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## An empirical study on foreign language learning anxiety of international Chinese education undergraduates in English online live classroom

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**Abstract.** In this study, 419 International Chinese Education sophomores were randomly selected as the subjects to investigate the online English learning anxiety in 2022 with the questionnaire OLECAS. The study aimed to examine the structure and predictors of English learning anxiety among International Chinese Education undergraduates in an online live classroom setting. The findings showed that in the online live classroom, the English learning anxiety of International Chinese Education students was mainly manifested in online classroom anxiety (OCA), confidence anxiety on offline tests (CAOT), emotional anxiety on offline tests (EAOT), and anxiety on offline test results (AOTR). The study further explored the relationship between English learning anxiety and English performance (esp. the CET4 score). The results showed that all the anxiety factors were negatively correlated with English performance. Among them, “emotional anxiety on offline tests” and “anxiety on offline test results” had a predictive effect on English test scores; while “online classroom anxiety” and “confidence anxiety on offline tests” had no significant predictive effect on English test scores. The findings provide practical implications for adjusting online teaching strategies and reducing test anxiety among college English learners

**Keywords:** pre-service Chinese undergraduates; synchronous online teaching; English learning anxiety; teaching strategies; online education

### ■ INTRODUCTION

International Chinese Education undergraduates will be engaged in intercultural communication and overseas Chinese teaching in the future, making proficient English a necessary professional skill for their career development. However, the shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to online live teaching, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020, has introduced new challenges for College English education in China. While online live classrooms offer advantages such as flexibility, time efficiency, and the ability to review recorded content (Wang & Jiang, 2022), they also present novel stressors that may heighten foreign language anxiety among learners (Zhang, 2021; García-Castro & O'Reilly, 2022). For pre-service Chinese language educators, who are expected to develop both strong English proficiency and pedagogical competence, understanding their English learning

anxiety in this emerging learning environment is of particular practical significance.

Recent studies have begun to examine foreign language anxiety in technology-mediated language learning contexts. Y. Huang & W. He (2023) found that online learning anxiety significantly predicts English proficiency among Chinese university students, with self-efficacy mediating this relationship. M. Bashori *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that instructor presence and immediacy behaviors play a crucial role in reducing foreign language anxiety in synchronous online classrooms, though the effect varies by learner proficiency levels. Q. Wang & Y. Jiang (2022) investigated the relationship between online learning engagement and foreign language anxiety among non-English majors in China, revealing that students with higher anxiety levels tended to participate less actively in live

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classroom interactions. J.-M. Dewaele *et al.* (2023) recently compared enjoyment and anxiety in online versus offline foreign language classrooms, suggesting that the online environment amplifies certain affective responses while reducing others. X. Zhang (2021) examined Chinese university students online English learning anxiety and identified impromptu speaking tasks and technical concerns as primary sources of M. Cancino & G. Cabello (2024) similarly found that performance pressure during real-time oral activities, concerns about technical disruptions, and heightened self-awareness when viewing one's own image on screen are key contributors to anxiety in live-streamed language classes. Despite these advances, research specifically targeting pre-service Chinese language educators – a population whose dual identity as language learners and future teachers may shape their perceptions of English learning and anxiety in ways distinct from general university students – remains limited. Moreover, few studies have systematically examined the structure of English learning anxiety among International Chinese Education undergraduates in online live classrooms, nor have they explored how specific anxiety components relate to standardised English test performance in this context. Given that passing the College English Test Band 4 (CET4) remains a degree requirement for most Chinese undergraduates, understanding the relationship between online English learning anxiety and test outcomes is critically important for both pedagogical practice and student well-being.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the structure of English learning anxiety among International Chinese Education undergraduates in an online live classroom and to examine its relationship with their CET4 performance.

## ■ LITERATURE REVIEW

Early research on foreign language anxiety dates back to the mid-1960s, with scholars developing systematic frameworks to understand its nature and impact. A foundational definition by E.K. Horwitz *et al.* (1986) describes foreign language classroom anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning” that causes considerable distress for learners. T. Scovel (1978) further categorised anxiety into two types: facilitating anxiety, which can motivate learners, and debilitating anxiety, which leads to avoidance behaviors.

Most studies confirm that learning anxiety has a negative impact on foreign language learning. For example, E.K. Horwitz *et al.* (1986) and P.D. MacIntyre & R.C. Gardner (1991) demonstrated that anxiety not only affects students' self-confidence but also their self-esteem. D.J. Young (1986) reported that anxiety affects students' performance in speaking and writing tasks. R.C. Gardner (1985) identified a negative correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and students' test scores, oral and written expression skills, and self-confidence. In recent years, A.J. Vogely (1998), and J. Pan & L. Lou (2023) have successively carried out studies on

foreign language reading, writing, and listening anxiety. The results also show that foreign language learning anxiety has a negative impact on learning. Many scholars believe that there is a moderate negative correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and foreign language proficiency (MacIntyre, 1999; Horwitz, 2001).

However, it is worth noting that although most studies recognise the important role of foreign language learning anxiety in the process of foreign language acquisition, there is no consensus on the relationship between foreign language learning anxiety and language performance. For example, the results of L. Ganschow *et al.* (1994) overturned the negative causal relationship between anxiety and performance, and believed that native language disability is the real cause of foreign language learning anxiety. There were also studies that found no relationship, and even positive relationships between anxiety and second language achievement (Kleinmann, 1977; Chastain, 1988). In recent years, E.K. Horwitz (2001) called the efforts to find out more specific sources of anxiety and the relationship between anxiety and different second language levels as a new trend in foreign language anxiety research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In summary, the research on foreign language learning anxiety has been developing and dynamic, and some new discoveries and research trends have been continuously found. However, judging from the current research content, most of the existing researches focus on foreign language learning anxiety in traditional offline classrooms or blended teaching. For foreign language online teaching, especially in online live classroom, foreign language learning anxiety is rarely studied. Secondly, most of the scales used for foreign language learning anxiety surveys was FLCAS compiled by E.K. Horwitz *et al.* (1986). Although FLCAS has been widely used in foreign language anxiety testing, with the development of foreign language teaching, the limitations of Horwitz's research are becoming more and more obvious. For example, the anxiety experience in FLCAS is only related to oral communication, but not to mention other aspects of anxiety in the foreign language learning process. However, the anxiety experienced by foreign language learners is not all related to spoken language, and anxiety can also arise in other aspects of learning. Therefore, when measuring foreign language learning anxiety in the new learning environment, it is necessary to adjust and modify the measurement tools accordingly.

