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MANAGING STUDENTS' ANXIETY WHILE LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CONDITIONS OF WAR IN UKRAINE

Summary. The current tense situation in which Ukraine found itself due to Russia's military aggression influenced all spheres of life: social, economic, medical, environmental and educational. And if traditionally the main factors determining the efficacy of foreign languages teaching and learning were methods and techniques used by the teacher, students' mental capacities and cognitive knowledge of the target language and motivation, in today's situation when a classroom ceased being a safe place, the priorities have shifted. Affective factor became essential, as depending on whether positive or negative emotions prevail, our mental processes while learning can be either boosted or hampered. In the process of foreign language teaching and learning the following affective factors should be taken into account: students' self-esteem, risk-taking, motivation, anxiety and inhibition. Due to the current situation in Ukraine, learners' anxiety became the object of our research. Ukrainian students, those learning foreign languages in particular, are facing now the difficulties connected with a high anxiety level. The research conducted at the faculty of foreign languages of Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University proved an extremely high level of students' situational anxiety, which is not only hampering their ability to learn, but has a drastic effect on students' health. The teachers have to face the challenge of lowering their learners' anxiety, conducting the academic process in the condition of war.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, foreign language learning, affective factors, anxiety, war anxiety, learning anxiety.

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ПОДОЛАННЯ ТРИВОЖНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ, ЩО ВИВЧАЮТЬ ІНОЗЕМНІ МОВИ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНІ

Анотація. Війна, розпочата Росією проти України, вплинула на всі сфери життя: соціальну, економічну, медичну (через постійні загрози життю та здоров'ю), екологічну та освітню. І якщо традиційно основними факторами, що визначали ефективність викладання та вивчення іноземних мов, були методи і прийоми, що застосовує вчитель, розумові здібності студентів, їх мотивація, то в сучасній ситуації, коли навчальна аудиторія перестала бути безпечним місцем, пріоритети змістилися. Ключового значення набувають афективні фактори, оскільки залежно від того, чи переважають позитивні, чи негативні емоції, наші розумові процеси під час навчання або посилюються, або гальмуються. У процесі викладання та вивчення іноземної мови необхідно враховувати такі афективні фактори: самооцінка студентів, готовність до ризику, мотивація, тривожність та гальмування. Об'єктом нашого дослідження стала тривожність. Населення України, згідно з численними психологічними дослідженнями, перебуває у постійному стані напруження та депресії. Українські студенти, зокрема ті, хто вивчають іноземні мови, стикаються з труднощами, пов'язаними з високим рівнем тривожності. Дослідження, проведене на факультеті іноземних мов Чернівецького національного університету в січні-лютому 2023 року, засвідчило високий рівень тривожності студентів, який не лише перешкоджає навчанню, а й суттєво впливає на їх здоров'я. Для визначення рівня тривожності застосовувалася шкала тривоги Спілбергера, що дозволяє визначити і стан людини в даний момент, і загальний рівень особистісної тривожності. За двома показниками рівень тривожності учасників дослідження виявився високим. Викладачам доводиться стикатися з проблемою подолання тривожності студентів, здійснюючи навчальний процес в умовах війни. Будучи прикладом для наслідування, педагог має можливість створити доброзичливу атмосферу на занятті, спонукати до позитивного мислення та емпатії, розвитку відчуття національної ідентичності для подолання тривожності студентів. Важливим є також навчання медійної грамотності, адже уміння обирати надійні джерела інформації та критично аналізувати дані, що ними подаються, допоможуть не лише володіти достовірними фактами, а й зменшити рівень тривожності.

Ключові слова: викладання іноземної мови, вивчення іноземної мови, афективні фактори, тривожність, тривожність спричинена війною, тривожність під час навчання.

Target setting. In the present time of globalization learning foreign languages became an integral and foremost part of future specialist's professional development. Nowadays to be successful on a job market one has to be fluent in several foreign languages. The first foreign language in Ukraine nowadays is mainly English, as it is worldwide recognized as the language of interna-

tional communication. At Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University students can choose from a wide range of languages: English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Lithuanian and Romanian.

The current tense situation in which Ukraine found itself due to Russia's military aggression influenced all spheres of life: social, economic, med-

ical (with constant life and health threats), environmental and educational. As a result thousands of people were forced to search for a new place to live. According to the official data there are about 4 million of internally displaced people and more than 6 million Ukrainian war refugees recorded globally [1]. This new tragic turn in the history of the country became one of the reasons for increasing citizens' motivation to study foreign languages and for the school graduates – to pick it up as their future profession.

