Foreign Language Anxiety and Heritage Students of Spanish: A Quantitative Study

 Foreign Language Anxiety and Heritage Students of Spanish: A Quantitative Study article by Tallon M. investigates the relationship between the mean anxiety scores for the heritage students and non-heritage students. The goal of this study examines Spanish-speaking heritage students and non-heritage students experience with foreign language anxiety and what level of anxiety they encounter.

What stood out to me most about this paper is that acknowledging anxiety as an issue for students learning a foreign language helps teachers and instructors to think about the problems they may face in the future when teaching a foreign language, or that they have already faced and do not know how to come up with the solution. The author was successful in identifying how instructors should make learning a foreign language less anxious.

This topic is significant to educators, it is important that they are aware that anxiety is a factor in teaching foreign language students. Knowing these teaching strategies to use when I am a Professor is essential, especially if I have heritage Spanish students in my class as this population continues to grow across the country every year, especially in southwestern United States.

One of the weaknesses of the article is that the writer suggests that anxiety is negative, and shows only the negative effects on academic achievement. However, a little bit of anxiety has positive effects as well. Anxiety in small doses can be a motivating factor and drive students to get their work done. The author was not successful in making me feel that the anxiety scale was just for foreign language learners. Heritage students are completely different than traditional foreign language students; therefore the questions on the survey were not appropriate for the students.

             What I found most significant about the research is that the article focuses on the quantitative data more than the qualitative data. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is focused only on speaking skills, and does not mention about writing, reading, and listening skills so that it cannot really measure all the factors that cause anxiety in students learning a foreign language.

I do not agree with the research, it does not represent the real anxiety scores since heritage students and non-heritage students have higher anxiety scores, but lower anxiety score writing to pass the exam or something. For example, The Phonetics and Pronunciation class is the only class where the heritage students’ anxiety score was higher anxiety score than non-heritage students.

            The result of this study provides information to help instructors of heritage students provide better teaching methods and techniques. I think this research was good to show us that the anxiety occurs because of students’ background and it is significant for the teacher to prepare students psychologically for the experience of learning a foreign language.

             The dependent variable in the study is anxiety and independent variable is anxiety score. Some of the problems with this research study is that the data collection was, “heritage students of Spanish studying at a large university in the southwestern United States.” Also, the students in the study were “asked to self-identify themselves as heritage students of Spanish or non-heritage students.” Lastly, “the results depend on the participants accurately and honestly responding to the items on the questionnaires”.

The analysis in this study technique used self-reports, consequently, the study indicates the experience of heritage students in Spanish foreign language anxiety. This study shows how anxiety is a big part of foreign language learning and tells teachers to consider their students background when they start teaching.  However, most of the research anxiety pertained to college students, younger students could be added to this material to make it better or more complete. There is room for further investigation and research on this topic.

References

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