

The Foreign Language Anxiety and Self Coping Strategies of Chinese Language Learners in Vietnam


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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the sources of Chinese learning anxiety among Chinese learners in Vietnam and the strategies and methods used to cope with anxiety. Based on the findings, we suggest effective strategies to relieve learners' learning anxiety caused by different anxiety-inducing situations. The results of this study showed that (1) seven factors, namely learners' own anxiety, teachers, peers, the characteristics of the Chinese language itself, fear of making mistakes, test anxiety and the learning environment, were the main causes of Chinese learners' anxiety. (2) When Chinese learners face anxiety, they try to cope with it through independent learning and seeking assistance from teachers. In addition, because Chinese is a challenging language, they also constantly adjust their feelings to face the learning tasks, strengthen their motivation to overcome anxiety, and increase their self-confidence in learning Chinese through repeated practice.

Keywords: Vietnam, International School, High school students, Chinese learning anxiety, Self coping strategies

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Introduction

With China becoming one of the world's leading economies, the desire of students to learn Chinese has also increased dramatically, "according to the State Hanban, the number of Chinese learners worldwide has now exceeded 100 million" (Wang, 2020). In addition, China's Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road are contributing significantly to the growing number of Chinese language learners (Ting &

Susan, 2018). Chinese has become the second most common foreign language worldwide (Moloney & Xu, 2015). Due to the increased ties and cooperation between China and ASEAN countries, teaching the Chinese language in Vietnam is rapidly developing, with more students learning Chinese every year (Tham & Cheng, 2019). As of 2019, 35 Vietnamese universities offered new courses in Chinese language, enrolling about 4,000 students annually (Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, 2019).

However, Chinese characters, especially their glyphs and the pronunciation patterns of non-alphabetic clues, gives the impression that Chinese is difficult to learn (Ma, 2020). More importantly, the U.S. Department of State considers Chinese "a challenging language for learners" (U.S. Department of State, 2018). Additionally, the large number of homophones makes it difficult for learners to remember the correct characters and their meanings.

As a result, Chinese learners face many challenges in the learning process. Studies have shown that most learners of Chinese as a foreign language experience moderate levels of anxiety in the classroom (Liu, 2020; Zhang, 2016). Li (2013) showed that most learners of Chinese as a foreign language in Southeast Asia exhibit moderate levels of anxiety. Learning anxiety is considered to be a key factor affecting students' academic performance (D'Agostino, 2022). Some scholars have found that foreign language learning anxiety may have a negative impact on students' attitudes and motivation to learn a foreign language (Phillips, 1990; Spitali, 2000). Bailey et al. (2003) and Gardner et al. (1987) found a positive correlation between high dropout rates and high levels of foreign language proficiency anxiety in their studies. There are also problems such as low learner retention in the learning and teaching process (Orton, 2008).

However, Liu (2018) argued that foreign language anxiety "is a complex construct, with little literature on learners of languages other than English as a second or foreign language, and even less on Chinese as a second or Chinese as a foreign language". There is little research on contextualized anxiety that considers the characteristics of the Chinese language (Chen, 2021). Therefore, anxiety is an important issue to address when learning Chinese as a foreign language in Vietnam.

Wang (2020) argued that the content of anxiety research should expand and deepen the research on the correlation between aspects such as self-regulation strategies and language anxiety. There is little literature on the causes of anxiety and strategies for coping with Chinese language learning anxiety among high school Chinese language learners in Vietnamese international schools. This study was prompted to investigate this issue in depth, and we hope the study results can provide a reference for Vietnamese Chinese language teachers' teaching.

In his affective filtering hypothesis, Krashen (1982) stated that affective factors influence learning when learning a language, either positively or negatively. Affective factors include motivation, attitude, personality, anxiety, and empathy. The greatest affective barrier to language acquisition may be anxiety, which significantly impacts students' classroom performance and achievement (Fu & Zheng, 2022). When students have higher

anxiety while learning Chinese, Chinese language acquisition may be more difficult. Affective filtering theory is most frequently used to explore the effects of anxiety on foreign language learning. Based on the theory of affective filtration, this study focused on the influence of anxiety on language learning and investigated the source of Chinese learning anxiety among students in Hanoi, Vietnam. Yu (2012) believed that students and teachers are the main causes of anxiety, so the social factors in this study include teacher factors and peer factors. Furthermore, according to the self-regulated behavior component of Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, to self-regulate, learners need to use self-observation, self-judgment, and self-response, which points out that individuals need to monitor and regulate their behavior accordingly. These three processes interact with each other. Self-regulated learning strategies may vary depending on the personal, behavioral, and environmental factors that need to be more clearly described. Students can develop metacognitive strategies and use these self-regulatory strategies to improve their language learning (Mohd Kosnin, 2007; Mourd, 2009). After understanding the sources of learners' anxiety and using the theory of self-regulation in social learning theory as research support, the purpose of this study is to explore the sources of Chinese language learners' anxiety and their own coping strategies in Vietnam, and to explore effective strategies to be adopted for different anxiety situations and causes of learning anxiety in order to reduce Chinese learners' learning anxiety and improve their language proficiency. According to the above research background and research objectives, the questions of this study are:

- A. What are the sources of anxiety among international secondary students in Vietnam who are learning Chinese?
- B. How do international secondary students in Vietnam cope with anxiety in the process of learning Chinese?

