

The Chinese Bouyei College Students' Strategies for Coping with Classroom Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning: A Survey Study

Jianhua Wei

School of Foreign Languages, Guangdong Institute of Petrochemical Industry
139 Guanduerlu, Maonan Administrative District, Maoming City 525000, China
Tel: 86-1511-365-8088 E-mail: jhbaker@163.com

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the degree of FL classroom anxiety experienced and the coping strategies employed by the Chinese Bouyei college students. The research subjects were 320 1st- and 2nd-year Bouyei college students from five colleges located in the southern and southwestern areas of Guizhou Province, China. Two sorts of written questionnaires were administered to collect the data. The simple descriptive statistics, i.e. mean, standard deviation (S.D.) and percentage were used to find out the levels of the informants' FL classroom anxiety and their anxiety coping strategy use, while a factor analysis was employed to examine the students' anxiety coping strategy categories. The findings demonstrate that the levels of the Chinese Bouyei college students' overall FL classroom anxiety and their reported anxiety coping strategy use are at the medium level on the whole. Six main categories of Bouyei college students' FL classroom anxiety coping strategies were found in the study. In addition, comments were made on the research findings, as well as what English teachers could do to help alleviate and eliminate learners' FL classroom anxiety.

Key words: Chinese Bouyei ethnic group; college students; foreign language; anxiety coping strategies; implications

1. Introduction

The Chinese college learners, both from the Han and other minority ethnic groups, including the Bouei that is considered as a representative of the minorities in the present study, are required to learn English for the first two years from the same start point, and have chances to attend different bands of College English Test (CET-Bands 4 & 6) in order to obtain relative certificates where the test scores are recorded. It is a common knowledge in China that students with higher CET scores are more advantageous in seeking jobs with higher salary at the enterprises, especially, concerning foreign affairs. Aiming at achieving satisfactory results in CET, the Chinese college students are hence assigned more homework and tasks for FL learning in spare time than the learning of other courses. They have to be tested by the teachers or do all types of additional examination papers themselves every now and then.

However, learners' proficiency is claimed to vary greatly due to different aspects like individual differences, linguistic differences, cultural differences (Cook, 2001; Dörnyei, 2005). Some scholars (e.g. Chen, 2002; Chen & Zhang, 2004; Liu, 2006; Tan, 2009) have found FL classroom anxiety existent among about one-third or so of the Chinese college students as subjects, and that the students' course grades and interest in English, intentions to continue their study of English, and their English learning are negatively affected by FL classroom anxiety. In order to help learners reduce their anxiety in FL learning, various studies have been conducted as to how English learners cope with their FL classroom anxiety.

1.1 Previous Studies Related to Anxiety Coping Strategies

Chen (2002) claims that two categories of coping styles — the “immature” type and the “mature” type in the FL context — can be allocated as follows: The “immature” type as the continuum of “avoidance”, “imagination”, and “reproach”, which may reflect a immaturity of person's mental development; and the “mature” type as that of “help-seeking”, “rationalization”, and “problem-solving” because of the learner's positive correlation with problem-solving.

As far as the “immature” type is concerned, some anxious people often cope with difficulties or setbacks in life through “avoidance”, “reproach”, etc., seldom utilize “problem-solving” method actively, and often manifest a kind of neurotic character, whose emotion and behavior lack stability (Chen, 2002). For example, in fear of the teacher who would

probably ask questions, some anxious students do not feel “safe” unless they choose to seat at the back of the class, while other anxious students might blame themselves as very slow persons who are always unable to utter very quick responses to what the teacher is saying in class. However, according to Prins (1986) and Bailey et al. (1999), avoidance is one of the most common coping strategies as an “immature” type for learners in the FL context. This insight meets support from various studies (Pappamihiel, 2002; Chen, 2002; Kondo & Yang, 2004).

According to Xiao and Xu (1996), young learners with anxiety often employ “problem-solving” and “help-seeking” methods rather than avoidance, reproach, or imagination, to cope with an emergency when they face such a situation. These learners often show a kind of mature and stable character and behavior style. This insight is consistent with the findings of some studies concerning learners’ anxiety coping styles in the FL context (Kondo & Yang, 2004; Marwan, 2007; Lizuka, 2010).

It is noteworthy that the conception of “maturity” and “immaturity” stated in previous studies may be interpreted differently according to the understanding of different scholars from different perspectives. Nevertheless, the researcher of the present study holds that the so-called “mature” type of coping styles evidently stands for the actual effects that can help learners effectively get rid of anxiety, especially, for the sake of maintaining a more salutary, beneficial environment for learners’ FL learning as a means of problem-solving. That is to say, such “mature” types of coping styles are not expected to bring about a negative impact that leads to FL learners’ “escape” from active instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedure, and other instructive situations, but help learners to get involved in the whole process of FL learning in class.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Since limited studies have been conducted on the anxiety and anxiety coping strategies of minority students in China, the identification of the Bouyei college students’ overall FL classroom anxiety level and their coping styles can potentially assist both the learners themselves and the FL teachers to alleviate anxiety in the classroom settings, so that the learners’ performance and achievement in the target language learning can be improved in a less stressful and anxiety-provoking classroom environment. Desirably, this research is expected to help make the subjects’ frequently used coping strategies explicit to other FL learners who may afterwards employ their strategies to effectively alleviate their classroom anxiety. Both teachers and students could thereby exploit corresponding ways to cope with the anxieties encountered in the English teaching and learning. The researcher of the current study hence believes that the findings will provide both English teaching and English learning with some useful pedagogical implications for FL learners of both the Bouyei ethnic group and other groups of people from a wide range of linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

1.3 Research Questions (RQs)

- RQ1: What level of overall FL classroom anxiety do the Chinese Bouyei college students experience?
- RQ2: What is the level of the Chinese Bouyei college students’ anxiety coping strategy use in FL class?
- RQ3: What strategies do the Chinese Bouyei college students employ to cope with their FL classroom anxiety?
- RQ4: What effects do gender, field of study, level of academic year, and level of college have on the Chinese Bouyei college students’ FL classroom anxiety coping styles?

