

UDC: 811.111.371.3

## **THE EFFECTS OF DURATION OF ESP INSTRUCTION ON AGRONOMY STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY**

***Bojović Milevica D., PhD***

***University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Agronomy in Čačak, Serbia***

*This study investigates whether different duration of English for Specific Purposes instruction in academic context can affect the levels of foreign language anxiety of agronomy undergraduate students at the Faculty of Agronomy, University of Kragujevac in Serbia. The students who were exposed to different duration of instruction in English for Specific Purposes generally had different levels of foreign language anxiety, particularly overall foreign language anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation.*

**Key words:** *agronomy, English for specific purposes, language anxiety, instruction.*

## **ВЛИЯНИЕ ПРОДОЛЖИТЕЛЬНОСТИ ESP ИНСТРУКТИРОВАНИЯ НА ИНОЯЗЫЧНУЮ ТРЕВОЖНОСТЬ СТУДЕНТОВ АГРОНОМОВ**

***Божович Милавица Д. PhD.***

***Университет Крагуевац, факультет агрономии, Чачак, Сербия***

**Аннотация:** *Данное исследование изучает, может ли разная продолжительность инструктирования по предмету «Английский язык для специальных целей» в учебном контексте повлиять на уровень иноязычной тревожности студентов агрономического факультета, Университет Крагуевац в Сербии. Студенты, которые подвергались различной продолжительности инструктирования по «Английскому языку для специальных целей», как правило, имеют различный уровень иноязычной тревожности, особенно в целом иноязычной тревожности, опасения общения, и страх негативной оценки.*

**Ключевые слова:** *агрономия, Английский язык для специальных целей, языковая тревожность, инструкция.*

### **Introduction**

Foreign language researchers have been aware that anxiety is often associated with language learning. A unique form of anxiety some people experience in response to learning and/or using a foreign language is referred to as foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 2010: 154). Foreign language anxiety is an aspect of situation-specific anxiety and is conceived as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to *classroom language learning* arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986:

128). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986: 127) argued that foreign language anxiety implies performance evaluation within an academic and social context. They identified three related performance anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, which are believed to provide useful conceptual building blocks for a description of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 1986: 128).

*Communication apprehension* refers to shyness, fear and anxiety experienced when an individual has to communicate with others, manifested as difficulties and discomfort in speaking in dyads or groups (oral communication anxiety) or in public, or in listening to a spoken message (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986: 127). *Test anxiety* is a tendency to become alarmed about the consequences of inadequate performance on a test or other evaluation (Sarason, 1978: 214, cited in Aida, 1994: 157). This type of performance anxiety stems from a fear of failure (Gordon & Sarason, 1955). *Fear of negative evaluation* is an individual's fear of being evaluated, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate themselves negatively (Watson & Friend, 1969: 449). The term is not constrained only to the testing context but can be applied to any social and evaluative context such as job interview or oral presentation in a foreign language classroom.

On the basis of the theoretical principles Elaine Horwitz, together with her associates, created the instrument *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* or FLCAS (Horwitz, 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) becoming the standard measure of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 2010: 158).

The focus of the study is the agronomy engineering students' foreign language anxiety and potential impact of the duration of ESP instruction on their levels of language anxiety.

### **Organization of research**

*The participants* were 60 undergraduate students of the Faculty of Agronomy in Čačak, University of Kragujevac, Serbia, prospective engineers in the field of agronomy and biotechnology, learning English for specific purposes (English in agronomy, agricultural economy, and food technology).

*The variables* used in the research are as follows:

- 1) foreign language anxiety (FLA) and its performance anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation; and,
- 2) the length of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction at university education level – four, six, and eight semesters (sophomores, juniors, and seniors, respectively).

The research *instrument* includes the *Foreign language classroom anxiety scale* (FLCAS) (Horwitz, 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The *FLCAS* items measure foreign language learner's anxiety from the perspective of overall foreign language anxiety, communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The instrument was designed to measure the level of anxiety foreign language learners experience in the language classroom. The scale consists of 33 items and is of the Likert-type, with choices ranging from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). The theoretical range of the instrument FLCAS is from 33 to

165. The positively worded statements express low levels of anxiety and negatively worded statements express high levels of anxiety. The positively worded statements were reverse scored, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5) – now, lower scores indicate higher levels of anxiety while higher scores indicate lower levels of anxiety. The scale is adapted so that the items pertain to learning English as a foreign language.

The instrument was used for collecting the data in the study. It was administered to the participants by their English language teacher during their regular English language classes (English for specific purposes). The measures of descriptive statistics (mean values and standard deviation) and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used for data processing. The obtained data were analyzed using SPSS 13.0 Package for Windows.

In this study the *Foreign language classroom anxiety* scale, the instrument used for measuring foreign language anxiety, is found to be reliable and highly internally consistent since the coefficient Cronbach’s alpha is  $r=0.91$ . This result is within the scope of values found in the literature ranging from 0.90-0.96 (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Rodriguez & Abreu, 2003; Tallon, 2011; Toth, 2008).

### **Agronomy engineering students’ levels of language anxiety**

The level of overall foreign language anxiety (FLA) for all the participants is relatively mild as the mean value is  $M=3.11$  (Table 1). It is important to emphasize that in this study original scores of foreign language anxiety, which are from 33 to 165, were averaged to the mean values (M) of 1 to 5 – the low end indicates high levels of anxiety, while the high end indicates high levels of relaxation. The results obtained by the measures of descriptive statistics (mean values and standard deviation) indicate that mean values for each anxiety factor are at moderate level (Table 1). The highest level of anxiety is recorded for communication apprehension ( $M=2.90$ ), while the lowest level of anxiety (the highest level of relaxation) is recorded for test anxiety ( $M=3.31$ ), having in mind that the lower the mean values, the higher the anxiety level, and vice versa. The level of students’ test anxiety has a tendency toward moderate level of relaxation.