Traditionally the main conditions determining the efficacy of foreign languages teaching and learning were methods and techniques used by the teacher, students' mental capacities and cognitive knowledge of the target language, in today's situation when a classroom ceased being a safe place, the priorities have shifted.

A well-known American scientist S. Krashen singled out five hypotheses which influence the process of foreign language learning: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor, the input, the natural order and the affective filter hypotheses [2]. The crucial importance of the latter for Ukrainian students stipulated our choice of the object of our research.

In any academic process, and in the process of foreign language learning in particular, the following affective factors should be taken into account: students' self-esteem, risk-taking, motivation, anxiety and inhibition. The role of affective factors can never be overestimated. Depending on whether positive or negative emotions prevail, our mental processes can be either boosted or hampered. In the present paper we are going to dwell on the influence of anxiety caused by the war in Ukraine on students' learning abilities and analyze the strategies of anxiety coping.

Actual scientific researches and issue analysis. The question of anxiety has always been under a thorough study of a number of scientists, among them Z. Freud, B. Phillips, G. Pitcher, C. Spielberger, O. Zakharov, R. Lazarus, G. Prykhodzhan, V. Shapar etc. The question of learning anxiety, as well as the ways to cope with it were studied by R. Worde, M. Horwitz, E. Horwitz and J. Cope. M. Zeidner in his work "Test Anxiety: the state of the art" gives clear analysis of the strategies that help overcome anxiety, especially during exams.

Highlighting components of the scientific problem, which have not been solved before. The state of anxiety and depression is inevitable during wars. A. Kurapov, I. Danyliuk, A. Loboda, A. Kalaitzaki, T. Kowatsch, T. Klimash and V. Predko described the psychological state of Ukrainians after six months of the war. The educational system has also been influenced the open-scale war, and not only because of ruining of school and university buildings, but also because of ruining their physical and psycho health. Thus, the problem of students' anxiety during the war period needs more attention.

The research objective. The given article aims at studying the issue of students' anxiety during the war, defining its levels and suggesting some strategies how to manage it.

Presentation of the basic material of the research. The war in Ukraine brought catastrophic changes in the life of every citizen. There is no

one in the country who would feel safe, as armed violence in at least 8 regions and missile threat for the whole territory led to death of more than 9 thousand civilians (500 children among them) and to the need for millions of Ukrainians to flee the country [1].

The greatest challenges of the educational system during the first year of war were: a direct threat to life and health of all participants of the educational process; large-scale destruction of higher education facilities (study buildings, laboratories, dormitories, etc.) as a result of shelling (2532 educational institutions have been damaged, more than 45 universities totally destroyed); necessity of relocation of higher institutions from the front zone (1300 schools and 12 universities – temporarily relocated); a significant loss of the contingent of students and teachers as a result of migration and mobilization; the loss of practice bases for students due to the destruction or relocation of enterprises [3].

But even all mentioned above couldn't stop the educational process, which was conducted, depending on the situation in each region, either distantly, or offline, or mixed. As UNICEF Ukraine Representative Murat Sahin mentioned: "Every child must have access to quality and safe education, even amidst the war. Education is critical to children's well-being and social development. It cannot be put on hold without risking the future of an entire generation. Lives of millions will be infinitely harder if we fail to help them continue their education now" [4].

Among the major problems the teacher has to face is the students' state of anxiety. An Oxford dictionary on psychology defines this term as "a state of uneasiness, accompanied by dysphoria and somatic signs and symptoms of tension, focused on apprehension of possible failure" [5]. In another psychological dictionary anxiety is connected with both expecting of negative events and negative feelings and anticipating of delayed pleasant events: "anxiety is an emotional state of a person that arises in conditions of probable unexpected situations: both when postponing and delaying pleasant situations, and when expecting trouble" [6].

Ukrainian scientist V. Shapar defines anxiety as a state of expedient preparatory increase of sensory attention and motor tension in a situation of possible danger, which causes a relevant reaction to fear [7].

The scholars distinguish between a trait anxiety which is associated with a stable personality characteristic and a situational anxiety, which is related to a specific external situation [7, p. 551]. There is also a specific form of anxiety, connected with learning a FL, it's known as foreign language anxiety. According to R. Worde, one third to one half of students examined reported experiencing high levels of language anxiety [8]. M. Horwitz, E. Horwitz and J. Cope define foreign language anxiety as a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" [9].

Ukrainian students learning a foreign language are facing now the difficulties connected not only with the worry arising from the learning process. Thus, in the present research we investigated the anxiety level of students' learning a foreign lan-

guage in the conditions of war, which is proven to be far more debilitating.