## ■ MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research context.** The study was conducted in a compulsory and credit-bearing English language course at an agricultural university in northwestern China. Since 2017, the “online and offline” blended learning in language education has been adopted. During spring semester in 2020, online live classroom has been used as the main teaching and learning mode in College English education. The English online live class carries out in online broadcast platform in which each English teacher can set up their own classes

and form a unique class number. Then the student can join the online class by the number. During the online classroom, the teacher can choose whether appear in the screen or not. Then, they can begin their teaching with the help of information technology, such as transmitting the language knowledge through PPT or electric learning materials and assign the task; besides, the teachers can interact with students through connecting the microphone with one or more students at a time, or ask them to give response in message area. Meanwhile, the student can also communicate with teachers and other peers by typing in message area or speaking in the microphone. After a short-term adaptation, most students show that they have already used to the online learning and can finish all the learning task and assignment smoothly in online classroom. The teachers also believe that the teaching aims can be achieved in online classroom.

**Participants.** 419 International Chinese Education sophomores were randomly selected and invited to participate in this study on a voluntary basis at the end of the English online live learning in 2022. They were asked to complete the questionnaire on the online learning platform anonymously. Before entering the university, the participants have been learning English for more than 9 years, and all achieved the standards of the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE). After entering the university, the participants began to accept the “online and offline” blended English learning and have mastered the basic skills and experiences in learning online. By the time of completing the survey, the participants have accepted the online live class learning for nearly 2 years, and the various online learning tasks can be skilfully operated and completed by participants. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). All participants took part voluntarily and anonymously. No personal identifying information was collected.

**Instruments.** In this study, the International Chinese Education students Online Live English Class Anxiety Scale (OLECAS) was used to investigate the English learning anxiety of the participants. This scale is adapted from both E.K. Horwitz *et al.* (1986) FLCAS and

J.C. Cassady & R.E. Johnson' (2002) cognitive test anxiety scale (CATS). In FLCAS, it mainly contains 33 items and uses Likert five-level scale, with options ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, covering three kinds of anxiety in foreign language learning: communicative anxiety, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation associated with language anxiety respectively. For this current study, 16 of the 33 items in the FLCAS were retained. All negatively keyed items were re-coded for the data analyses. These items were named as FLCAS1 to FLCAS16.

Considering that the assessment of International Chinese Education students' English ability in higher English education in China is still mainly accomplished through various English tests, passing English tests is still the main learning goal of college English learners, so test anxiety must be another major source of students' anxiety in English learning. Therefore, based on FLCAS, this study further refers to the cognitive test anxiety scale (CATS) compiled by J.C. Cassady & R.E. Johnson (2002) to strengthen the study of students' English test anxiety. CATS is a 27-item series, each measured on a 4-point scale, with responses ranging from “not at all typical of me” to “very typical” of me. It examines students' test anxiety in terms of delayed entry into the test, test emotional anxiety and test result anxiety. In the current study, items from the CTAS were trimmed following the same procedures used for FLCAS. 12 of the 27 items in the CTAS were retained in the study, adopting the 5-point Likert scale as with the FLCAS. These items were named as CTAS1 to CTAS12. Since English is a foreign language for the participants, all the items in the questionnaires were translated into Chinese. Considering the context of the study is in the online learning environment, the “online live classroom” is set apart in the items instead of the original one.

After modifying the previous questionnaire, following the principles of administering questionnaires, two experts in English language education and 10 students were invited to examine and complete the questionnaire, providing expert validity and comments. Further minor revisions were made based on that. Eventually, 28 questionnaire items in OLECAS were proposed and 5-point Likert scale was adopted. Table 1 is a brief description of the items in the questionnaire.

**Table 1.** Detailed items of the online live English class anxiety scale (OLECAS)

| No. | Names of items | Items                                                                                                   |
|-----|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | FLCAS1         | When I speak in English online live classroom, I always lose confidence.                                |
| 2   | FLCAS2         | I never worry about making mistakes in English online live classroom.                                   |
| 3   | FLCAS3         | When I am called on in my English online live classroom, I tremble with nervousness.                    |
| 4   | FLCAS4         | When a teacher speaks English in English online live classroom and I don't understand it, I get scared. |
| 5   | FLCAS5         | It doesn't bother me to have more English online live classes.                                          |
| 6   | FLCAS6         | In the English online live classroom, I found that I always think of something unrelated to the class.  |
| 7   | FLCAS7         | I always think that other students' English level is better than mine.                                  |
| 8   | FLCAS8         | When I had to speak in English online live classroom without any preparation, I felt very scared.       |
| 9   | FLCAS9         | In English online live classroom, I may be so nervous that I forget what I should know.                 |
| 10  | FLCAS10        | When I can't understand the teachers' question in English online live classroom, I feel very sad.       |
| 11  | FLCAS11        | Although I had prepared for the English online live class, I still felt anxious.                        |
| 12  | FLCAS12        | I've always wanted to skip English online live classroom.                                               |

