessment Anxiety               | A1 (Fear of making mistakes)              | 3.06 | 1.20               | 3.49       |
|                                           | A11 (Fear of correcting mistakes)         | 2.96 | 1.15               | 3.15       |
|                                           | A17 (Worrying about the progress of class)| 2.89 | 1.16               | 3.05       |
| Language skill anxiety                    | A13 (Listening Material Difficulty Anxiety)| 3.59 | 1.12               |            |
|                                           | A4 (Oral Communication Anxiety)           | 3.24 | 1.14               |            |
| Speaking                                  | A9 (Anxiety in Reading Text aloud)        | 2.86 | 1.24               | 3.02       |
|                                           | A14 (Communicating with High Level People)| 2.96 | 1.15               | 3.15       |
| Reading                                   | A5 (Translation Anxiety in Reading)       | 3.20 | 1.11               |            |
|                                           | A15 (Fear of new words more)              | 3.34 | 1.09               |            |
| General Business English Anxiety          | A1-A18                                    |      |                    | 3.00       |

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett test

| Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin Measure of Sampling Sufficiency | 0.719 |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Bartlett’s sphericity test                        |       |
| Approximate Chi Square                            | 481.445 |
| df                                                | 190   |
| Sig.                                              | 0     |

Table 5. Comparison of influencing factors in the experimental group

| Category                  | Item                                      | Mean | Standard deviation | Total mean |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|------------|
| Learner factors           | V1 (Confidence)                           | 2.75 | 1.04               |            |
|                           | V5 (Self-efficacy)                        | 3.08 | 1.18               |            |
|                           | V8 (Learning Strategies)                  | 2.9  | 1.25               | 2.89       |
|                           | V12 (Learning Motivation)                 | 2.95 | 1.25               |            |
|                           | V13 (Personality Characteristics)         | 2.73 | 1.03               |            |
|                           | V17 (Overseas Experience)                 | 2.9  | 1.19               |            |
|                           | V2 (Teacher-student relationship)         | 2.57 | 0.77               |            |
|                           | V6 (Personality Charm)                    | 2.68 | 1.08               | 2.61       |
|                           | V9 (Professional Attitude)                | 2.19 | 0.93               |            |
| Teacher factors           | V14 (Teaching Method)                     | 3.01 | 1.08               |            |
|                           | V3 (Peer Relations)                       | 1.77 | 0.75               |            |
| Peer factors              | V10 (Peer Cooperative Learning)           | 1.99 | 0.97               | 2.24       |
|                           | V15 (Peer Communication)                  | 2.38 | 0.96               |            |
|                           | V18 (Peer Competition)                    | 2.83 | 1.24               |            |
|                           | V4 (Course Setting)                       | 2.6  | 1.02               |            |
| Other factors             | V7 (Social Needs)                         | 3    | 1.26               | 2.70       |
|                           | V11 (Cultural Factor)                     | 2.68 | 0.99               |            |
|                           | V16 (Environmental Factors)               | 2.52 | 1.14               |            |
Factors affecting college students’ Business English anxiety

The descriptive statistics of the factors affecting the Business English Anxiety Scale were made by SPSS. The results are shown in Table 5.

The results of Table 5 show that the main factors affecting college students’ Business English anxiety are learners themselves, teachers, peers and other factors. From the frequency of factors, Business English anxiety is most affected by individual factors of learners, followed by teachers and peer factors.

Relationship between Business English anxiety and gender, majors, and language level

Gender differences

In order to compare the differences between male and female students under the influencing factors such as learners, teachers, and peers etc., SPSS was used for independent sample t-test (Table 6).

It can be seen from Table 6 that in terms of the learner factor in China, the mean values of males and females were 3.11 and 2.97, respectively, P=0.000, indicating a significant difference between male and female in English learning anxiety; in terms of the teacher factor, the mean value of males and females were 2.59 and 2.27, respectively, P=0.000<0.01, indicating a significant difference between males and females.

Therefore, there are significant differences between male and female students under the different influencing factors (P<0.05), and the teacher and peer factors of male teachers have larger influence than female students.

Major differences

In order to compare the differences between the major and non-major students under the influencing factors, an independent sample T test was performed (Table 7).

The results in Table 7 show that in terms of learner factors, the differences are not significant between major and non-major students; in terms of teacher factors, P=0.923>0.05, which indicates no significant differences; in terms of peer factors, P=0.547>0.05, indicating no statistical difference between the two; in other influencing factors, P=0.082>0.05, also indicating no significant difference.