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Participants

The survey study in use of questionnaire was conducted with 320 (male=127; female=193) 1st- and 2nd-year Chinese Bouyei students in the “science-oriented” (n=127), “non science-oriented” (n=110) and “English” (n=83) fields of study. All of them were randomly selected from various classes at each of the following five colleges: the South Guizhou Teachers College for Ethnic Groups, the South Guizhou Vocational College for Ethnic Groups, the South Guizhou Medical Science College for Ethnic Groups, the Xinyi Teachers College for Ethnic Groups, and the Southwest Guizhou Vocational College for Ethnic Groups, all located in the south and southwest areas of China’s Guizhou Province where a majority of the Chinese Bouyei people are living. Furthermore, a large number of students enrolled in these five colleges are usually local population, a bigger percentage of who are more characteristic of authentic Bouyei ethnic culture relatively less assimilated by the Han culture.

2.2 Instruments

Two questionnaires were applied to the study. The first was a close-ended written five-point Likert scale—the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz (1986) with 33 items of belief. The maximum range for the FLCAS is 33 to 165, with lower scores indicating lower anxiety and higher scores indicating higher anxiety under the condition that 9 items (i.e., items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, & 32) are inversely scored for their meaning totally opposite to all the others’.

The second consists of 24 five-point Likert closed-ended questionnaire items of belief adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Coping Styles Questionnaire (the FLCACSQ) developed by Chen (2002), and one additional open-ended question provided by the researcher of the present study. Both the 24 closed-ended questionnaire items and the one open-ended question were for eliciting participants' responses as to what exact coping strategies were employed by the Bouyei college students. The maximum range for the FLCAS is 24 to 120, with lower scores indicating lower anxiety and higher scores indicating higher anxiety.

2.3 Data Collection

Both the FLCAS and the FLCACSQ were administered at the five target colleges mentioned above. In order for the students to understand the scale better, the two questionnaires had been appropriately translated into Chinese.

The number of the subjects for filling out the FLCAS was bigger than the expected number, so that the adequate sample size was guaranteed. The questionnaire that was incomplete, and the students who could not be located to fill out the questionnaires, were then eliminated from the study, while other randomly chosen students were invited to fulfill their tasks.

2.4 Data Analyses

The data from the FLCAS and FLCACSQ were tallied and tabulated with the assistance of the SPSS computer program to identify the levels of the participants' FL classroom anxiety and their coping strategy use level.

For the data analysis of the closed-ended FLCACSQ, the researcher attempted to find the results of the present study by means of the simple descriptive statistics, i.e. mean, standard deviation (S.D.) and percentage used to find out the levels of the informants' overall FL classroom anxiety and their anxiety coping strategy use; while a factor analysis was employed to examine the students' anxiety coping strategy categories.

It must be first noted that the frequency of Bouyei college students' classroom anxiety and their coping strategies reported have been categorized as "low", "medium", and "high" levels of anxiety and coping strategy use. This is determined by students' responses to the FLCAS and the FLCACSQ. The frequency of anxiety and coping strategy use levels is indicated on a five-point rating scale, ranging from "strongly agree"/"never used" valued as 1; "agree"/"used" valued as 2; "neutral" valued as 3; "disagree"/"used" valued as 4; and "strongly agree"/"always used" valued as 5. Then the average value of frequency of anxiety and coping strategy use levels can be valued from 1.00 to 5.00. The mid-point of the minimum and maximum values is 3.00. The mean scores of FL classroom anxiety of each item valued from 1.00 to 2.59 is determined as 'low level', from 2.60 to 3.39 as "medium level", and from 3.40 to 5.00 as 'high level'.

For the data analysis of the closed-ended question in the FLCACSQ, the researcher wrote down the statements of the subjects in relevant sections according to the similarities of the context or situation from which the FL anxiety are resulted. Then data reduction like coding, synthesis, etc. operated iteratively according to the "open coding" and "axial coding" techniques proposed by Paunch (2005) and Strauss and Corbin's (1998).

3. Results

To check the reliability of the slightly revised FLCAS and FLCACSQ, they were administered initially to 96 students at the South Guizhou Teachers College for Ethnic Groups before the formal data collection from the 320 participants. According to a general formula for coefficient alpha, $\alpha = n(1 - \sum \sigma_i^2 / \sigma_x^2) / (n-1)$, the former scale achieved an alpha coefficient of .928 ($n=96$), and the later achieved an alpha coefficient of .80 ($n=96$), both of which indicated a certain high degree of internal reliability according to George and Mallery's (2003).

In accordance with the analysis of data from both the FLCAS and the FLCACSQ, the present study reached the findings which are respectively demonstrated as follows.