Table 1. Continued

| No. | Names of items | Items                                                                                                                       |
|-----|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13  | FLCAS13        | When I speak in English online live classroom, I feel confident.                                                            |
| 14  | FLCAS14        | When the teacher corrects my language mistakes in English online live classroom, I will be very afraid.                     |
| 15  | FLCAS15        | I always worry that I can't keep up with the rapid progress of the English online live classroom.                           |
| 16  | FLCAS16        | When I speak English in English online live classroom, I am afraid that other students will laugh at me.                    |
| 17  | CATS1          | I couldn't sleep because I was worried about the English final exams or CET4.                                               |
| 18  | CATS2          | When I take an English test or CET4, I always wonder if other students can do better than me in the HKCEE.                  |
| 19  | CATS3          | It is easier for me than other International Chinese Education students to find out the directions of English test or CET4. |
| 20  | CATS4          | I'm not as nervous as the other students about the English test or CET4.                                                    |
| 21  | CATS5          | At the beginning of English test or CET4, I was always so nervous that I could not think normally.                          |
| 22  | CATS6          | In the English test or CET4, I would be so nervous that I would forget the grammar and words I knew.                        |
| 23  | CATS7          | After every English test or CET4, I feel I could have done better.                                                          |
| 24  | CATS8          | I feel confident and relaxed when I take an English test or CET4.                                                           |
| 25  | CATS9          | I always have a bad feeling when I take the English final or CET4.                                                          |
| 26  | CATS10         | Every time I find an unexpected question on an English test or CET4, I feel like it's a challenge and not a panic attack.   |
| 27  | CATS11         | I am not good at taking the English test or CET-4, so my test results can not reflect my true level.                        |
| 28  | CATS12         | I haven't been doing well in my English exam and in CET4.                                                                   |

**Note:** OLECAS – Online Live English Class Anxiety Scale

**Source:** adapted by E.K. Horwitz *et al.* (1986) and J.C. Cassady & R.E. Johnson (2002); modified for the online live learning context

**Data collection and analysis.** The study was distributed to the participants through electronic questionnaires in online English learning platform. A total of 419 students participated in the survey, of which 419 were valid questionnaires, with an effective rate of 100%. After the data was collected, the personal information of students was analysed first. There were 175 males and 242 females, with an average age of 19.5 years ( $SD = 0.57$ ), majoring in Chinese, secretarial science, urban planning and management, forestry, environmental engineering, and biotechnology, etc. Meanwhile, the latest CET4 (College English Test Band 4) scores of the participants during the English online live class were also collected. For most Chinese International Chinese Education students, CET4 is the national standard for their English proficiency and is related to their academic certificate. The data showed that the average CET4 score of the subjects was 392.4 ( $SD = 50.94$ ), which was lower than the pass score of CET4 (425). Considering that most of the items on the scale were negatively keyed items, the anxiety scale was assigned a value of 1 for “strongly agree” and 5 for “strongly disagree” before the data were analysed. Therefore, the scale scores were in the range of 28-140. The higher the score, the lower the anxiety level, while the lower the score, the higher the anxiety level. Then, the data analysis involved the following three phases with SPSS23.0 and AMOS17.0. First, the descriptive analysis was conducted to give the brief understanding of the English learning anxiety in online live classroom. Second, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to test the construct validity of the OLECAS scale. Third, the finalised OLECAS factors were analysed through confirmatory factor analysis. Then, correlation and regression analysis between the factors in OLECAS and CET4 scores was conducted where the OLECAS factors were considered as predictor variables, and the CET4 scores were processed as outcome variables.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive analysis of the OLECAS

Firstly, SPSS 23.0 was used to analyse the average score of the whole scale and each item to get a general description of English learning anxiety of the students in online live classroom. The data showed that the average score of the scale was 69.082, which indicates that the level of online English learning anxiety of the participants is still on the high side. From Table 1, it is found that except for No. 5 (FLCAS5), No. 12 (FLCAS12), No. 14 (FLCAS14), No. 19 (CATS3), No. 20 (CATS4) and No. 26 (CATS10), the average scores for other questions are all below the average, showing the higher level of English learning anxiety, which reflected these questions are mainly source of Chinese International Chinese Education students' English online live learning anxiety. For example: in online English class, the students may “feel so nervous that they can forget what they have already known”, and they are afraid when “questioned by teacher in screen” and show “lack of confidence in the online classroom” and “cannot understand what the teacher was saying” and so on.

In the English online live classroom, the face-to-face communication and interaction between teachers and students and students and students is much less than in the traditional offline classroom, so students should have felt relaxed and not anxious (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). However, the participants in the study still show the fear about the communication with teachers and classmates by screen and microphone, and worry about the negative evaluation from teachers and peers. Meanwhile, the participants also believe that they are lacking of confidence and have much anxiety about the online English learning. Besides, during the English online live classroom, the participants also show they have excessive stress and lack of confidence in the English test, and expect the test results too

much, especial for CET4. Therefore, it is obvious to find that the English learning anxiety in online live classroom mainly comes from online classroom and English test. As shown in Table 2, item 19 recorded the highest mean

anxiety score ( $M = 3.36$ ), while item 8 recorded the lowest ( $M = 2.22$ ), reflecting notable variation in students' anxiety levels across different aspects measured by the OLECAS scale.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics for OLECAS items