The state of anxiety is characterized by an extreme tension, quick breathing, racing heartbeat and sweating. Of course, this cannot but influence person's health and consequently his/her ability to study. The list of the following anxiety criteria stands to prove it:

- The individual appraises a situation as difficult, threatening, or challenging.

- The individual perceives himself or herself as being inefficient or inadequate to the task at hand, lacking coping responses needed to deal forthrightly with a call for action or a situational restraint or opportunity.

- The individual focuses on undesirable consequences of personal inadequacy or on undesirable outcomes.

- The individual is preoccupied with self-deprecatory thoughts about self that compete with cognitive task-related activity.

- The individual expects and anticipates failure and loss of self-esteem or regard by others [10, p. 475].

Studies conducted by a cohort of Ukrainian and Swiss scientists in August – October 2022 indicate that Ukrainians exhibit significantly elevated levels of anxiety and depression due to the war. They also add that there were clear age and gender differences in anxiety, for example women showed higher levels of anxiety, depression and stress than men; the symptoms also increased with age, except for participants over 40 years old who showed lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress that are comparable to those of young participants aged 18–20 [11].

Aiming at helping our students overcome the state of extreme worry while studying during war time we first checked their level of anxiety. Among a wide variety of anxiety tests we have chosen the State – Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) [12], suggested by an American psychologist Charles Spielberger. STAI is the most frequently used tool for measuring people's anxiety. It is designed so, as to check both current conditions of a "state anxiety" and a more general state – "trait anxiety". Both scales have 20 questions, which can be rated with a 4-point scale. It helps to define the level of person's anxiety: low, average or high.

The criteria of the mentioned levels of learning anxiety are as follows:

A high level of anxiety manifests itself in a feeling of defenselessness, helplessness, self-doubt, powerlessness facing external or internal factors that may contain danger and threat to one's self-esteem, or lead to violation of basic needs. In the classroom it is expressed in an increased anxiety in educational situations, anticipation of bad attitude and of negative evaluation from teachers' and peers' side.

An average level of anxiety – students are generally calm, balanced, socially adapted, but in stressful and unfamiliar situations, they feel some worry. However, it will not disturb their social adaptation.

A low level of anxiety – students are "excessively calm". Such insensitivity to adversity is, as a rule, compensatory and protective in nature claim that it doesn't fully contribute to the formation of one's personality [13].

The research, during which we asked the students to go through an online State – Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) [12] was conducted among 62 students of Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, future teachers of foreign languages. The age range was from 17 – to 22 (50 – female and 12 – male). The results are perplexing:

100% of students have a high level of state anxiety. As to the trait anxiety – 93 % of the learners have a high level of anxiety and only 7 % proved to have a average and no students (0 %) with a low trait anxiety level.

Willing to understand how the war influences the learners' anxiety, we compared the results of our findings with the data of V. Vynogradova and N. Shkurenko who were studying students' anxiety caused by the pandemic in Ukraine [14]. The mentioned research was conducted at V.I. Vernadski Taurida National University in Kyiv in 2021. 73 students, aged 17–21, participated in the research. STAI results showed the following results of the situational anxiety: high level – 20 %, average level – 80 %, and 0 % with a low level of anxiety.

As to the trait index at Taurida National University in 2021 the data were as follows: high level – 22 %, average level – 31 %, and low level – 47%. Thus, we see, that with the beginning of the war the data changed immensely (the high level anxiety indicator increased by 74%).

Psychologists claim that anxiety, fear and depression are inevitable during war. People feel help-

Diagram 1. The Situational Anxiety (Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University 2023)