3.1 RQ1: Do the Chinese Bouyei College Students Have Anxiety in FL Class? If So, What Level of FL Classroom Anxiety Do They Experience?

Under the condition that items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, and 32 were reversely scored as previously planned, the method of frequency of FL classroom anxiety was used to measure the level of the Bouyei college students' anxiety in FL class. It must be noted that the determination of the level of FL classroom anxiety is made in terms of the applied measures of FL classroom anxiety level.

Table 1 shows that the mean frequency scores of students' reported overall FL classroom anxiety level are 3.10 (SD=.68). The results indicate that these 320 Bouyei college students, as the research subjects, reported experiencing FL classroom anxiety as a whole, which indicates as reply to RQ1 that the Bouyei college students do have anxiety in FL class, and the level of anxiety they suffer is neither high nor low in general, but just medium on average.

<Table 1 about here>

3.2 RQ 2: What Is the Level of the Chinese Bouyei College Students' Anxiety Coping Strategy Use in FL Class?

To find an answer as to the level of strategy use employed by the students, Table 2 reveals the result of the holistic mean frequency scores across the FLCACSQ administered to 320 1st- and 2nd-year Bouyei students in China. It must be noted that the determination of the level of FL classroom anxiety is made in terms of the applied measures of FL classroom anxiety level stated previously.

<Table 2 about here>

Table 2 shows that the mean frequency score of students' reported overall FL classroom anxiety coping strategy use level is 2.91 (SD=.53). As a reply to the first half of RQ 4, this indicates that the 320 Bouyei college students, as the research subjects, reported using FL classroom anxiety coping strategies; meanwhile, the second half of the RQ4 has also obtained an answer, i.e., the level of their overall anxiety coping strategy use was found to be "medium" which refers to that they neither lowly nor highly employ anxiety coping strategies in their FL learning.

However, certain individual anxiety coping strategy use levels, which fall into "high use" and "low use" categories reported by these Bouyei students are demonstrated in Table 3, illustrating that the use of three individual anxiety coping strategies, i.e., item 10 ($\bar{x}$ =4.09, SD=1.16), item 17 ($\bar{x}$ =3.58, SD=1.434), and item 18 ($\bar{x}$ =3.68, SD=1.258) was at a high level. The results indicate that the Chinese Bouyei college students highly employed some individual anxiety coping strategies like attempting to correct their oral mistakes the teacher and classmates had pointed out; taking deep breath each time when entering the examination room; and sometimes communicating with the classmates who had passed exams so that they could assimilate others' experiences and reduce anxiety.

<Table 3 about here>

Table 3 also shows that the use of five individual anxiety coping strategies, i.e., item 6 ($\bar{x}$ =2.58, SD=1.237), item 7 ($\bar{x}$ =2.24, SD=1.242), item 11 ($\bar{x}$ =1.54, SD=.932), item 19 ($\bar{x}$ =2.22, SD=1.199) and item 22 ($\bar{x}$ =2.52, SD=1.209) was at a high level. The results indicate that the Chinese Bouyei college students lowly employed some individual anxiety coping strategies like making a plan, listening to and imitating English broadcasting programs, asking for leave once realizing the teacher would ask questions, often improvising an English speech by themselves, and so on.

3.3 RQ3: What Strategies Do the Chinese Bouyei College Students Employ to Cope with Their FL Classroom Anxiety?

3.3.1 Results from the Factor Analysis of Responses to the Closed-ended Items in the FLCACSQ

In seeking the nature of underlying pattern or structure of FL classroom anxiety, the 24 anxiety items of the FLCACSQ were reduced by the processes of factor analysis starting with a principal component factor analysis through the extraction methods, followed by the varimax rotation method for the correlations of the 24 items as shown in Table 4, Figure 1, and Table 5.

<Tables 4 & 5 about here>

Table 4 reveals the initial eight extracted categories of factors that accounted for 58.726% of the variability among the 24 FLCACSQ items. However, the eight extracted factor is hard to interpret. Actually, compared with Figure 3.3.1 concerning the scree plot of the eigenvalue, reducing the number of factors from seven to four or five was further examined in order to make it easier for interpretation, instead of using the initial eight extracted factors. Having taken the factor interpretation into repeated account in comparison with Table 4, Figure 1, and Table 5, and since the extracted four and five factors are found slightly different with regard to internal relationship among the anxieties emerging under the same factors, the researcher of the present study found it more straightforward to interpret the extracted five factors rather than the extracted four factors. As a result, the percentages of variance indicate that 45.22% of the total variation between the frequency of FL classroom anxiety coping strategy use can be explained by the first five principal components.

< Figure 1 about here>

Eventually, the five extracted factors were taken as five categories of anxiety coping strategy use (hence expressed as Coping Strategy 1 to Coping Strategy 5 below), each of which was given a name by the researcher of the present study according to the interrelation and common inner-characteristics they share. However, item 10 was deleted based on its low factor loading and communality as well as low relationship with the same factor. The five extracted factors include:

Coping Strategy 1: **Preparation**, made up of 6 items (i.e., items 1, 7, 8, 12, 14, and 19). This factor accounts for 20.39 percent of the variance among the 24 coping strategies.

Coping Strategy 2: **Help/Peer Seeking**, made of 8 items (i.e., items 2, 5, 6, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 23). This factor accounts for 8.45 percent of the variance among the 24 coping strategies.

Coping Strategy 3: **Problem Solving**, made of 3 items (i.e., 3, 4, and 22). This factor accounts for 5.92 percent of the variance among the 24 coping strategies.