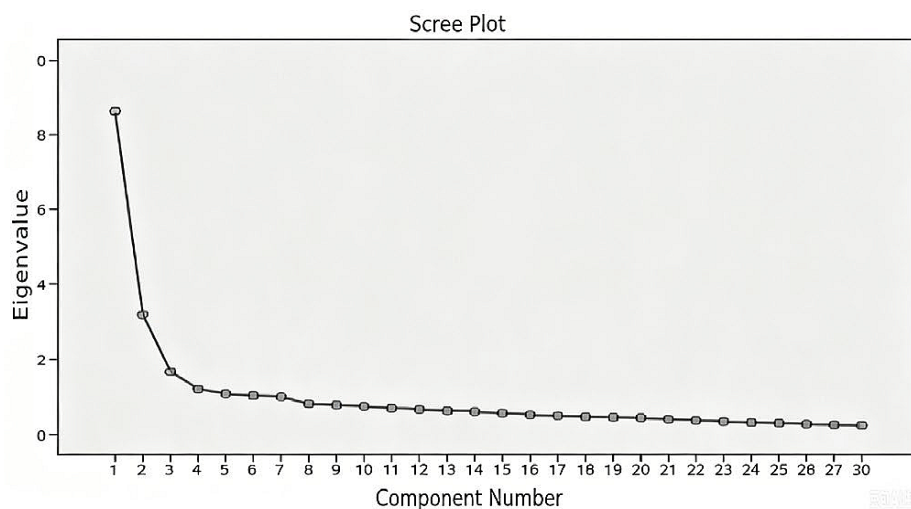
| Items | Mean | SD    | Items | Mean | SD    | Items | Mean | SD    | Items | Mean | SD    |
|-------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| 1     | 2.40 | 1.002 | 8     | 2.22 | 0.957 | 15    | 2.71 | 0.965 | 22    | 2.72 | 0.937 |
| 2     | 2.99 | 1.094 | 9     | 2.71 | 1.051 | 16    | 2.71 | 1.006 | 23    | 2.59 | 0.897 |
| 3     | 2.78 | 1.073 | 10    | 2.53 | 0.922 | 17    | 2.63 | 1.019 | 24    | 2.99 | 0.882 |
| 4     | 2.74 | 0.989 | 11    | 2.74 | 0.973 | 18    | 2.55 | 1.001 | 25    | 2.48 | 0.872 |
| 5     | 3.10 | 1.007 | 12    | 3.04 | 0.976 | 19    | 3.36 | 0.803 | 26    | 3.08 | 0.855 |
| 6     | 2.73 | 0.985 | 13    | 2.81 | 0.919 | 20    | 3.17 | 0.863 | 27    | 2.90 | 0.842 |
| 7     | 2.24 | 0.809 | 14    | 3.04 | 0.965 | 21    | 2.88 | 0.954 | 28    | 2.51 | 1.019 |

Source: author's own data

### Exploratory factor and confirmatory factor analyses of the OLECAS

Considering the questionnaire used in the study were adapted and modified by two different questionnaires, the factor structure and reliability of the questionnaire needed to be reexamined. Then, the data were randomly divided into two groups. The first set of data was tested by the Cronbach coefficient for the internal reliability of the scale. The total coefficient of Cronbach  $\alpha$  was  $0.892 > 0.8$ , and the coefficient of Cronbach  $\alpha$  of each factor measured in the questionnaire was  $\geq 0.60$ , which indicated that the internal consistency of the questionnaire was sufficient and

the validity is in a high degree. Secondly, the principal component analysis was used to finalise the factors in OLECAS with the maximum skew orthogonal rotation method (Kaiser, 1958). For finalising the OLECAS, the factor loading of items should preferably weigh greater than 0.5 on the relevance factor and other factors less than 0.4 should be deleted (Stevens, 1996). As a result, a total of 25 items and four factors were retained in the final version of the OLECAS and FLCAS6, FLCAS7 and FLCAS12 were deleted in this study (shown in Table 3). It can also be seen from the (Fig. 1) that the distribution curve of the factors gradually levelled off after the fourth factor.



**Figure 1.** Scree plot for the exploratory factor analysis of the OLECAS

Source: author's own data

**Table 3.** Rotated factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha values for the OLECAS

| Factors                                                                     | Loading |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Online Classroom Anxiety (OCA), $\alpha = 0.906$ , Mean = 2.658, SD = 0.052 |         |
| FLCAS1                                                                      | 0.560   |
| FLCAS3                                                                      | 0.733   |
| FLCAS4                                                                      | 0.702   |
| FLCAS8                                                                      | 0.682   |
| FLCAS9                                                                      | 0.714   |

Table 3. Continued

| Factors                                                                                 | Loading |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Online Classroom Anxiety (OCA), $\alpha = 0.906$ , Mean = 2.658, SD = 0.052             |         |
| FLCAS10                                                                                 | 0.655   |
| FLCAS11                                                                                 | 0.733   |
| FLCAS14                                                                                 | 0.688   |
| FLCAS15                                                                                 | 0.659   |
| FLCAS16                                                                                 | 0.708   |
| Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests (CAOT), $\alpha = 0.630$ , Mean = 2.790, SD = 0.093 |         |
| FLCAS2                                                                                  | 0.583   |
| FLCAS13                                                                                 | 0.586   |
| CATS4                                                                                   | 0.715   |
| CATS8                                                                                   | 0.713   |
| CATS10                                                                                  | 0.611   |
| Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests (EAOT), $\alpha = 0.692$ , Mean = 3.008, SD = 0.018  |         |
| CATS1                                                                                   | 0.763   |
| CATS2                                                                                   | 0.722   |
| CATS3                                                                                   | 0.529   |
| CATS5                                                                                   | 0.595   |
| CATS6                                                                                   | 0.611   |
| CATS7                                                                                   | 0.607   |
| Anxiety on Offline Test Results (AOTR), $\alpha = 0.622$ , Mean = 2.631, SD = 0.055     |         |
| CATS9                                                                                   | 0.550   |
| CATS11                                                                                  | 0.685   |
| CATS12                                                                                  | 0.506   |

Source: author's own data

The four factors in OLECAS were “Online Classroom Anxiety (OCA)” ( $\alpha = 0.906$ , Mean = 2.658, SD = 0.052), “Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests (CAOT)” ( $\alpha = 0.630$ , Mean = 2.79, SD = 0.093), “Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests (EAOT)” ( $\alpha = 0.692$ , Mean = 3.008, SD = 0.018), and “Anxiety on Offline Test Results (AOTR)” ( $\alpha = 0.622$ , Mean = 2.631, SD = 0.055). The total variance explained was 69.87%. The factor “communicative apprehension” and “negative evaluation apprehension” in the original FLCAS questionnaire are not reflected in this study separately, but are presented as online classroom anxiety, which shows that the English learning anxiety of Chinese International Chinese Education students in online live class does present some new features.

