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Foreign Language Anxiety During Synchronous-Online and Face-to-Face Classes

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It is well acknowledged that the COVID-19 global pandemic has resulted in unignorable changes to almost every aspect of people's life, including foreign language education (UNESCO, 2020). Different from traditional online education that is often planned ahead with preparation, the abrupt transition to online education during COVID-19 has placed great pressure on foreign language teachers (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Similarly, students may have experienced foreign language anxiety (FLA) further in online classes during COVID-19 (Moser et al., 2021; Russell, 2020), due to isolation from teachers and peers (Hurd, 2007). Despite continuing interest in FLA, research is still lacking in directly comparing FLA between online and face-to-face classes (although see Resnik et al., 2023). This study aims to fill in this gap by adopting a quasi-experimental, within-subject design to compare the effects of synchronous-online and face-to-face learning contexts. Specifically, this study explores FLA levels, coping strategies, and their relationships as the same group of students moved from synchronous-online to face-to-face English language classes during COVID-19.

The FLA levels of 47 undergraduate students in a Japanese university were tracked throughout 14 weeks, with 3 waves of data collected from each of the 7-week, synchronous-online and face-to-face phases respectively, using the well-established Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students' strategies to cope with FLA were also recorded with the recent FLA Self-regulatory Strategy Scale (Guo et al., 2018). Results from statistical analyses showed that students experienced lower FLA levels in the face-to-face than the synchronous-online phase, and that students used the Avoidance strategies less often than the other five categories of strategies, namely, Cognitive, Management, Affective, Social, and Appraisal. It was also found that students with higher FLA levels tended to use the Avoidance and Affective strategies more often. Theoretical and pedagogical implications of the current findings will be discussed.

Keywords

Foreign Language Anxiety, FLA Coping Strategies, Synchronous Online Classes

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