Coping Strategy 4: **Resignation**, made of 2 items (i.e., items 9, and 11). This factor accounts for 5.48 percent of the variance among the 24 coping strategies.

Coping Strategy 5: **Positive Thinking**, made of 4 items (i.e., 13, 15, 16, and 24). This factor accounts for 5.004 percent of the variance among the 24 coping strategies.

As what have been seen above, the underlying factors of Bouyei college students' overall FL classroom anxiety coping strategy use, the factor loading each anxiety item, and the percentage of variance of each factor, have been identified through the data from the FLCACSQ. The findings indicate that *Preparation* and *Help/Peer Seeking*, seems to be the most commonly employed anxiety coping strategies because they accounts for the biggest percent of the variance (20.39% and 8.45) the variance among the 24 coping strategies.

3.3.2 Results from the Responses to the One Open-ended Question in the FLCACSQ

What follows is an additional, qualitative analysis of the participants' responses to the open-ended question provided by the researcher of the present study below the written anxiety items in the FLCACSQ: "*What else can you tell me about how you deal with your FL classroom anxiety?*"

For the purpose of eliciting supplementary information on how the Bouyei college students cope with their FL classroom anxiety, the one open-ended question was provided, and received responses merely from 46 students among the 320. Actually, only one category of coping strategies was found. Below is the only one additional category of anxiety coping strategies with all the individual responses followed by the person-time and percentage of the 25 interviewees who shared the same category as listed below, This category of coping strategies is regarded as the fifth category of coping following the previous five categories of coping strategies in sequence number.

Coping Strategy 6: **Relaxation (R)**, consisting of 12 items, shared by 58.7% of the respondents. For example:

R1: *I usually listen to some music (11) (23.9%).*

R2: *I listen to favorite English songs (1) (2.17%).*

R3: *I would sing karaoke songs with the computer in my dorm (1) (2.17%).*

R4: *I feel relaxed in English class (1) (2.17%).*

R5: *I'd like to play football or basketball after class in order to alleviate my anxiety or unhappiness (5) (10.87%).*

R6: *I do some running after English class sometimes. (1) (2.17%).*

R7: *I would relax by watching some English movies at home (1) (2.17%).*

R8: *I participate in other out-of-class activities (1) (2.17%).*

R9: *I will play cards with friends (1) (2.17%).*

R10: *I go out for a walk (2) (4.34%).*

R11: *I relax myself outside the classroom during the break (1) (2.17%).*

R12: *I would not push myself so much in English class (1) (2.17%).*

Interestingly, it seems that based on the individual coping strategies related to *Relaxation*, the students most frequently reported employing the strategies of "listening to music", and "playing football or basketball after class" in order to reduce their FL classroom anxiety. However, besides the statements above, some students also expressed that they employed other coping strategies consistently like *Positive Thinking*, *Help Seeking*, *Problem Solving*, and *Resignation* previously presented previously, and hence are not included in this section as the additional categories of anxiety coping strategies.

3.4 RQ4: What Effects Do Gender, Field of Study, Level of Academic Year, and Level of College Have on the Chinese Bouyei College Students' FL Classroom Anxiety Coping Styles?

Variation in level of students' reported overall FL anxiety coping strategy use based on the analysis of variance (ANOVA) is involved to see if this statistical method demonstrates significant variation as assumed according to the four independent variables, i.e., gender, main field of study, level of academic year (freshmen and Sophomores), and level of college, in order to answer RQ5. Each of the independent variables in a relative row of the tables below is followed by mean frequency score of FL classroom anxiety ($\bar{x}$), standard deviation (SD), significance level, and patterns of variation in frequency of students' FL classroom anxiety, if a significant variation exists.

3.4.1 Gender and the Students' Anxiety Coping Strategy Use

Table 6 shows the summary of variation in the Bouyei college students' anxiety coping strategy use based on the ANOVA according to gender of the students (male=127, female=193). In terms of overall FL anxiety, the results show a significant difference ($P=.002$) between male ($\bar{X}=2.78$, $SD=.54$) and female ($\bar{X}=3.0$, $SD=.51$) students. This means that in the overall FL classroom anxiety coping strategy use, female Bouyei college students reported using FL classroom anxiety coping strategies more than their male counterparts.

<Table 6 about here>

Nevertheless, some different findings were still obtained in terms of the percentage of students' high degree (agree/strongly agree) of one individual anxiety, and the observed chi-square (X^2) value used to demonstrate a significant variation as shown in Table 7, showing that significant higher percentage of male than female students reported that they employed one individual anxiety coping strategy, i.e., item 9 (male=57.78%, female=65.80%; $X^2=6.41$; $P=.041$). The results indicate male more than female Bouyei college students reported choosing to be seated at the back in English class in order to avoid being asked questions by the teacher.

<Table 7 about here>

3.4.2 Field of Study and the Students' Anxiety Coping Strategy Use

The post-hoc Sheffé tests were carried out after the ANOVA results for the calculation of variation in Bouyei college students' anxiety coping strategy use based on the ANOVA according to learners' main field of study (science=127; non science=110; English=83)* as shown in Table 8. In terms of overall FL anxiety, the post-hoc Sheffé test carried out after the ANOVA results shows significant differences ($P=.001$) between science-oriented majors ($\bar{X}=2.69$, $SD=.46$) and English majors ($\bar{X}=3.06$, $SD=.53$). Significant differences were also found between science-oriented majors ($\bar{X}=2.69$, $SD=.46$) and non science-oriented majors ($\bar{X}=3.05$, $SD=.54$), but no not found between English majors ($\bar{X}=3.06$, $SD=.53$) and non science-oriented majors ($\bar{X}=3.05$, $SD=.54$), because the latter shares almost the same mean frequency scores with each other. It is evident that English majors reported using anxiety coping strategies as nearly frequently as non science-oriented majors, but more than science-oriented majors.