The confirmatory factor analysis can verify the results of the exploratory factor by establishing a structural equation model to test whether the exploratory factor fits with the research purpose well. Based on the four main factors that have been finalised in the OLECAS, the study used AMOS 17.0 to construct the first-order model of OLECAS based on the rest of data. A fitness check was performed and corrected according to the estimated values, correction paths

and indices suggested by the system. Finally, the model ( $\chi^2/df = 1.222$ ,  $P = 0.013$ , GFI = 0.907, RMSEA = 0.036, CFI = 0.982, NFI = 0.912, IFI = 0.983) has a good fit, confirming the four factors of “Online Classroom Anxiety”, “Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests”, “Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests”, and “Anxiety on Offline Test Results” can represent the variables of OLECAS in blended learning.

#### Correlation between English learning anxiety and CET4 scores

Based on the current situation of International Chinese Education students' English learning anxiety in online live classroom, this study further explored the relationship between English online learning anxiety and English test scores. CET4 score was used as an independent variable and English learning anxiety as a dependent variable to establish a correlation analysis. It can be seen in Table 4 that there is a negative correlation between the four kinds of anxiety and the CET4 scores, which showed that students' English online learning anxiety will affect their English test results directly, and the higher the degree of anxiety, the lower their test results.

Table 4. Correlation between OLECAS factors and CET4 scores ( $n = 419$ )

| English Learning Anxiety (ELA) | OCA       | CAOT      | EAOT      | AOTR      |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| CET4 score                     | -0.0213** | -0.0170** | -0.0134** | -0.0242** |

Note: OCA = Online Classroom Anxiety; CAOT = Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests; EAOT = Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests; AOTR = Anxiety on Offline Test Results. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Source: author's own data

The stepwise regression analysis was also conducted in which the learners' English learning anxiety were used

to predict their CET4 scores, namely, the OLECAS factors are the predictors, while the CET4 scores are outcome

variables. The findings in Table 5 revealed that the OLE-CAS factors of “Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests” and “Anxiety on Offline Test Results” have significant negative predictors of CET4 scores. However, “Online Classroom Anxiety” and “Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests” did not predict the results. A possible explanation is that online classroom anxiety is mainly related to real-time interaction and peer evaluation in virtual environments, which is separate from formal test contexts. Students may experience anxiety about speaking in class or being

judged by peers during live sessions, but this does not necessarily translate to performance on standardised exams like CET4, which are taken individually and focus on written skills rather than classroom participation. Similarly, confidence anxiety on offline tests may reflect general self-doubt rather than test-specific anxiety, thus having less impact on actual test performance. This suggests that anxiety manifests differently across contexts, and classroom-related anxiety may not directly influence formal test outcomes.

**Table 5.** Stepwise regression model for predicting students' CET4 scores ( $n = 419$ )

|             | OLECAS | B      | SE    | Beta  | T      | P     |
|-------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| CET4 scores | EAOT   | 9.351  | 4.273 | 0.115 | -2.189 | 0.029 |
| CET4 scores | AOTR   | 14.392 | 5.108 | 0.196 | -2.818 | 0.005 |

**Note:** EAOT = Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests; AOTR = Anxiety on Offline Test Results.  $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**Source:** author's own data

### Independent sample T test on different genders

First, the average CET4 score for boys and girls were calculated respectively. It is easily found that the average CET4 score for boys and girls was 370.75 ( $SD = 54.004$ ) and 405.13 ( $SD = 44.107$ ) respectively. Although neither boys nor girls did not reach the pass mark (425 points), girls' English scores were significantly higher than boys. Meanwhile, the average score of the four anxiety factors of the female students is also higher than that of the male students, which indicates that the anxiety level of the female students is lower than that of the male students, which is consistent with the results of the correlation analysis. The independent sample T test further showed that there were significant differences between male and female students in “Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests” and “Anxiety on

Offline Test Results” ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, there was no difference between “Online Classroom Anxiety” and “Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests”. Specifically, the difference in “Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests” between male and female students' is mainly reflected in FLCAS2, CATS8 and CATS10, showing that the boys are less confident than girls in the English test, and they are more worried about making mistakes especially in CET4. Meanwhile, it was more difficult for boys to deal with unexpected situations in the English test. Besides, the difference between male and female students' anxiety about the English test result was reflected in CATS12. It indicates that compared with female students, boys are more likely to view the test with pessimistic and depressed to their English scores. These gender differences are summarised in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Independent samples T-Test results by gender

| Factors | Item   | Gender | Average | SD      | Sig.  | 95% confidence interval for difference |             |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|-------|----------------------------------------|-------------|
|         |        |        |         |         |       | upper-bound                            | lower-bound |
| CAOT    | FLCAS2 | M      | 2.80    | 0.099   | 0.003 | -0.5788                                | -1.258      |
|         |        | F      | 3.15    | 0.057   |       |                                        |             |
|         | CATS8  | M      | 2.85    | 0.089   | 0.001 | 0.1529                                 | 0.5589      |
|         |        | F      | 3.22    | -0.0027 |       |                                        |             |
|         | CATS10 | M      | 2.80    | 0.9351  | 0.002 | -0.3869                                | -0.0198     |
|         |        | F      | 2.99    | 0.7774  |       |                                        |             |
| AOTR    | CATS12 | M      | 2.29    | 1.0285  | 0.001 | -0.2470                                | 0.1469      |
|         |        | F      | 2.68    | 0.982   |       |                                        |             |