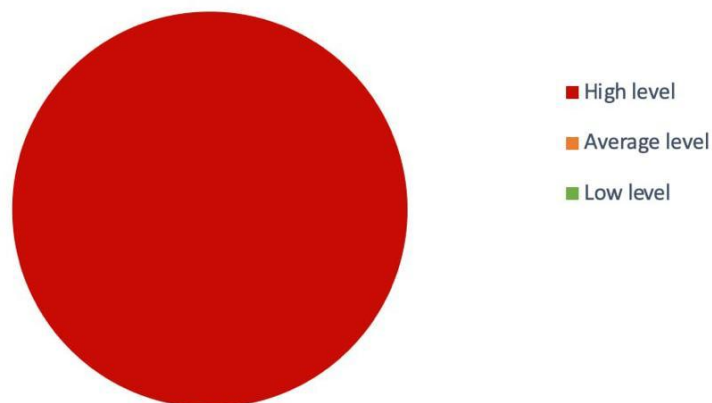
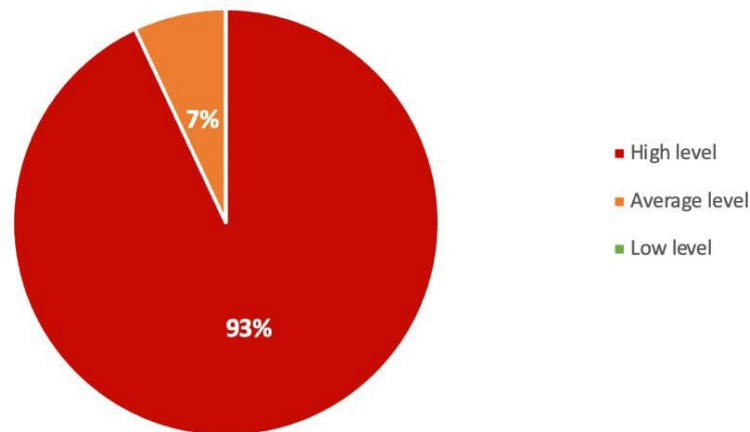
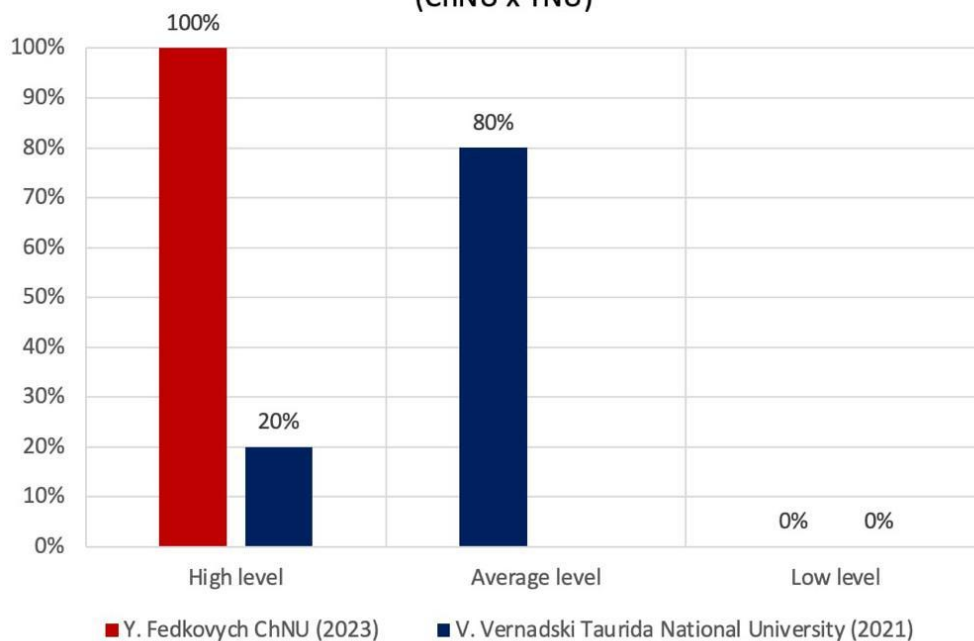


Diagram 2. The Trait Anxiety (Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University 2023)**Diagram 3. Comparative analysis of a Situational anxiety level (ChNU x TNU)**

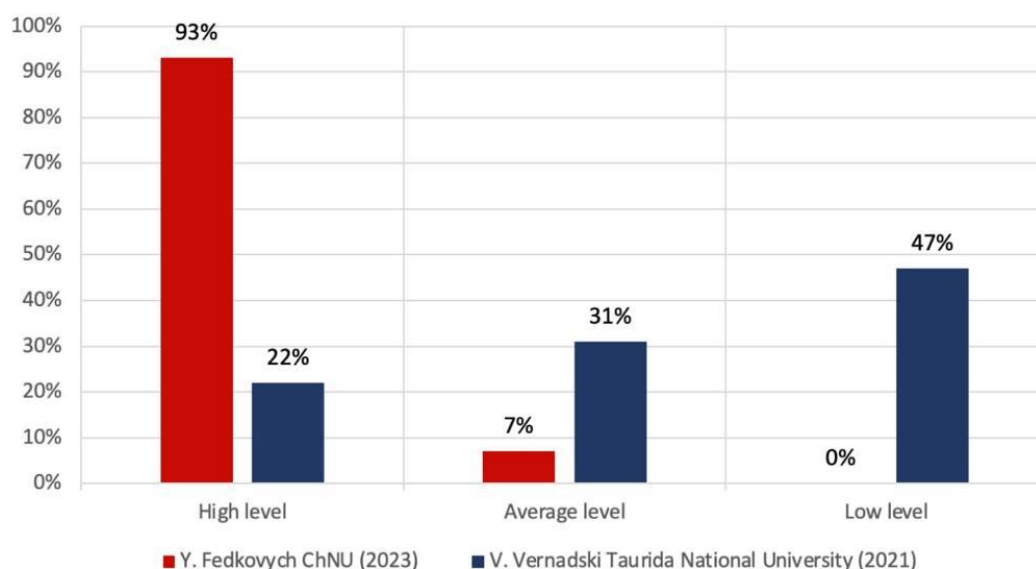
less and powerless. Citizens can in no way influence the situation and cannot stop reading the news, as their own and lives of their close people are under the threat. And it makes the situation worse. The therapists advise to filter social media, reading only reliable sources and take care that the news doesn't stick in one's head; practice breathing exercises. Some people find comfort in religion, others – address psychologists, or simply talk with a close person or friend, sharing their feelings and worries.

