

# College EFL Teachers' Perspectives of Foreign Language Anxiety and Self-Perceived Teacher Roles in Managing College Students' Language Anxiety

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## Abstract

This qualitative study investigated college EFL teachers' perceptions of language anxiety among students and the self-perceived roles of the teacher in managing students' language anxiety. Gaining an understanding of the teachers' viewpoints on language anxiety provides insight into the teachers' assumptions on the students' language anxiety and strategies used to assist students coping with anxiety. Eight college teachers were interviewed. An analysis of the data revealed that anxiety was regarded as negative caused by student-related, teacher-related, and instruction-related factors. Teachers viewed their roles in anxiety management as anxiety observer, activity manager, friendly relationship builder, skilled instructor, confidence-building facilitator and learner responsibility developer. Several issues of concern are discussed in this study. First, the idea of a total anxiety-free classroom is not fully agreed upon by the participants because a degree of anxiety, such as challenge, indicates a sense of responsibility for accomplishment and an inner drive to make more effort in learning. Second, another role of anxiety is that of a dictator of the program. The result is that the teachers eliminate all activities that might produce the slightest anxiety to the students. Accordingly, the language classroom looks like a lecture room where the communicative approach has little chance if anxiety is the dictator. Third, teachers can respond to the anxiety caused by a lack of student responsibility by being a learner responsibility developer. Lastly, when a native teacher is the cause of the anxiety, a mutual cultural understanding included in the syllabus would be a start in building a friendly relationship and to increasing mutual understanding and expectations. However, it may not be easy to draw a clear line to distinguish anxiety and challenge, or to balance the roles between friendly relationship builder and learner responsibility developer. But knowing students' ability, capacity and learning needs would essentially determine strategies utilized.

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