**Note:** CAOT = Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests; AOTR = Anxiety on Offline Test Results

**Source:** author's own data

## DISCUSSION

### The English learning anxiety of Chinese International Chinese Education students in online live classroom

The current study analysed the International Chinese Education students' English learning anxiety in online live classroom with the exploratory and confirmatory analysis. The findings indicate that in the online English live classroom, the International Chinese Education students' English learning anxiety include four factors, namely,

“Online Classroom Anxiety”, “Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests”, “Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests”, and “Anxiety on Offline Test Results”. In the online live classroom, students generally do not have to leave their comfort zone and answer questions and interact with the teachers are also less frequently, therefore, the students should feel more relaxed about the online learning, and the learning anxiety should be reduced. However, the results of the study show that the students still have the high learning anxiety and show fear and worry about English learning

in online live classroom. This indicates that the change of learning environment has limited influence on students in language learning. It is worth noting the “communicative apprehension” and “negative appraisal apprehension” in FLCAS are not reflected in this study, which is consistent with the results of S. Giasiranis & L. Sofos (2020), she also found that International Chinese Education students’ English learning anxiety is a comprehensive factor in her research on Chinese International Chinese Education students’ English learning anxiety.

On the one hand, it proves that English learning anxiety is not only caused by oral communication anxiety, but also a combination of various kinds of anxiety. On the other hand, the oral communication between teachers and students is not the focus of English learning in online live classroom. Therefore, the English learning anxiety of International Chinese Education students in online live classroom is a kind of holistic anxiety which exists in the whole process of online live learning. This finding is consistent with E.K. Horwitz *et al.* (1986), who argued that foreign language anxiety is a multifaceted construct rather than being limited to oral communication. However, L. Ganschow *et al.* (1994) emphasised the role of language learning disabilities in anxiety, a factor not examined in the current study. Additionally, H.W. Zhang (2022) found that online classroom anxiety was a significant predictor of test performance in their sample of science majors, which contrasts with the present results. This discrepancy may be attributed to the different majors and teaching contexts. Furthermore, Y. Lee *et al.* (2023) reported that test result anxiety was the strongest predictor of academic performance, aligning with the current study’s findings.

Second, the most significant factor in OLECAS is “Anxiety on Offline Test Results”, and the average loading of factor is more than 0.7 and the Mean = 2.631 (SD = 0.055), ranking the lowest among 4 anxiety factors. The finding shows that the English learning anxiety of students in the process of online live learning is mainly concentrated on the fear and worry about the English test results, especially the CET4 scores, which coincided with many researches on foreign language learning anxiety that the foreign language learning anxiety mainly comes from the test anxiety to a large extent (Mandler & Sarason, 1952). In recent years, the foreign language teaching in China has been undergoing a transformation from the traditional class to flipped classroom and to the blended learning, the “student-centred” teaching concept is more and more applied. Therefore, the process assessment of the students is also adopted, at the same time, the International Chinese Education students’ views on English learning, and motivation have also changed significantly. They have gradually realised that English learning is more for improving their intercultural communication competence, and ultimately developing their comprehensive application of English. However, it cannot be denied that at present, the assessment of International Chinese Education students’ English proficiency in China is still based on

national English test as the main means and standard. Only passing the relevant English tests, can students achieve their own graduation, get further studies, and find a better job, which inevitably leads to “test-oriented” as the main goal of International Chinese Education students’ English learning. Therefore, English test anxiety is still the main source of Chinese International Chinese Education students’ English learning anxiety. This may also explain why anxiety about English test accounts for three-quarters of the anxiety factors in International Chinese Education students’ English online live classroom. In other words, although the English online live classroom has changed the traditional learning environment and learning model, once the requirement of students to pass the English test has not been changed, the English learning anxiety of students will not change in nature.

Meanwhile, it is also found that the mean of “Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests” was the highest among the four factors (Mean = 3.008, SD = 0.018). In other words, students experienced the lowest emotional anxiety during the English exam. There are two reasons for the finding. First, after so many English test for Chinese International Chinese Education students since they began to learn English, they have already formed some strategies to relieve the emotional anxiety in the English test. Second, due to the influence of COVID19, the CET4 test in the 2020 was delayed so that the participants have nearly one year not to take part in formal English test. Therefore, most of them have forgotten the emotional anxiety in the English test at that time. Above reasons may illustrate why the students felt less anxious emotionally about the English test when they took part in the questionnaire survey.

#### **Correlation between learners’ English learning anxiety in online live classroom and CET4 scores**

Based on the current situation of International Chinese Education students’ English learning anxiety under the online live classroom, this study further explores the relationship between OLECAS and CET4 scores with the correlation analysis and regression analysis. The factors “Emotional Anxiety on Offline Tests” and “Anxiety on Offline Test Results” in OLECAS were negative predictors of English achievement, while “Online Classroom Anxiety” and “Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests” were not predictive of English achievement. It is worth noting that the findings of the regression analysis show that the more relaxed they were or the less emotionally anxious the students were in the English test, the lower test scores they would get. Although there is much debate as to whether foreign language learning anxiety has the direct impact on students’ foreign language outcome, however, this study still agrees that students with learning anxiety will have defects in understanding the test and encoding information, which leads to a decline in learning skills and strategies they use to deal with the test. In turn, it directly increases their mental burden and pressure, and ultimately affects performance of students in exams (Ganschow *et al.*, 1994).