*Table 1 – Students’ foreign language anxiety considering different length of instruction*

FLA - factors	M	SD	Length of ESP instruction			p
			Nr of semesters (M)			
			4	6	8	
Communication apprehension	<b>2.90</b>	.721	2.81	3.10	3.49	.099
Test anxiety	<b>3.31</b>	.649	3.27	3.24	3.85	.152
Fear of negative evaluation	2.98	.906	2.84	3.29	3.94	<b>.020*</b>
Overall anxiety	3.11	.662	3.03	3.20	3.75	.058
<b>N = 60</b>		<b>*p &lt; 0.05</b>				

*FLA – foreign language anxiety, M – mean value, SD – standard deviation, N – number of participants, p – statistical significance*

## **The role of ESP instruction in students' levels of language anxiety**

The results obtained by ANOVA analysis show that the students who were exposed to different duration of ESP instruction during their undergraduate academic studies generally experienced different levels of foreign language anxiety. The results of ANOVA analysis are also illustrated in Table 1.

Statistically significant differences were noticed among the students who experienced ESP instruction of different duration considering their levels of fear of negative evaluation ( $F=2.988$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The students exposed to the ESP instruction lasting 8 semesters (seniors) had the lowest level of fear of negative evaluation ( $M=3.94$ ) of the three groups – they appeared to be mildly relaxed; this level of fear of negative evaluation was significantly lower than their peers exposed to the ESP instruction for 4 semesters (sophomores) who expressed moderate level of anxiety ( $M=2.84$ ).

Furthermore, the additional post-hoc Dunnett T3 test (the test of multiple comparisons) showed the existence of statistically significant differences between students who experienced different duration of ESP instruction considering the levels of overall language anxiety and communication apprehension (statistical significance index being  $p < 0.05$  for both factors, more precisely  $p=0.034$  and  $p=0.001$ , respectively). The levels of overall language anxiety and communication apprehension were lowest among the students who experienced the ESP instruction lasting 8 semesters (seniors) – the students expressed mild relaxation considering overall foreign language anxiety ( $M=3.75$ ) and communication apprehension ( $M=3.49$ ), as shown in Table 1. On the other hand, the levels of overall language anxiety and communication apprehension of the students exposed to the ESP instruction lasting 4 semesters (sophomores) were at moderate levels ( $M=3.03$  and  $M=2.81$ , respectively).

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to explore some tendencies of the ESP students' levels of foreign language anxiety. In addition, the aim of the study was to determine whether the different duration of ESP instruction influenced the students' levels of foreign language anxiety.

The obtained results revealed that the biotechnology engineering students' foreign language anxiety was at a moderate level, individual language anxieties (communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation) remaining also at moderate levels. These findings are consistent with the results obtained in several other studies examining the language anxiety levels of students learning English as a foreign language (Lucas, Miraflores, & Go, 2011; Rodriguez and Abreu, 2003). Moreover, the findings are similar with the FLCAS scores of the students studying Japanese (Aida, 1994) or Spanish (Horwitz, 1986; Tallon, 2011) as a foreign language.

The results obtained in this study also revealed that the duration of instruction in English for specific purposes affected the levels of overall foreign language anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation - these levels are the lowest among the students who experienced the longest ESP instruction (seniors, 8 semesters, mild relaxation) and the highest among those ones whose ESP instruction was double shorter (sophomores, 4 semesters, moderate anxiety). In other words, longer exposure to ESP instruction means lower levels of language anxiety and particularly its related performance anxieties, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation.

As foreign language learners often experience unnecessary levels of anxiety when learning a foreign language, foreign language teachers are to create the right atmosphere in the classroom for effective language learning by reducing foreign language anxiety. An efficient method of decreasing students' language anxiety is to expose them to the instruction in a target language for a longer period in order to enhance students' relaxation while learning English as a foreign language.

### References

1. Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: the case of students of Japanese. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(2), 155-167.
2. Gordon, E. G. & Sarason, S. B. (1955). The relationship between "test anxiety" and "other anxieties". *Journal of Personality*, 23(3), 317-23.
3. Horwitz, E. K. (1986). Preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of a Foreign Language Anxiety Scale. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(3), 559-562.
4. Horwitz, E. K. (2010). Foreign and second language anxiety. *Language Teaching*, 43(2), 154-167.
5. Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B. & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.
6. Lucas, R. I., Miraflores, E. & Go, D. (2011). English language learning anxiety among foreign language learners in the Philippines. *Philippine ESL Journal*, 7, 94-119.
7. Rodriguez, M. & Abreu, O. (2003). The stability of general foreign language classroom anxiety across English and French. *The Modern Language Journal*, 87(3), 365-374.
8. Tallon, M. (2011). Heritage speakers of Spanish and foreign language anxiety: A pilot study. *Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education*, 15(1), 70-87.
9. Toth, Z. (2008). A foreign language anxiety scale for Hungarian learners of English. *WoPaLP*, 2, 55-78.
10. Watson, D., & R. Friend (1969). Measurement in social-evaluative anxiety. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33(4), 448-457.