Theory

Krashen's Emotional Filtering Hypothesis Theory

Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis stated that "affective factors influence and control the acquisition of a second language." It also states "the affective filter hypothesis uses the affective component as an affective filter to capture the relationship between affective variables and the second language acquisition process, whereby language input needs to be emotionally filtered before it becomes language and is actually acquired and absorbed by the learner." Wang and Wu (2020) suggested that learners with high affective filters create a hostile environment, creating psychological barriers that prevent them from acquiring or receiving input. Therefore, students feel insecure about their use of language for communication. García Uquillas (2021) argued that anxiety may prevent the conversion of input into the intake and the transformation of uttered elements into comprehension. They hypothesize that low filtering is encouraged by creating a relaxed atmosphere where students do not feel defensive. Affective filters play an essential role in the foreign language learning process. Anxiety is one of the factors in the affective filter that can hinder learning a language, so learners should be supported in lowering their affective filter to obtain language input. This study used the affective filter theory to investigate the impact of anxiety as an affective factor on language learning and the sources of anxiety for Chinese learners, and to analyze the causes of their anxiety.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory focuses on the role of observational learning and self-regulation in triggering human behavior, emphasizes the interaction between human behavior and the environment, and explores the influence of individual cognition, behavior, and environmental factors and their interaction with human behavior. The theory focuses on understanding, predicting, reshaping, or changing behavior. Xu and Wu (2015) argued that the theory includes four core components: observational learning theory, triadic interaction theory, self-regulation theory, and self-effect theory, and stated that the interaction between the individual and the environment influences human behavior. Shih (2019) argued that self-efficacy strength is indirectly related to self-regulation strategies, mediated by goal setting and expected effort. Participants set concise goals and exert effort to implement strategies to accomplish academic tasks only after they believe in their abilities. Yao (2016) showed that the "observational learning" and "self-efficacy" theories elaborate on the important influence of observation and imitation in individual learners' behavioral acquisition and the role of individual learners' self-perceptions in learning potential. In this study, teachers and peers, as social factors, should focus on role modeling, teacher-student interactions, peer support, and learner emotions, which motivate students to develop a positive sense of self. Using social learning theory, this study argues that foreign language learners as self-regulators should understand and confront their anxiety when facing foreign language learning anxiety, and also try to adopt appropriate coping methods to reduce their anxiety.

Method

Research Implementation

In this study, an intentional sample of 12 students from grades 9 to 12 of an international school in Hanoi, Vietnam, was selected for semi-structured interviews with the consent of the learners. Semi-structured interviews are a flexible way to collect data and provide respondents with an opportunity for honest dialogue in which they can discover how they feel about what they are doing, and explain why they are doing it (Layder, 2013). The interviews were conducted in face-to-face or online meetings. Because the language instruction in international school is English, all interviews were conducted in English so that the participants could express their thoughts and feelings more completely. The respondents were provided with the study content and given an informed consent form before the interview. After the interviews were completed, all interviews were transcribed and given to the participants to check for accuracy. Data were analyzed using the MAXQDA software. Regarding research ethics, the confidentiality of respondent data was strictly protected to ensure validity while contacting respondents, interviewing, and subsequent data analysis.

Participants

The selected International School in Vietnam is a member of the East Asian Regional Conference of Overseas

Schools (EARCOS) and is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). There were 12 participants in this study, three males and nine females, aged 15-17, from Vietnam, Korea, and the United States. Nine students plan to take the AP Chinese Language and Culture Examination, and three desire to communicate in Chinese.

Table 1. Interviewees' profiles.

Code Name	Gender(M/F)	Grade	Nationality	Chinese Learning Years
A1	Male	10	American	8 Years
A2	Female	11	Vietnamese	3 Years
A3	Male	1	Vietnamese	6 Years
A4	Female	9	Korean	7 Years
A5	Female	9	Korean	7 Years
A6	Female	10	Vietnamese	8 Years
B1	Female	11	Vietnamese	4 Years
B2	Female	10	Vietnamese	8 Years
B3	Female	10	Vietnamese	8 Years
B4	Female	12	Vietnamese	3 Years
B5	Male	10	Vietnamese	2 Years
B6	Female	10	American	5 Years

Interview Outline

This study was designed using a self-administered interview outline that was reviewed and organized based on the literature. The interviews included a total of nine open-ended questions, and Patton (1990) suggested that the interviewee response format should be open-ended; the researcher did not provide or predetermine the phrases or other types of responses that respondents must use to express their thoughts and feelings. The open-ended response strategy helped to capture the complexity of the respondents' personal perceptions and experiences. Questions 1 and 3 corresponded to the causes of Chinese language anxiety, questions 2 and 9 to the coping strategies students used for Chinese language learning anxiety, question 4 to the duration of Chinese language learning factor, questions 5, 6, and 7 to the teacher factor, and question 8 to the peer factor. The first question was based on Basith et al.'s (2019) study. Questions 2 and 9 refer to the description of the study by Li and Jiang (2020). Question 4 was referenced from Zhao and Whitchurch's (2011) and Luo's (2013) studies. Questions 3 and 5 referred to Von Wörde's (2003) study. Questions 6 and 7 referred to Xie and Luo's (2021) study. The 8th question referred to the study of Wang and Leon (2020).