Combined with the regression results in the previous chapter, online classroom anxiety and confidence anxiety on offline tests cannot significantly predict CET4 scores. The core reason is that online classroom anxiety mainly stems from real-time interaction, teacher questioning and peer evaluation in virtual classrooms, which belongs to situational anxiety in the learning process and is independent of the assessment scenarios of standardised examinations. Test-related confidence anxiety is a general psychological state of self-doubt, rather than targeted anxiety generated in the examination process, so it cannot effectively predict actual examination performance. In addition, the findings also indicate that for most participants, they treated the classroom and English test separately. The English learning anxiety in online live classroom is only manifested in their unwilling to be questioned and interacted by teachers and students, their lack of self-confidence in learning, and their refusal to accept the negative comments from teachers and peers. However, they don't think there is a direct relationship between classroom learning and English tests. In the online live classroom for College English, the teachers would focus on the questions in the students' autonomous learning, and the important and difficult language points in the teaching materials. Therefore, the training and preparation for CET4 is not included in the online classroom, so students may think that the English learning online is not helpful to pass CET4 although the test was delayed. Besides, several participants were interviewed to explore the deep reasons behind test anxiety, and it was found that their university has clear degree requirements linked to CET4 scores. Only those with a CET4 score above 400 can obtain the degree certificate. Therefore, passing the CET4 test has become the most important learning goal for students. However, the overall CET4 performance of the respondents is unsatisfactory: only 25.7% of students passed the exam, and 43.3% scored above 400, which is far from the graduation standard.

The findings show that the students do not attach importance to the learning in English classroom, so that they lack of consolidation and accumulation of English language knowledge, resulting in their skills are not solid and that the students are weak in how to transform language knowledge into the skills in response to English test. Therefore, even if they spend a lot of time on exercises about CET4, the outcome is still not satisfactory. In turn, the low score in English test aggravates the students' anxiety about English learning, which results in a vicious circle.

#### **Gender differences in English learning anxiety in online live English classroom**

There have been different views on gender differences in foreign language learning anxiety. However, females have repeatedly been found to report higher levels of overall test anxiety than males (Hembree, 1988; Zeidner, 1990; Bandalos *et al.*, 1995). According to E.K. Horwitz *et al.* (1986), foreign language anxiety of female students is higher than that of male students, because female students tend to be

more introverted, so their learning anxiety in classroom is higher. J.C. Cassady & R.E. Johnson, (2002) showed that although the learning anxiety for female is higher, there is no obvious difference in the language test performance between female and male. While the findings of S. Nooreen *et al.* (2015) show that English learning anxiety of girls is lower than that of boys. However, the results of independent sample T test show that boys' English learning anxiety is higher than girls' in "Confidence Anxiety on Offline Tests" and "Anxiety on Offline Test Results", and the average score of CET4 of boys is lower than girls. It is found that most of the participants in the study come from the rural areas in western China, influenced by economic factors and Chinese outworn concept "value the male child only", the learning pressure for most girls in rural areas in western China would be too great. However, the female students who can go to high school or university or above are generally the "less but better" group, who have excellent performance and are usually better than male students in academic works. Therefore, the learning motivation and abilities of female International Chinese Education students in western China are often quite strong, and the academic performance is generally better than boys, so their English learning anxiety will be lower than boys, and they are also more confident in the process of English learning.

#### **Pedagogical implications for online English teaching**

Although English online live teaching, with the help of advanced information technology, is better fit with the modern society's learning philosophy, the findings of this study still show that there is a high level of English learning anxiety for Chinese International Chinese Education students in the online live classroom, which is mainly reflected in the classroom anxiety and English test anxiety. In view of this, this study puts forward the following suggestions for English teaching in online live classroom.

Firstly, the teacher should learn the anxiety of students in online classroom clearly and understand what the student worry about and they want from the online classroom. Secondly, R.L. Oxford (1999) found that anxiety in foreign language learning is closely related to the way teachers teach. In foreign language classroom, the behaviour of the teacher, especially the language used in error correction and evaluation, will cause the students' foreign language learning anxiety. Therefore, exploring the English teaching mode in online live classroom is the key to the English online live education. English teachers should not only complete the teaching tasks in the online classroom, but also overcome the obstacles caused by lacking of teacher-student communication, and learn about the feedback of the classroom in time from the students. Therefore, the teacher should strengthen the interaction with the students, "chatting" with the students through video or typing before or after class to know the students' learning. Meanwhile, even in the online classroom, the teacher should also give more encouragement to the students behind the screen, so that the students can learn in a relaxed learning atmosphere. At

last, the teachers can use diverse ways to make evaluation to student, such as increase the peer review to allows students to correct errors in the online classroom, which can prevent students from receiving negative feedback directly from teachers and reduce their fear towards the classroom.

At the same time, since no more scientific and feasible measure of English ability than English test in the short term, students' anxiety about English test will exist for a long time. In view of students' high anxiety level and low CET4 passing rate, college English teachers should also consider strengthening the training of students' test-taking skills by means of teaching materials during live broadcast. For example, according to the content of the CET4 examination according to the students assigned translation, writing training, or for the content of the text set reading questions, so that students limit the time online reading, and so on. This not only completes the teaching content of the live-broadcast course, but also strengthens students' test skills in daily teaching, which can not only enhance students' learning willingness for the live-broadcast course, but also enhance their interest in English learning, it can also improve students' test skills and test-taking ability, enhance students' test confidence, and reduce students' test anxiety. Only in this way can the learning effect of students' online live broadcast class.

## ■ CONCLUSIONS

Based on a survey of English learning anxiety among 419 International Chinese Education students at a university in western China, the study found that the shift to online live teaching did not reduce students' anxiety in either English learning or formal English tests. Further analysis revealed that two anxiety factors, emotional anxiety during tests and anxiety about test results, were significant negative predictors of CET4 performance, while online classroom anxiety and general confidence anxiety were not predictive.

