

Anxiety of ESL Students in Business Classes and their Coping Strategies: An Empirical Study in Cambodia

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Abstract:

This study sought to examine different dimensions regarding anxiety expressed by English as a Second Language (ESL) students undertaking business courses in English. An inferential sample was drawn from the undergraduate business program of an institution of higher education in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. An anonymous, self-administered questionnaire was utilized to test the variables of gender, location where respondents were raised, their years of studying English, self-assessment of English proficiency, and self-category of academic grade. The study also examined any correlation between self-assessment of difficulty (and consequential anxiety) by course subject and self-assessment of the mathematical highness of each of the course subjects. Finally, it explored potential coping strategies that students considered when studying business.

Eleven of the thirteen hypotheses examined received at least partial support. A key finding was that when the respondents ranked business course subjects in order of difficulty, the order of that ranking matched exactly the ranking of heaviness of mathematical content that the course subject was perceived to contain. While findings were mixed for most of the hypotheses, the strongest findings indicated no statistical mean differences regarding gender and full support of significant mean differences in the rating of difficulty for the four English modes based on self-assessment/identification of English proficiency. As to coping strategies, students preferred Preparation, followed by Asking for Help, Positive Thinking, Resignation, and Relaxing (in that order).

This was a pioneering effort regarding most of the tested hypotheses and a pioneering effort regarding ESL students in business classes in Cambodia. However, respondents were derived from an undergraduate program of one institution of higher education. Future research should expand to other academic venues for replication as well as other inquiries regarding anxiety among ESL business students to provide further assistance regarding pedagogical considerations.