<u>No</u>	<u>Questions</u>
1	Do you feel nervous, anxious, or worried when taking Chinese classes? If so, what are the reasons for your negative emotions?
2	What methods do you choose to use to reduce your negative emotions while studying?
3	When learning Chinese listening, speaking, reading, and writing, what aspects make you feel anxious? And describe how these aspects make you anxious.
4	How long have you been learning Chinese? Compared to the past (when learning Chinese for the first time), what do you think is the change in learning mood?
5	In the Chinese class, what teaching activities or teaching strategies do you think your Chinese teacher can use to relieve your anxiety in listening/speaking/reading/writing?
6	In the Chinese class, what does your Chinese teacher do that makes you nervous or anxious?
7	What do you think your Chinese teacher can do to increase your Chinese learning emotional experience and sense of achievement, and thus relieve your negative emotions?
8	In the Chinese class, what do your classmates do that make you nervous or anxious? Or make you feel less negative?
9	For you, what are some good ways to learn Chinese that can make it easier for you to understand what the teacher says? Or to increase your confidence in learning Chinese, thereby reducing your anxiety.

Data Coding and Analysis

Chen (2000) pointed out that data coding and analysis are used to process the initial data by systematizing and organizing them according to the purpose of the study. The researcher then focuses on the material, summarizes the essence and reflects on it, with the goal of interpreting the collected data in a meaningful way. This study used thematic analysis, which was developed in the 1980s and is centered on the development of a "thematic framework" (Wang et al., 2006).

In this study, MAXQDA was used to analyze the data and code the interview results. The operational steps of qualitative coding include three stages: open coding, spindle coding, and selective coding (Strauss, 1990). Yin (2016) argued that a credible study is one in which the researcher can properly and correctly assemble and interpret the data so that the findings and conclusions of the study are accurately presented to the world under study. In this study, student interviews were audio-recorded to record the key information and content of the interviews. The interview transcripts were checked to make a verbatim transcript, which was reviewed by the interviewees. Finally, the information was analyzed to ensure research credibility. After the coding was completed, it was discussed with and agreed upon by three experts. This researcher is a master's degree student in educational administration. Expert 1 and Expert 2 are Ed.D. The experts were used to confirm analytical credibility, results, and correct use of data or methodological triangulation to ensure that similar results were

obtained (Wang & Wang, 2010). The outline of this study was revised four times by the supervisor and was shared with the interviewees 2 hours before the interview. The interviewees were introduced to the study and issued informed consent forms, and the formal interview began after signing the informed consent form. The interviewees were allowed to fully express their opinions during the interview. In terms of research ethics, the confidentiality of the respondents' data was strictly protected to ensure validity in the process of contacting respondents, interviewing, and subsequent data analysis.

Results

Analysis of The Sources of Anxiety Among Chinese Learners in Vietnam

Learner Factor

Many previous studies have explored and analyzed various aspects that contribute to the sources of foreign language learning anxiety. These results usually fall into two main categories: the learner factor and the situational factor (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). The results of the interviews in this study also showed that learners generally appear to lack confidence and experience uncertainty about whether they are using the correct wording, and also believe that their Chinese language has caused them anxiety because they have not made progress after a certain period of study. This is in step with Anwar and Climis's (2017) suggestion that factors including self-confidence interact in various ways to cause and increase foreign language learners' anxiety levels. Therefore, learners' own factors have a definite influence on the development of Chinese language learning anxiety. An example of a participant's view is as follows:

Although I have been learning Chinese for a long time, I am not sure if my Chinese has improved too much over the years. There are words in a sentence that I don't recognize even if I have come across them before, which makes me question my comprehension and memory of Chinese grammar, and sentence structure is also important(B3).

Teacher Factor

Rubio (2017) argued that the role of the teacher may have a considerable impact on students' anxiety because students with high levels of anxiety say they feel more relaxed only in the presence of certain teachers. Fu (2020) pointed out in her study that the teaching materials used by teachers may have a serious negative impact on students' development of language initiative. Textbooks and support materials vary greatly in difficulty, so the use of textbooks and improper teaching may cause a great deal of pressure on students' learning and seriously affect their self-confidence in learning. Similar results were found in this study. The results of the interviews showed that the content of the teaching materials and teaching methods were causes of anxiety among Chinese learners in Vietnam. The high degree of difficulty learning the Chinese language coupled with the teaching materials makes it challenging for the learners to understand all the content they have studied. An example comment is as follows:

I think sometimes the learning content is difficult and it makes me worried because it contains lots

of vocabulary and grammar. (A4)

Students may experience anxiety caused by the teacher's teaching methods. Some of the reasons for learner anxiety include being asked questions, the teacher's fast pace of teaching, responding to email assignments in a limited time, doing cultural presentations, and the teacher giving instructions in the Chinese language to the class so fast that learners do not understand the instructions. This result is consistent with Zulfikar's (2022) study that foreign language learners usually become anxious when the teacher invites them to speak in the classroom. It is also believed that some of the activities or teaching methods designed and led by the teacher are a source of anxiety for learners. One participant made the following observation:

You need to finish the culture presentation and the e-mail response within a certain time, but I feel the time is too short for me to finish the whole e-mail response. It makes me anxious. (A5)

Peer Factor

Zhang and Lai (2023) suggested that peer pressure is a factor in the anxiety of foreign language learners. Li (2019) argued that today's students have a strong desire to win, which leads to increased competition among students, and as a result, students may feel some pressure and anxiety. This study confirms the view of these two researchers that peers cause learning anxiety among Chinese learners in Vietnam. Pressure and anxiety from peers are caused primarily in the following ways: learners compare themselves with their peers and feel inferior to them, learners worry about receiving bad comments from their peers, and the learners lack effort and seriousness in group activities. One participant made the following comment:

There's one kid who's really good at Chinese and she is Korean. I used to be the best student and now I'm not and she's not even Chinese so it's a little bit embarrassing. (B6)

Chinese Characteristics Factor

The interviews in this study confirmed that speaking activities produced the most anxiety from the perspective of students, while teacher characteristics, such as a non-severe attitude towards error correction, and a positive, friendly, and relaxed attitude toward students could reduce student anxiety. The results of the interviews showed that both the speaking and reading aspects of Chinese had an impact on the anxiety production of Chinese learners in Vietnam. In terms of speaking, classroom speaking anxiety, oral presentation, cultural presentation, and pronunciation were factors that contributed to student anxiety in learning Chinese. This is consistent with the study of Pelzl et al. (2019), who noted that when the second language spoken is Chinese it is often considered a great challenge for learners of voiceless languages. Horwitz et al. (1986), Liu (2006), Young (1990), Phillips (1992), and Cheng et al. (1999) also argued that speaking or communicating in the foreign language classroom has been the most important source of anxiety. Speaking can be defined as a productive and engaging ability and involves four distinct cognitive stages: conceptualization, formation, clarity, and self-monitoring (Pawlak, 2015). Since this skill is done in a short period of time, it will be difficult for the speaker to

control all stages. One participant's perspective was as follows:

The aspect that made me feel anxious most is definitely speaking. Speaking Mandarin is very difficult compared to English or Vietnamese. It's way harder and they have different tones. (A2)

In addition, according to the interview results, too much Chinese vocabulary, inflections, conjunctions, grammar, syntax, idioms, and colloquialisms are difficult to master and are sources of anxiety for Chinese language learners. Horwitz et al. (1986) asserted that one of the most anxiety-provoking situations for most students is communication because it includes many language learning processes such as word pronunciation, word recognition, meaning, and grammatical rules, and is therefore difficult to master (Fielding, 2007). Spencer (2015) also explained the problems and challenges of learning Chinese characters and Chinese as a foreign language because Mandarin is a very complex language, and learners need to overcome many difficulties in learning Chinese characters. For example, first of all, like other foreign language learners, they have to deal with stress and anxiety. Secondly, they have to deal with Chinese characters and the problems specific to Chinese characters, such as the morphological differences between Chinese characters and other languages, the acquisition of tones, and the complex writing system of Chinese characters. One participant made the following comment:

You have to remember a lot of phrases and sentences to structure your response, which can be stressful. There is also the worry of forgetting structures and grammar. (A1)

In the case of Chinese listening, listening texts being too long, relatively fast, and including too much vocabulary such that the full text cannot be understood in its entirety are causes of learners' Chinese learning anxiety. This result confirms Lai and Dilley's (2016) view that phonological differences in Chinese are what makes it different from other languages, which requires students to have meta-linguistic awareness during listening practice. An example participant's perspective is as follows:

For the listening, sometimes you might hear a word that you don't know, especially if it's a really hard assessment, you can't turn it back to hear it again. Or the speaker speaks too fast; it makes me worried. (B2)

Chen et al. (2014) noted that Chinese has certain linguistic characteristics, including the unique composition of strokes, radicals, and characters, and writing in Chinese may be different from writing in other languages; therefore, writing in Chinese is more likely to cause anxiety than practicing other language skills. This is consistent with the results of the interviews in this study, where the short time given by teachers for writing tasks and the difficulty of the strokes, radicals, and structure of Chinese characters are factors that contribute to learner anxiety when it comes to writing in Chinese. One participant made the following observation:

You need to finish the culture presentation and the e-mail response within a certain time; I feel the time is too short for me to finish the whole e-mail response, so it makes me anxious. (A5)

Zhao et al. (2013) found in their study that given the linguistic differences in learning mechanisms between native and target languages, second language reading anxiety mainly stems from unfamiliar texts on different

topics as well as comprehension. Xu (2018) argued that although a number of Chinese characters exist in the Korean writing system as well as in their own country, Korean students may get confused when learning Chinese because there are some variations in the pronunciation, meaning, and character form of these characters. The results of the interviews also indicated that the difficulty in recognizing Chinese characters and the inability to understand all content when reading were reasons for the anxiety of Chinese learners. One participant's opinion was expressed as follows:

You know how to pronounce it when it comes to typing things down, but you get a list of Chinese characters and need to choose. If there's a word I only know how to say and then try to identify the correct words without a dictionary, or just based on what it looks like, that causes me anxiety. (A3)

Afraid of Making Mistakes Anxiety Factor

Most learners will worry about making mistakes in front of their peers when using Chinese because they are not sure whether they are using the correct words and phrases, which contributes to learning anxiety among Chinese language learners. This result is consistent with Aichhorn and Puck's (2017) finding that many foreign language learners worry about reacting incorrectly or performing poorly in front of their peers because they are usually ridiculed and humiliated by their peers, which causes them to lose self-esteem. This fear has a negative impact on foreign language learning. An example participant perspective is as follows:

I make mistakes and it's not that I get a negative reaction from the teacher, but just that I'm afraid of making mistakes. (B4)

Test Anxiety Factor

According to Cakici (2016), test anxiety is considered as a kind of anxiety in which learners are afraid of experiencing failure in academic assessment in a test situation. Elaldi (2016) stated that fear of quizzes is one of the causes of anxiety in foreign language classroom settings because learners are constantly being assessed in the classroom. The results of the interviews showed that quiz anxiety was one of the factors that produced anxiety among Chinese learners in Vietnam, and that learners were worried and nervous when doing the task being assessed. This echoes Young's (1991) statement that the more unfamiliar a student is with the content and format of a language test, the more anxiety the learner experiences. One participant's perspective was as follows:

There is a lot more stress involved in the assignments, as they often carry a high weight in assessments (A1).

Learning Environment Factor

According to the results of the interviews, the way the school assesses makes Chinese learners anxious. This echoes Xu's (2018) suggestion that schools should judge students' abilities in a comprehensive way through

multidimensional assessments based on multiple test scores by including a certain percentage of the final and midterm written or oral test scores in students' final grades so that the assessments are more credible and at the same time can reduce students' anxiety about a particular test. One participant's perspective was as follows:

I will say that these big projects can be a bit stressful sometimes because there is a lot of weight and pressure on the performance. If you don't do well, your grade could go down, but if you do very well, your grade could go up. The risk involved in how your grade will change can be stressful at times. (A1)

Strategies for Chinese Learners in Vietnam to Cope with Anxiety

Learners' Learning Methods

Hazimah and Margaretha (2022) pointed out that students should make full use of the opportunity in class to practice speaking, ask the teacher for more advice, and communicate with their classmates in Chinese more often. This is consistent with the results of the interviews. The interview results showed that when learners experienced Chinese learning anxiety, some of the coping strategies they used included: when they encountered words they did not understand or did not know they would use online dictionaries by themselves, or when they had questions, they would often ask their peers or teachers for advice, and practice speaking Chinese with their peers after class. Hazimah and Margaretha (2022) also suggested that students should have the habit of pre-reading what they are going to learn in class and reviewing what they have learned after class in order to ease their anxiety about classroom instruction. This is consistent with the interview results that pre-reading before class and reviewing after class will also enable learners to better grasp what they have learned in Chinese and thus increase their confidence to some extent. An example comment is as follows:

Thanks to the internet, I have access to a variety of online resources such as dictionaries like Pleco and 有道翻译 that I can use to quickly search and learn more about words that I don't understand, which are extremely helpful in improving my understanding and proficiency in Chinese as they help to clear up misunderstandings and fill in any gaps in my learning. (A1)

Good attitudes will have a positive impact on students' future learning (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). Anwar and Balcioglu (2016) argued that students' abilities, strategies, and attitudes determine the success of their language learning. This is consistent with the results of the interviews, which showed that learners perceived Chinese as a challenging language, but they tried to adjust their emotions to make themselves learn Chinese with a relaxed, stress-free attitude. In addition, the learners' motivation to learn Chinese included the possibility of taking the AP Chinese examination in the future and the possibility of communicating in Chinese, and the fact that Chinese would help them in their future studies and work were also strategies used by the learners when they were anxious about learning Chinese. This is in line with Bereketoğlu's (2018) finding that motivation is one of the key factors in foreign language learning because, in addition to being a motivator to initiate and sustain learning, it is an important factor to compensate for the lack of competence when the learning situation becomes difficult. One participant's

view was as follows:

Although Chinese is difficult, I use the method that I learned in Chinese class with a relaxed attitude. So there's no stress while I'm learning Chinese. (B5)

Listening to Chinese music, watching Chinese-related videos, learning Chinese in movies, and learning from mistakes based on feedback or corrections given by teachers are coping strategies adopted by Chinese learners in Vietnam when they experience anxiety. This is in line with the results of previous studies, as Zhang (2022) argued that the process of watching Chinese movies is also a process of learning Chinese, and students may imitate and rehearse the more interesting lines, which helps to stimulate their desire to express themselves orally. Through these strategies, students feel that their Chinese is gradually improving, thus alleviating their feelings of anxiety. An example participant perspective is as follows:

I think we can make ourselves look back on the mistakes and you make us redo it. Then we would definitely redo it and learn from the mistakes and your feedback is better so that we can make improvements. (B1)