<Table 8 about here>

However, some different findings were also obtained in terms of the percentage of students' high degree (agree/strongly agree) of four individual coping strategies and the observed chi-square (X^2) value used to demonstrate a significant variation as shown in Table 9. The table shows a significant higher percentage of non science-oriented majors than science-oriented followed and English majors reported employing the strategy of item 3 (51.82%, 43.31%, 42.17%; $X^2=20.65$; $P=.001$) respectively. The results indicate that more non science-oriented majors than science-oriented and English majors reported they usually kept silence when experiencing anxiety such as disappointment, compunction, uneasiness, and indignation emerging in the English lessons.

Table 9 also shows a significant higher percentage of non science-oriented majors than English and science-oriented majors reported employing the individual strategies of item 18 (78.18%, 77.11%, and 53.54%; $X^2=20.65$, $P=.001$), item 19 (30.91%, 28.92%, and 11.02%; $X^2=16.66$, $p=.002$), item 23 (53.64%, 46.99%, 27.56%; $X^2=19.65$, $P=.001$) respectively. The results indicate that more non science-oriented majors than English and science-oriented majors reported that they sometimes communicated with the classmates who had passed exams so that they could assimilate others' experiences and reduce anxiety, often improvised English speeches by themselves, and took part in short-term trainings for passing some important exams.

<Table 9 about here>

3.4.3 Level of Academic Year and the Students' Anxiety Coping Strategy Use

Table 10 shows the summary of variation in the Bouyei college students' anxiety coping strategy use based on the ANOVA according to level of academic year (freshmen=162; sophomores=158). The table shows a significant difference ($P=.001$) between freshmen ($\bar{X}=2.74$, $SD=.46$) and sophomores ($\bar{X}=3.09$, $SD=.55$), indicating that the 2nd-year Bouyei college students reported employing anxiety coping strategies more than their 1st-year counterparts.

<Table 10 about here>

Interestingly, no other results were found different from any of the abovementioned findings in terms of the percentage of students' high degree (agree/strongly agree) of the individual anxiety coping strategies and the observed chi-square (X^2) value used to demonstrate a significant variation.

3.4.4 Level of College and the Students' Anxiety Coping Strategy Use

Table 11 shows the summary of variation in the Bouyei college students' anxiety coping strategy use based on the ANOVA according to level of college (three-year-system specialized college students =153, four-year-system undergraduate college students=167). In terms of overall FL anxiety, the table shows a significant difference ($P=.012$) between 3-year specialized college students ($\bar{X}=2.99$, $SD=.56$) and 4-year undergraduate college students ($\bar{X}=2.84$, $SD=.50$), indicating that Bouyei college students at lower-level college reported employing FL classroom anxiety coping strategies more frequently than their counterparts at higher-level college.

<Table 11 about here>

Again, no other results were found different from any of the abovementioned findings in terms of the percentage of students' high degree (agree/strongly agree) of the individual anxieties and the observed chi-square (X^2) value used to demonstrate a significant variation.

4. Discussion

Through the quantitative and qualitative analyses of data collected from the written questionnaires, the study has found the Bouyei college students' FL classroom anxiety is at a medium level, and that six anxiety coping style categories were reported by the Bouyei college students to deal with their anxiety.

4.1 The Bouyei College Students' Anxiety Coping Strategies

Of the six categories, Preparation seems most commonly used by the Bouyei college students according to the results of factor analysis, since it accounted for the biggest percent (20.39%) of the variance among the 24 anxiety coping style items and took the biggest eigenvalue which was 4.893. Although quite different from Chen's (2002) findings that "avoidance" ranked first among all the items in his Chinese informants' coping, the findings of the present study receive support from the studies by Marwan (2007) and Kondo and Yang (2004) who maintained the foremost position of this strategy. This indicates that whatever anxiety the Bouyei college students are experiencing, it is considerable that they have the appetency to actively carry out task-relevant thoughts like Preparation in order to alleviate their FL anxiety in class. It is worth noting that Kondo and Yang (2004) as well regard such thoughts as what highly anxious people are likely to adopt under the conditions that such a strategy is perceived to be most effective in reducing their anxiety.

Peer Seeking and Positive Thinking, according to Kondo and Yong (2004:263), are "attempts to suppress or alter problematic thought processes related to language learning, and thus be subsumed into cognitive strategies". However, Peer Seeking is further interpreted as "students' willingness to look for other students who seem to have trouble understanding the class and/or controlling their anxiety" (Kondo and Yong, 2004:263) which limits this strategy within a very narrow sense. In the present study, Help/Peer Seeking and Positive Thinking have been found as effective methods for the Bouyei college students to cope with their FL classroom anxiety. In the factor analysis, Help/Peer Seeking is the second most commonly used strategy of the Bouyei college students, for it accounted for 8.45 percent of the variance among the 24 coping strategies, and took the second biggest eigenvalue which was 2.024. Similar to the findings of the present study, these strategies are also regarded by Kondo and Yang's (2004) as foremost important ones among the five coping strategies explained in their study. Moreover, Chen's (2002) study does not offer explanation as to how these strategies are used in detail, but merely states it as a coping strategy reported by his informants.