As it is anxiety while learning we also addressed the works of scientists which help overcome this negative emotion in the classroom. Jilly Gardiner [15], an Oxford lecturer provides some tips on how to manage an adult learning anxiety in her own blog Oxford open learning. She suggests a so-called humanistic approach, which is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs: if a person concentrates on his/her basic level needs, like feeling safe and secure in the learning environment, have friends and family

who care and support, the learner feel less anxious and therefore have a much better chance of successfully achieving learning goals. But we see that in a current situation all the basic human's needs are violated and the students find themselves in no position not only to study but to safely and normally live because of war.

Searching for the way to help students overcome their stress, we also addressed Moshe Zeidner. In his book the author suggests some coping strategies, the aim of which is the protection of anxious learners by eliminating or modifying the conditions that produce stress or by keeping the emotional consequences within manageable bounds. The researcher classifies them in the following way:

1. Problem-focused strategies, designed to manage or solve the problem by removing or circumventing the stressor (e.g., carefully planning and spacing one's study schedule in preparing for an exam, studying hard, obtaining good summaries of lecture notes).

Diagram 4. Comparative analysis of a Trait anxiety level (ChNU x TNU)

2. Emotion-focused coping, designed to regulate, reduce, or eliminate the emotional stress associated with the stressful situation (e.g., seeking emotional support from friends, denying the importance of the exam, distancing oneself from the evaluative threat).

3. Avoidance-oriented coping, designed to avoid stressful situation. It can be achieved for example by engaging in nonrelevant tasks, watching TV, avoiding or seeking of others, etc. [16, p. 315].

In the usual learning atmosphere all three groups of strategies can be very effective for coping with an anxiety. But as soon as it comes to learning anxiety during war, when we can neither solve, nor avoid the problem, the strategies aiming at coping with emotions can only help. Researchers studying the Ukrainians' psychological state during the war assume that the increased national unification in times of crisis "contributed to the development of efficient coping strategies for overcoming anxiety, depression, and stress among Ukrainians. For example, Ukrainians tend to employ support-seeking and support-giving strategies instead of distancing and emotion-focused strategies..." [11].

Conclusions and propositions. Thus, the state of situational, as well as trait anxiety level of today's Ukrainian students is perplexingly high, which is the result of the open scale war of Russian against Ukraine. This is not only hampering students' motivation and abilities to study, but ruins their health, too. Relying on the findings in the field of psychology, on our own pedagogical experience and an interview with my students, the following tips for the teacher and learners on reducing person's anxiety caused by war can be suggested:

1. Develop strong national identity, which refers to a collective sense of belonging and shared culture, language and history. This is important in all the times, but in the war period it becomes essential. Besides, volunteering and taking care of others helps the students overcome their stress and anxiety.

2. Remember, that a teacher is the model to be followed. Just like kids are scanning their parents' emotional state, so learners peruse their teachers and are influenced by them. The teacher should be aware of the official instructions how to behave in critical situations and how to assess students overcome stress and anxiety. He/she should remain stable and calm, open for communication and cooperation with students.

3. Create a positive classroom environment, promoting emotional support. This can be achieved with a help of various ice-breakers and warm-up activities at the beginning of the class.

4. Develop digital literacy skills. The age of the Internet has dramatically increased access to knowledge. Students need to learn how to process and analyze large amounts of information, be able to determine trustworthy sources which they can rely on when reading about the situation in the country and abroad. As misinformation which floods the Internet can lead to more anxiety.

5. Find positive things in every day and do good! Everyone searches for his/her own ways to overcome anxiety and remain calm. This can be some professional psychological support, volunteering, learning new languages, improving one's professional skills, hobby, sport, communicating with family and friends.

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