Exploring Effective Strategies for Different Anxiety Situations and Causes of Learning Anxiety among Chinese Learners in Vietnam

Strategies for The Learner Factor

Li (2018) pointed out that teachers should pay attention to creating a cordial classroom atmosphere in English teaching, and offer timely praise and affirmation for students' progress to increase their interest and confidence in learning English. In addition, Zhao (2023) argued that creating a relatively friendly and comfortable learning atmosphere is conducive to establishing a good teacher-student relationship. Teachers should promote cooperative foreign language learning among students, especially for foreign language learners who feel anxious, which can stimulate their sense of security. Foreign language teachers should be aware of students' unique personalities, work to reduce peer pressure, and tailor instruction to different students' foreign language anxiety levels and foreign language abilities. Teachers' friendliness, support, and humor with innovative and fun classroom activities can increase learners' positive emotions about learning (Li et al., 2020). This is consistent with the interview results that creating a harmonious environment for learning Chinese, a positive, amiable teaching attitude of the teacher, and willingness to give help to students will make students feel closer to the teacher. Students will not worry about making mistakes, and being encouraged and rewarded by the teacher can alleviate their anxiety. One participant's view was as follows:

The Chinese teacher is always very encouraging and cheerful. Even if you know you have been having a bad day, you wouldn't show it and it would not impact our needs. I think that's very notable. (A3)

Strategies for The Teacher Factor

The results of the interviews indicated that, in terms of the content chosen by teachers, teachers preparing

interesting and practical content for teaching materials and adding game-like and cultural classroom activities will make learning interesting. Thus, it is more active for learners, and also reduces learners' anxiety about learning Chinese. This is consistent with the study of Xiao and Zhang (2018), who pointed out that adding folklore to Chinese language teaching can increase interest in learning Chinese and can also alleviate the phenomenon of anxiety generated by learners. In terms of teaching methods, teachers should provide students with enough opportunities to practice their Chinese language skills in Chinese classes, especially by giving non-graded forms of practice. In addition, teachers should also put the class slides, practice vocabulary, and review materials on the school's learning system platform so that students can easily find the learning materials to practice anytime and anywhere, which will make learners more proficient in Chinese skills and thus provide them with self-confidence. Zheng and Cheng (2018) suggested that teachers should adjust their teaching resources and try to use learning materials that are meaningful but less likely to cause anxiety in order to facilitate students' language learning at an optimal level. The level of task difficulty should be appropriate to stimulate and challenge student language development while minimizing student anxiety. One participant's perspective was as follows:

My Chinese teacher has helped me feel more confident and less anxious when it comes to giving presentations, doing interviews, or completing reading and listening assignments. One of the ways she's done this is through constant practice in class, where we've had the opportunity to do cultural presentations, interviews, and email responses. This has really helped me feel less anxious and nervous when it comes to listening, speaking, or reading in Chinese. (A1)

When administering pop quizzes, language teachers should manage the difficulty level of the quizzes and determine how often they need to be administered. In addition, teachers should inform students in advance about course requirements, materials, and how assessments will be conducted, which may be helpful in alleviating learners' quiz anxiety (Fang & Tang, 2021). The results of the interviews indicated that teachers who reduce the number of time-limited quizzes to assess students as well as allow students to be able to redo some tasks or quizzes would reduce learner anxiety. In addition, detailed feedback on tasks from the teacher is helpful for the learners to understand what is wrong and how to correct it so that they can improve their Chinese language skills, which makes the learners less worried to a certain extent. This finding is also in line with Chaudron's (1988) suggestion that the teacher write on the board the mistakes or serious errors that students often make and share them with the class, as it is important to provide scaffolding for students. In addition, informing students about tests or tasks and how they will be assessed in advance of doing them or answering questions will give students sufficient time to prepare, which will have a significant impact on reducing learners' anxiety levels. One participant's perspective was as follows:

The teacher can pick the people that need to speak from the class ahead of time so we can be prepared. (B5)

From the participants' feedback, it is known that teachers should add pinyin to some of the more difficult Chinese characters so that students can recognize them through pinyin, and they should also increase the number of practice sessions to consolidate vocabulary so that students can better grasp the vocabulary they have learned

and thus increase their confidence. This echoes Chaudron's (1988) statement that increased daily practice is effective in addressing this problem. In addition, when teaching grammar and syntax, teachers can compare the similarities and differences of different languages and give detailed explanations and more examples, which can make learners more aware of the application of grammar and syntax in Chinese. Additionally, teachers should also use more Chinese in the Chinese classroom so that students have more opportunities to listen to Chinese and thus improve their listening skills. This echoes Inada's (2021) idea that students' foreign language skills will gradually improve if they have more opportunities to speak English and receive input from other people's conversations. Participants' perspectives were as follows:

I think because repetitive learning has been proven in psychology and if you just spend 10 minutes going through the vocab and the quizlet you will remember the character better because you learn it so much and you can't forget. (B4)

I think for the sentence structure, we could compare the structure to other languages so we can see the difference between them. We can recognize the difference and put them in other orders so we can see how the structure works. (B5)