Since there is rare definite explanation of *Problem Solving* in previous studies, which can be solely taken as a category of strategies broad in meaning apparently in relation to a "mature" type of coping strategies (Chen, 2002) as mentioned previously in the paper, any strategies aiming to solve the problem of FL classroom anxiety are usually regarded by other researchers as *Problem Solving*. However, this strategy is defined by the researcher of the present study mainly as something else the English learners actively choose to do in order to alleviate their FL anxiety at the very moment when being bothered with such anxiety. For example, for the purpose of not to be bothered so much by anxiety, the learners keep silence when experiencing anxiety such as disappointment, compunction, uneasiness, and indignation emerging in the English lessons; are not willing to see any negative evaluation on English learning from others, and are oblivious of themselves in working in order to cast off their anxiety in English learning. The coping strategy was also found from the analysis of data obtained through the open-ended question in the FLCACSQ that have further proved that this category of strategies are employed by the Bouyei college students.

Relaxation is characterized by its affective quality in that it aims at alleviating bodily tension associated with emotional arousal as defined by Kondo and Yang (2004). This category of coping strategies have been found employed by the Bouyei college students in the analysis of data obtained through the open-ended question in the FLCACSQ. This finding is consistent with the studies by Chen (2002) and Liu (2007) with students in mainland China, and by Marwan (2007) with Indonesian university students.

Resignation is what the Chinese Bouyei college students reported employed in English class. Also according to Kondo and Yang's (2004) explanation, it is characterized by the students' reluctance to do anything to alleviate their language anxiety, not merely meaning that the students choose to quit from class. The research findings indicate the former situation that some Bouyei college students are not willing to go to English class, and some choose to sleep in class or do something irrelevant to English class; however, many of them who do not feel like going to English class still push themselves to stay in English class. This may be due to the Bouyei college students' contradictory psychological situations that quitting the class may lead to more serious results like being punished by the teacher or school for their absence than doing nothing in English class.

Although *Resignation* and *Problem Solving* share a similarity in "doing something else", it must be noted that they are quite different from each other in that the former is involved in some Bouyei college learners' avoiding participation in any classroom activities without the purpose of alleviating FL anxiety, and the latter in other Bouyei college learners' doing something else in order to alleviate their FL anxiety at the very moment when being bothered with such anxiety in class just hopefully for the purpose of getting out of the difficult situation temporarily. This phenomenon is proved by Marwan (2007) in a previous study that *Resignation* is closely related to the unwillingness of students to alleviate their language anxiety; whereas, *Problem Solving* aims to take away or alleviate their language anxiety. These two distinct strategies employed hence embody the multiple characteristics of the Bouyei college students' anxiety coping styles.

4.2 The Students' Anxiety Coping Strategy Use According to Relative Independent Variables

4.2.1 Gender

Gender has been found to cause the Bouyei college students' FL classroom anxiety coping styles to change significantly in the present investigation. The findings indicate that female Bouyei college students reported using FL classroom anxiety coping strategies in general more than their male counterparts, especially, in preparation; and help seeking. These findings are consistent with Marwan's (2007) study.

Whereas, a conflict concerning resignation shows that male more than female Bouyei college students reported choosing to be seated at the back in English class in order to avoid being asked questions by the teacher, seemingly as what were commonly existent in daily English teaching classrooms according to the observation of the researcher of the present study, who used to work as an English teacher at a college located in the mountainous area of China at the same time.

4.2.2 Field of Study

Field of study has also been found to cause the variation of the Bouyei college students' FL classroom anxiety coping strategy use. The results illustrate that English majors reported using anxiety coping strategies in general as nearly frequently as non science-oriented majors, but more than science-oriented majors.

These findings meet support from the results in the analysis of individual FL classroom anxiety coping strategy use, i.e., a significant higher percentage of English majors, followed by non science-oriented and science-oriented majors, who reported using FL classroom anxiety coping strategies in most of the three categories: preparation; problem solving; positive thinking; and resignation; whereas, a significant higher percentage of non science-oriented majors than English and science-oriented majors has been found using such strategies in the category of help seeking.

However, it should be noted that these research findings are again very much different from Chen's (2002) study in which no significant differences were found among the three dimensions concerning anxiety coping strategies.

4.2.3 Education Levels

Regarding level of academic year, it might be a common sense that since the Bouyei freshmen reported experiencing overall anxiety as well as CA and TA more than sophomores (Sections 4.1.3, 4.1.4, & 5.1.1), they might hence have to undertake more corresponding tactics to cope with their FL classroom anxiety in the first year; and when they became sophomores, they may thus be more used to the learning settings with less FL classroom anxiety that simultaneously results in the decline of the frequency of their anxiety coping strategy use. However, it is a bit baffling that the research findings are just on the contrary: the Bouyei sophomores have been found using FL classroom anxiety coping strategies more frequently than the Bouyei freshmen, especially, in the individual anxiety coping strategy categories like preparation, help seeking, positive thinking; and resignation. Actually, this kind of phenomenon finds interpretation in the study by Marwan (2007) that learners in the higher year are more afraid of failing their class than those at the lower year. This might as well indicate that the Bouyei college students in the higher year know more about the importance of tests, i.e., CET, TEM, ... and other tests for example, and are also more experienced in using anxiety coping strategies every now and then that can efficiently decrease their anxiety in FL class once they have anxiety. This may account for the higher frequency of the sophomores' anxiety coping strategy use.

