Construction of a Chinese Language Learning Anxiety Scale: Towards a Theoretical Model

Rationale

In the past two decades, the study of anxiety has attracted the attention of an increasing number of researchers and language instructors. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) proposed that foreign language anxiety was a situation-specific anxiety construct independent of other types of anxieties. In addition, they offered an instrument, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), to measure foreign language anxiety. To date, the FLCAS, a generic foreign language anxiety scale, has been the most widely used instrument to measure foreign language learners’ anxiety for all target languages. However, the FLCAS mainly addresses foreign language speaking anxiety and it does not take into consideration the characteristics of specific target languages.

Many existing studies (e.g. Saito, Horwitz & Garza, 1999; Kim, 2000; Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999; Cheng, 2004) have shown that foreign language learners' anxiety is associated with the four skills rather than just with speaking. In addition, studies (e.g. Samimy & Tabuse, 1992; Aida, 1994; Norman, 1996; Le, 2004) seem to have indicated that the target language has an effect on foreign language anxiety.

Since Chinese is very different from English and other alphabetic languages due to its tones and character-based writing system, a measure of anxiety that is specifically designed for Chinese language learners may be necessary. As studies have suggested that speaking, listening, reading, and writing anxieties in foreign language learning are distinguishable constructs, the present study views the construct of foreign language anxiety as having four components: speaking anxiety, listening anxiety, reading anxiety, and writing anxiety.

The goal of the present study is to construct a reliable and valid Chinese Language Learning Anxiety Scale, which reflects the four components of foreign language anxiety and addresses characteristics of the Chinese language.

Research Procedure

The scale development process consisted of the following three phases: 1) generation of an initial pool of items; 2) consultation with experts for content validity of the items; 3) administration of the revised pool of items to Chinese language learners for item analysis and tests of the reliability and validity of the scale.

The initial pool of scale items were based on existing anxiety scales and Chinese language instructors and learners’ perceptions. Experts were consulted for the content validity of the initial pool. Items approved by all the experts were then administered to CFL learners for item analysis and tests of reliability and validity.

428 (225 males, 202 females; 1 missing the gender indication) CFL learners at two large public U.S. universities participated in this study. These participants had an age range from 15 to 59 ($M = 20.9$, $SD = 3.9$). They were taking credit-bearing Chinese language courses at the two universities. Participants were asked to fill out a two-part survey. The survey was a combination of the 27-item Chinese Language
Major Findings

EFA and cross-validation analyses showed that Chinese Language Learning Anxiety has three components: Speaking Anxiety, Listening Anxiety, and Reading & Writing Anxiety, a finding that provides evidence for the construct validity of the Chinese Language Learning Anxiety Scale. Results of reliability analyses and correlation analyses indicated that the final 16-item Chinese Language Learning Anxiety Scale and its three sub-scales have good internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, and criterion-related validity.

References.