Table 6. Independent sample T test of students of different genders under the factors affecting business English anxiety

| Dimension   | Gender | N  | Mean | Standard Deviation | t     | P    |
|-------------|--------|----|------|--------------------|-------|------|
| Learner factors | Male   | 320 | 3.11 | 0.76               | 7.359 | 0.000|
|             | Female | 320 | 2.97 | 0.84               |       |      |
| Teacher factors | Male   | 320 | 2.59 | 0.71               | 10.679| 0.000|
|             | Female | 320 | 2.27 | 0.8                |       |      |
| Peer factors | Male   | 320 | 2.42 | 0.64               | 2.183 | 0.02 |
|             | Female | 320 | 2.47 | 0.76               |       |      |
| Other factors | Male   | 320 | 2.72 | 0.7                | -3.748| 0.000|
|             | Female | 320 | 3.09 | 0.83               |       |      |

Table 7. Independent samples T test of different majors under the factors affecting business English learning anxiety

| Dimension   | Major   | N  | Mean | Standard deviation | t     | P    |
|-------------|---------|----|------|--------------------|-------|------|
| Learner factors | English | 210 | 2.84 | 0.76               | -1.413| 0.149|
|             | Other   | 420 | 2.94 | 0.73               |       |      |
| Teacher factors | English | 210 | 2.35 | 0.73               | -0.112| 0.923|
|             | Other   | 420 | 2.36 | 0.69               |       |      |
| Peer factors | English | 210 | 2.57 | 0.65               | 0.631 | 0.547|
|             | Other   | 420 | 2.53 | 0.65               |       |      |
| Other factors | English | 210 | 3.1  | 0.72               | 1.68  | 0.079|
|             | Other   | 420 | 2.98 | 0.71               |       |      |
Table 8. One-way analysis of variance for different language levels of students under the influencing factors of Business English anxiety

| Dimension     | Level     | N   | Mean | Standard deviation | F       | P       |
|---------------|-----------|-----|------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Learner factors | High Level | 144 | 2.45 | 0.96               | 28.152  | 0.000   |
|               | Middle Level | 325 | 2.94 | 0.85               |         |         |
|               | Low Level   | 162 | 3.14 | 0.83               |         |         |
| Teacher factors | High Level | 144 | 2.05 | 0.83               | 13.578  | 0.000   |
|               | Middle Level | 325 | 2.37 | 0.82               |         |         |
|               | Low Level   | 162 | 2.52 | 0.87               |         |         |
| Peer factors  | High Level  | 144 | 2.3  | 0.86               | 9.403   | 0.000   |
|               | Middle Level | 325 | 2.57 | 0.76               |         |         |
|               | Low Level   | 162 | 2.65 | 0.78               |         |         |
| Other factors | High Level  | 144 | 2.61 | 0.93               | 21.902  | 0.000   |
|               | Middle Level | 325 | 3.04 | 0.8                |         |         |
|               | Low Level   | 162 | 3.2  | 0.85               |         |         |

In summary, there is no significant different between the major and non-major students in terms of different influencing factors such as learners themselves, teachers, peers and others.

Language level difference
In order to explore whether there is a significant difference between different language levels of students from the aspects of learners, teachers, peers and other factors, SPSS was used for one-way analysis of variance (Table 8).

From the aspect of learner influencing factors, the mean value of high-level students was 2.45, that of middle-level students was 2.95, and that of low-level students was 3.14, indicating that the anxiety of students at higher language level is less affected by their own; from the aspect of the teacher factors, the mean of high-level students was 2.05, that of middle-level students was 2.37, and that of low-level students was 2.52, indicating that business English anxiety of high-level students is not easily affected by teachers' teaching methods and styles; From the aspect of peer factors, the mean of high-level students was 2.3, that of middle-level students was 2.57, and that of low-level students was 2.65, indicating that the higher language level of the learner and more intense competition of peers shall have greater influence on business English anxiety level; among other influencing factors, the mean of high-level students was 2.61, and that of middle-level students was 3.04; that of low-level students was 3.2, which indicates that business English anxiety of low-level students is easily subjected to the environment.

CONCLUSIONS
(1) The mean value of business English anxiety for college students was 3.00, which is moderate anxiety;
(2) In the Business English Anxiety Questionnaire, language skill anxiety, examination anxiety and negative assessment anxiety became smaller in turn; among them, the language skill anxiety was ordered in sequence: listening, speaking, reading and writing;
(3) The main factors affecting college students’ Business English anxiety include learners, teachers, peers and others. The study found that business English anxiety is mainly influenced by learner factors, followed by teacher factors and other factors, as well as peer factors;
(4) There are significant differences in Business English learning anxiety between different genders and between different language levels of learners in the anxiety of learners, but no significant differences between English majors and non-English majors.

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