Regarding level of college, the research findings illustrate a significant difference between students at lower-level college and higher-level college, that is, the students studying at lower-level college reported using FL classroom anxiety coping strategies more frequently than the students studying at higher-level college. Seemingly a contradiction with the findings related to level of academic year, this phenomenon might be due to the factual situation that students at the higher level of college usually have better achievements in English learning, partly for the scores of which obtained in the National Entrance Examinations for Higher Education of China (NEEHE) these students could be matriculated by those higher-level institutions. According to the study by Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham (2008) who prove that more proficient language users suffer less from FL anxiety than less proficient language users, the Bouyei students at higher-level college might have less FL classroom anxiety than those studying at lower-level college, and hence apply relatively less anxiety coping strategies than the Bouyei students at lower-level college. However, whether this assumption really makes sense still needs further investigation in future.

5. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, it seems that the Bouyei college students experience a medium level of FL classroom anxiety and their solution to lessen their FL classroom anxiety is doing preparation for class, seeking help from peers, the English teacher and others, conducting positive thinking, doing something else to temporary solve the problems, alleviating bodily tension, and even avoiding participating in classroom activities. The findings show that the Chinese Bouyei college students' first three most commonly employed coping strategies are related to *Preparation*, *Help/peer Seeking*, and *Problem Solving*, indicating that their coping styles are mainly of "mature" type. However, FL classroom anxiety is anyhow detrimental for its debilitating nature that enervates one's participation in classroom activities and has been proved existent among the Chinese Bouyei college students at a medium level. Accordingly, whatever "mature"-type coping strategies are employed, nothing can be more facilitating to the Bouyei college students' FL learning than the FL teachers' important role masterly played in class. That is, the FL teacher should not merely be a controller, but act as facilitators in the language classroom by developing a harmonious relationship with the learners while showing adequate concern about different characteristics of students and the four independent variables that may cause their anxiety coping strategy use to vary, managing to provide more opportunities for them to speak in class, and more importantly, and conducting further self-education for necessary accomplishments in FL teaching in order to make classroom settings less anxiety-provoking but stimulate students' motivation and interest in FL learning.

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Table 1. Level of Bouyei college students' FL classroom anxiety

Anxiety Variables	Number of Students (n)	Mean Frequency Score ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Frequency Category
Overall FL Classroom anxiety	320	3.10	.68	Medium Level

Table 2. Frequency of level of the students' anxiety coping strategy use

Number of Students (n)	Mean Frequency Score ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Frequency Category
320	2.91	.53	Medium Use

Table 3. Different levels of the students' individual anxiety coping strategies

Item	Individual Anxiety Coping Strategies	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D.	Frequency Category
10	I attempt to correct my oral mistakes that the teacher and classmates have pointed out.	4.09	1.176	High
17	To calm down, I take deep breath each time when I enter the examination room.	3.58	1.434	High
18	I sometimes communicate with the classmates who have passed exams so that I can assimilate others' experiences and reduce anxiety.	3.68	1.258	High
6	I make a plan that I strictly follow in order to overcome anxiety.	2.58	1.237	Low
7	I listen to and imitate English broadcasting programs.	2.24	1.242	Low
11	I ask for leave once I realize the teacher will ask me questions.	1.54	.932	Low
19	I often improvise an English speech by myself.	2.22	1.199	Low
22	I am not willing to see any negative evaluation on English learning from others.	2.52	1.209	Low

Table 4. The sums of squared factor loadings of the initial factors for FLCACSQ

Factor	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings (Eigenvalues)		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.893	20.386	20.386
2	2.024	8.435	28.822
3	1.421	5.920	34.741
4	1.315	5.478	40.220
5	1.201	5.004	45.224
6	1.158	4.823	50.047

7	1.064	4.435	54.482
8	1.019	4.244	58.726

Table 5. Results of the rotated component matrix of factor analysis for the FLCACSQ

Item	Anxiety Items	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
7	I listen to and imitate English broadcasting programs.	.766				
8	I do morning reading and recite favorite English poems or articles in order that I can talk more in English class.	.715				
19	I often improvise an English speech by myself.	.636				
1	I seize all opportunities to practice speaking with the English native speaker or other classmates in class.	.628				
14	I voluntarily answer the teacher's questions in English class.	.564				
12	I do a lot of simulation exercises in order to pass examinations.	.513				
5	I hope my teacher and classmates can help me with a solution to my anxiety in English learning.		.712			
20	I would like to confide my anxiety in English learning to my parents or friends.		.665			
21	I usually eliminate anxiety by doing something positive or creative like drawing, woodworking, etc.		.515			
2	To overcome my anxiety in English learning, I occasionally read some books in psychology.		.495			
17	To calm down, I take deep breath each time when I enter the examination room.		.470			
18	I sometimes communicate with the classmates who have passed exams so that I can assimilate others' experiences and reduce anxiety.		.462			
23	I sometimes take part in short-term trainings for passing some important exams.		.455			
6	I make a plan that I strictly follow in order to overcome anxiety.		.416			
3	I usually keep silence when experiencing anxiety such as disappointment, compunction, uneasiness, and indignation emerging in the English lessons.			.609		
22	I am not willing to see any negative evaluation on English learning from others.			.568		
4	Being oblivious of myself in working helps cast off my anxiety in English learning.			.482		
11	I ask for leave once I realize the teacher will ask me questions.				-.720	
9	To avoid being asked questions by the teacher, I choose to be seated at the back in English class.				-.447	
13	I rarely keep English classroom anxiety in mind.					.718
24	I usually change embarrassment into humor when someone laughs at my oral mistakes.					.548
16	To alleviate anxiety, I usually imagine that maybe his/her Chinese is not as good as my English when I communicate with a foreigner, so I sometimes use Chinese instead.					.432
15	I never care for others' negative evaluation, but let English learning anxiety develop itself.					.431