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Specifically, AOTR showed the strongest negative prediction of CET4 scores ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), followed by EAOT ( $\beta = 0.152$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ). These findings highlight that assessment-related anxiety, rather than classroom interaction anxiety, is the primary barrier to academic performance in this context.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study underscores the need for teachers to proactively identify and address students' anxiety triggers in online settings, particularly those linked to high-stakes testing. Strengthening real-time interaction, providing positive reinforcement, and integrating test-taking skill training into live lessons can help mitigate anxiety and create a more supportive learning environment. Over time, these practices may foster greater confidence and a more positive cycle of learning and performance. Future studies could explore English learning anxiety in hybrid learning environments, examine how different online teaching platforms shape anxiety levels, and test targeted interventions such as stress management workshops or low-stakes practice assessments designed to reduce test-related anxiety among pre-service TCSOL teachers.

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## ■ CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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## Синхрондук онлайн англис тили сабактарында “Кытай тилинин эл аралык билим берүүсү” багытынын бакалавриат студенттеринин чет тилин үйрөнүүдөгү тынчсыздануусун эмпирикалык изилдөө

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**Аннотация.** Бул изилдөөдө 2022-жылы онлайн форматта англис тилин үйрөнүүдөгү тынчсызданууну OLECAS суроо-барагынын (онлайн англис тилин үйрөнүүдөгү тынчсыздануу шкаласы) жардамы менен изилдөө үчүн “Кытай тилинин эл аралык билим берүүсү” багытында окуган бакалавриаттын 2-курсунун 419 студенти туш келди тандалып алынган. Изилдөө реалдуу убакыт режиминдеги онлайн сабактардын шартында аталган багыттын студенттеринин англис тилин үйрөнүүдөгү тынчсыздануусунун структурасын жана божомолдоочу факторлорун (предикторлорун) аныктоого багытталган. Алынган натыйжалар көрсөткөндөй, синхрондук онлайн сабактарда студенттердин англис тилин үйрөнүүдөгү тынчсыздануусу негизинен төмөнкү формаларда байкалган: онлайн сабактардагы тынчсыздануу (OCA), офлайн тесттерди тапшыруудагы ишенимдүүлүккө байланыштуу тынчсыздануу (CAOT), офлайн тесттерди тапшыруудагы эмоционалдык тынчсыздануу (EAOT) жана офлайн тесттердин жыйынтыктарынан кооптонуу (AOTR). Изилдөөдө англис тилин үйрөнүүдөгү тынчсыздануу менен академиялык жетишкендиктин (айрыкча, CET-4 экзаменинин упайларынын) ортосундагы байланыш андан ары талдоого алынган. Жыйынтыгында тынчсыздануунун бардык факторлору англис тили боюнча жетишкендиктер менен терс корреляцияда экени аныкталган. Алардын ичинен “офлайн тесттерди тапшыруудагы эмоционалдык тынчсыздануу” жана “офлайн тесттердин жыйынтыктарынан кооптонуу” факторлору англис тилинен тесттин упайларына божомолдоочу таасир тийгизген; ал эми “онлайн сабактардагы тынчсыздануу” жана “офлайн тесттерди тапшыруудагы ишенимдүүлүккө байланыштуу тынчсыздануу” факторлору тесттин жыйынтыктарына олуттуу божомолдоочу таасирин тийгизген эмес. Изилдөөнүн жыйынтыктары жогорку окуу жайларында англис тилин үйрөнүп жаткан студенттердин онлайн окутуу стратегияларын ылайыкташтыруу жана тест тапшыруудагы тынчсызданууну басаңдатуу үчүн практикалык сунуштарды берет

**Негизги сөздөр:** кытай тилинин болочок мугалимдери (бакалавриат студенттери); синхрондук онлайн окутуу; англис тилин үйрөнүүдөгү тынчсыздануу; окутуу стратегиялары; онлайн билим берүү

## Эмпирическое исследование тревожности при изучении иностранного языка у студентов бакалавриата по направлению «Международное образование в области китайского языка» в условиях синхронного онлайн-обучения английскому языку

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**Аннотация.** В данном исследовании в качестве испытуемых были случайным образом выбраны 419 второкурсников бакалавриата, обучающихся по направлению «Международное образование в области китайского языка». Целью работы являлось изучение уровня тревожности при онлайн-изучении английского языка в 2022 году с использованием специализированного опросника OLECAS (шкала тревожности при изучении английского языка в режиме онлайн). Исследование было направлено на анализ структуры и прогностических факторов (предикторов) тревожности при изучении английского языка среди студентов указанного направления в условиях онлайн-занятий в реальном времени. Полученные результаты показали, что в условиях синхронного онлайн-обучения тревожность студентов при изучении английского языка в основном выражалась в следующих формах: тревожность во время онлайн-занятий (OCA), тревожность, связанная с уверенностью при прохождении офлайн-тестов (CAOT), эмоциональная тревожность при прохождении офлайн-тестов (EAOT) и тревожность перед результатами офлайн-тестирования (AOTR). В исследовании также детально изучалась взаимосвязь между тревожностью при изучении английского языка и академической успеваемостью (в частности, баллами за экзамен CET-4). Результаты продемонстрировали негативную корреляцию между всеми факторами тревожности и успеваемостью по английскому языку. При этом такие факторы, как «эмоциональная тревожность при прохождении офлайн-тестов» и «тревожность перед результатами офлайн-тестирования», имели прогностическое влияние на экзаменационные баллы по английскому языку; в то время как «тревожность во время онлайн-занятий» и «тревожность, связанная с уверенностью при прохождении офлайн-тестов», не оказали существенного прогностического влияния на результаты тестирования. Выводы исследования содержат практические рекомендации по корректировке стратегий онлайн-преподавания и снижению экзаменационной тревожности у студентов вузов, изучающих английский язык

**Ключевые слова:** будущие преподаватели китайского языка (студенты бакалавриата); синхронное онлайн-обучение; тревожность при изучении английского языка; стратегии обучения; онлайн-образование