The reduction in students' anxiety helped when they engaged in more group activities or discussions. This mirrors the finding of Azizpour and Gholami (2022) that teachers can create a relaxed and positive environment by providing students with sufficient interactive and collaborative classroom activities. For example, in a linguistics class, teachers can prepare some topic or classroom discussion. One participant made the following comment:

The small group activities and discussions in class help me to reduce my negative feelings. because being able to work with your classmates you can receive new input or learn their learning methods as well, and as you interact with more people sharing knowledge. It is a really good way to learn and create new study methods. So, group projects especially with the students we are all familiar with and they're all friendly, it really helps a lot. But mixing the groups around, meeting and working with new people is also important because you'll experience new things and push yourself out of your comfort zone, which helps with learning as well, and reduces the nervousness. (B2)

Strategies for The Characteristics of The Chinese Language Factor

It was revealed by most of the participants that teachers should do more to encourage students to not only listen to Chinese but also speak Chinese in the classroom. Students could also improve their Chinese by listening to Chinese songs and watching Chinese movies and TV programs. This is similar to Zhang's (2022) description of students learning Chinese while watching Chinese movies. They can imitate and rehearse the lines in the movies that interest them. It echoes that it is beneficial to increase students' willingness to express themselves orally. In addition, some participants also commented that teachers need to give feedback and correct students' intonation and pronunciation if their pronunciation is not accurate so that students can correct their Chinese pronunciation and thus increase their confidence in speaking Chinese. This is also in line with Wang's (2017) statement that whenever learners make more phonological as well as grammatical errors, teachers should try to use more non-

explicit correction strategies to correct the errors. One participant's view was as follows:

If she did correct my tones every time, that would be a lot of corrections and would feel bad, but it would make me more confident in knowing what I'm supposed to be saying. (B6)

Zhao (2023) argued that students' familiarity with reading content in a foreign language can reduce text complexity and foreign language reading anxiety. In providing feedback, teachers can use indirect methods to correct students' foreign language errors in order to minimize their foreign language anxiety levels. This is consistent with the interview results, reading aloud as well as by reading some books outside of the Chinese classroom. Also, teachers can teach students some reading and test-taking skills, such as guessing the meaning of words and themes and creating writing templates. According to Ma (2020), teachers should take the lead in guiding students to recognize the unique characteristics of Chinese characters and the Chinese language, and in this way, stimulate students' interest in Chinese characters and Chinese language learning, thus reducing their anxiety about the Chinese language, especially Chinese characters. This is consistent with the interview findings that when teachers provide students with practice sheets of stroke order to practice writing Chinese characters, it is helpful in improving learners' reading and writing skills. An example comment is as follows:

When I was in Malaysia, my Chinese teacher told me to read a lot of Chinese articles and she gave me a Chinese article every week to read. I used this method when I prepared for the HSK. It helped me be fluent in reading and be a faster reader. (A5)

Strategies for The Learning Environment

The results of the interviews showed that the harmonious and supportive learning environment created by teachers has a significant effect on reducing learners' anxiety. Some appropriate additional Chinese class time in school can give students more time to learn and master the Chinese knowledge and skills they have learned, which reduces students' Chinese learning concerns. This echoes Yin's (2015) statement that teaching and learning is a multilateral and cooperative process between teachers and students, and between students and students. Creating a democratic and harmonious classroom atmosphere not only increases respect as well as understanding between teachers and students, but also increases students' motivation to learn, and reduces students' anxiety levels. One participant's perspective was as follows:

I feel our school community is very welcoming. Everyone here is really kind regarding studies and doing classes. When I don't know where to go and have any questions, I'll ask any person in the school to help me and they would really help me very enthusiastically. It would help rescue me from the negative feelings. (A4)

Chen (2019) and Crawford et al. (2019) indicated that peer interaction facilitates language learning. Most participants also agreed that peers were not a factor in their anxiety. Moreover, positive, helpful, and friendly attitudes of peers, as well as encouragement given among peers would somewhat increase their confidence and thus reduce their foreign language learning anxiety. The feedback and suggestions given

by peers during practice can help students learn from each other and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, thus improving their Chinese language skills. This is in line with Murphey et al.'s (2014) idea that students need to help each other and exchange ideas to provide each other with the learning resources they need, thus increasing group motivation to learn. One participant explained as follows:

I don't have issues with being nervous or anxious because of my classmates in my Chinese class. My peers gave me encouragement when I was not as good as other students so I am not insecure. My classmates are positive and always willing to motivate fellow students, which helps prevent anxiety in learning. Working with my classmates on classwork, group work, or reviewing the material also helps me feel less anxious, because I can learn well while spending time with my friends. (B2)

From the feedback of the participants, we know that some of them found it difficult to learn Chinese at the beginning, especially the Chinese characters, and they did not know how or why to learn Chinese. However, some participants felt that learning Chinese was easy and simple at the beginning, mainly because the content was easy to understand and there was no pressure for grades. In addition, students generally felt that their previous experience of learning Chinese had not only helped them find a suitable method for learning Chinese, but also increased their initiative and motivation to learn Chinese, making it easier and more interesting to learn Chinese now. They gained more confidence, and thus their learning anxiety reduced. This finding is also in agreement with Afiqah (2015) and Basith et al. (2019) who stated that there is a significant effect of length of foreign language learning and language anxiety, with the longer a person's time and experience in learning a language, the less anxiety he/she has. Significant differences were found in various aspects of Chinese language learning anxiety between students in their first year of learning Chinese and those who studied Chinese at the highest level. This difference is due to the experience gained in learning the language that yields similar results. Participants' perspectives were as follows:

At first, I really didn't like learning Chinese because the Chinese characters were so hard compared to English and Korean. It takes me about one hour to just memorize 10 characters. It was really hard and I thought I wasn't showing any improvement in learning Chinese. (A4)

Because when you're younger, especially in elementary school, the environment was very carefree and you didn't have to worry about your grades too much. (B2)

Conclusion

Based on emotional filtering theory and social learning theory, this study investigated the sources of learning anxiety among Chinese learners in an international school in Vietnam and their own coping strategies in the face of anxiety. The study also explored strategies to reduce Chinese learners' learning anxiety according to the specific causes. The results of the study showed that (1) seven factors, namely the learners themselves, teachers, peers, the characteristics of the Chinese language itself, fear of making mistakes, test anxiety, and the learning environment, were the main causes of anxiety among Chinese

learners in Vietnam. (2) When Chinese learners in Vietnam face anxiety, they also try to cope with it through independent learning and by seeking assistance from teachers. In addition, since Chinese is a challenging language, they will constantly adjust their emotions and attitudes to face the learning task, strengthen their motivation to overcome negative emotions, and increase their self-confidence in learning through repeated practice.

Recommendations

About Learner

Teachers should create a harmonious, positive and mutually supportive Chinese learning environment for teachers and students. A positive and amiable teaching attitude of teachers, peer understanding, support and mutual assistance will not only make students feel closer to teachers and other students, but also ease students' nervousness in Chinese classes. As a result, students will be less afraid of making mistakes when using Chinese in the classroom. In addition, positive encouragement from teachers and peers can make students feel a sense of belonging and security, which can increase their self-confidence in learning or using Chinese, and thus improve their Chinese language skills. In addition to learners' attempts to alleviate anxiety, teachers should also help learners to establish correct and positive self-evaluation and self-coping concepts, gradually change negative emotions and try different coping strategies during long-term learning and knowledge accumulation, so as to change learners' own anxiety level and promote their self-improvement.

About Teachers

First of all, in terms of material selection and teaching methods, interesting and practical teaching materials will make students more interested in learning Chinese, while designing games and activities about Chinese culture will make learners more active and enjoy learning Chinese, which will ensure that students improve their Chinese skills and knowledge, and also reduce their anxiety about learning Chinese, thus increasing their positive experience of learning Chinese. In terms of teaching methods, teachers should provide enough opportunities for students to practice their Chinese skills in the Chinese classroom, especially in the form of non-grade-based practice, which will allow students to focus more on practicing their Chinese skills without the pressure of considering grades, and as learners become more proficient in Chinese skills, their self-confidence will increase and thus their negative emotions will reduce. Teachers should also help students find the right way to learn Chinese according to the characteristics of each student.

Secondly, in terms of tests and assessment methods, teachers should inform students about the content of the test or task and the assessment methods in advance of the test or task, so that students can have enough time to prepare, which will have a great impact on reducing learners' anxiety levels. Teachers should also

diversify their assessment methods to minimize time-limited tests that cause anxiety in learners. After the assessment, teachers should give students detailed and easy-to-understand feedback on how to correct their mistakes so that learners can improve their Chinese language skills, which to some extent will make them less worried.

Finally, when teaching Chinese characters, vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, the teacher can reinforce the vocabulary exercises through game-like activities to reinforce the recognition of characters and vocabulary so that students can master the vocabulary they have learned, which will not only increase learners' confidence but also make the exercises fun. In addition, when teaching grammar and syntax, teachers can compare the similarities and differences of different languages and give detailed explanations and more examples, which can make learners understand more about the application of grammar and syntax in Chinese.

About Chinese Language Characteristics

First of all, in terms of Chinese listening and speaking, from the feedback of most participants, it is known that teachers should encourage students to listen and speak more Chinese in classes, and teachers should also use more Chinese so that students have more opportunities to listen to Chinese and thus improve their listening skills. They can also improve their Chinese by listening to Chinese songs and watching Chinese movies and TV programs. Secondly, in the area of reading and writing Chinese, besides reading aloud and reading books outside the Chinese classroom, teachers can also teach students some reading and test-taking skills, such as guessing the meanings of words and topics, creating writing templates, etc. so that students can better understand what they read. Finally, teachers can provide students with practice sheets to practice writing Chinese characters, which can also help improve learners' reading and writing skills.

About Peers

In the Chinese classroom, positive interaction and mutual help among peers, helpful and friendly attitudes, as well as encouragement and support given by peers will, to a certain extent, make learners more positive about learning Chinese and make them more confident, thus reducing their Chinese learning anxiety. In addition, the feedback and suggestions given by peers during practice can make students learn from each other and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, thus improving their Chinese language skills.

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