Table 6. Summary of variation in the students' overall coping strategy use according to gender

Gender	Male (n=127)		Female (n=193)		Comments	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Significance Level	Pattern of Variation
Overall Anxiety Coping Strategy Use	2.78	0.54	3.0	0.51	p=.001	Female>Male

Table 7. Variation of individual coping strategy according to gender

Gender	Never used /unused	Neutral	Used /always used (%)	Observed X ²	Patterns of Variation
9. To avoid being asked questions by the teacher, I choose to be seated at the back in English class.					
Male	49	10	68 (53.54%)	X ² =6.41	Female<Male
Female	99	7	87 (45.08%)	P=.041	

Table 8. Summary of variation in the students' overall anxiety coping strategy use according to field of study

Field of Study	Science-* (n=127)		Non Science-* (n=110)		English* (n=83)		Comments	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Significance Level	Pattern of Variation
Overall Anxiety Coping Strategy Use	2.69	.46	3.05	.54	3.06	.53	p=.001	English≈ Non Science-> Science-

*"Science-" stands for "science-oriented", "non science-" for "non science-oriented majors", and "English" for "English majors".

Table 9. Variation of some individual anxieties according to field of study

Field of Study	Never used /unused	Neutral	Used /always used	Observed X ²	Pattern of Variation
3. I usually keep silence when experiencing anxiety such as disappointment, compunction, uneasiness, and indignation emerging in the English lessons.					
Science-	52	20	55 (51.82%)	X ² =9.77 p=.044	Non Science->
Non Science-	46	7	57 (43.31%)		Science->
English	43	5	35 (42.17%)		English
18. I sometimes communicate with the classmates who have passed exams so that I can assimilate others' experiences and reduce anxiety.					
Science-	44	15	68 (78.18%)	X ² =20.65 p=.001	Non Science->
Non Science-	18	6	86 (77.11%)		English>
English	14	5	64 (53.54%)		Science-
19. I often improvise an English speech by myself.					

Science-	99	14	14 (30.91%)	X ² =16.66 p=.002	Non Science->
Non Science-	69	7	34 (28.92%)		English>
English	51	8	24 (11.02%)		Science-
23. I sometimes take part in short-term trainings for passing some important exams.					
Science-	68	24	35 (53.64%)	X ² =19.65 p=.001	Non Science->
Non Science-	38	13	59 (46.99%)		English>
English	37	7	39 (27.56%)		Science-

Table 10. Summary of variation in students' overall anxiety coping strategy use according to level of academic year

Level of Academic Year	Freshmen (n=162)		Sophomores (n=158)		Comments	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Significance Level	Pattern of Variation
Overall Anxiety Coping Strategy Use	2.74	.46	3.09	.55	$p=.001$	Sophomores > Freshmen

Table 11. Summary of variation in the students' overall anxiety coping strategy use according to level of college

Level of College	Specialized Colleges (n=153)		Undergraduate Colleges (n=167)		Comments	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Significance Level	Pattern of Variation
Overall Anxiety Coping Strategy Use	2.99	.56	2.84	.50	$p=.012$	Specialized College > Undergraduate College

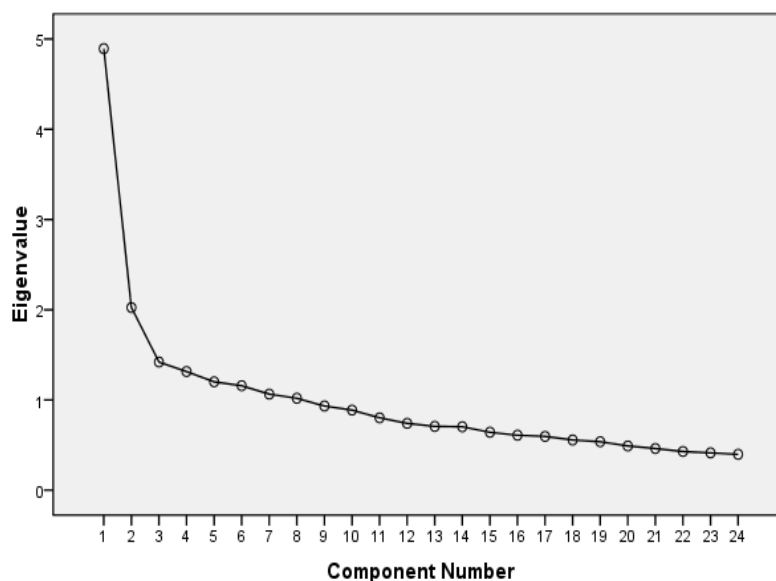


Figure 1. Scree plot of the eigenvalue for the FLCACSQ