

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY OF THAI AND NON-THAI STUDENTS IN THE ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION PROGRAM AT DHURAKIJ PUNDIT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine 1) the level of English language anxiety of students in an international program 2) to investigate the relationship between the students' learning achievement and their level of English language anxiety, and 3) to analyze the differences in the sources of English language anxiety between Thai students and non-Thai students. The samples were taken from 36 university students studying in English for Business Communication (International Program) in the Faculty of Arts. The instrument used in this study was adopted from a questionnaire from a study of foreign language learning anxiety developed by Parawat (2011). The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. The research results were found as follows: 1) students had moderate anxiety with the average mean of 2.84 and the two major sources of students' English language learning anxiety when considering the six components of performance anxiety were fear of being less competent than others, with the mean of 3.31 and test anxiety with the mean of 3.00 2) there was a significant negative correlation between English language learning anxiety and the moderate-achieving group of students, and 3) the distinct differences in the sources of English language learning anxiety according to the six components of performance anxiety of Thai and non-Thai students were fear of being less competent than others and test anxiety with a mean of 3.52 and 2.87, and test anxiety with a mean of 3.15 and 2.87, respectively.



Keywords: English language anxiety, Performance anxiety,
Students' learning achievement

Introduction

The English language is recognized as one of the global languages when considering its vital role nowadays. In Thailand, international programs have become popular in recent years due to the need for language competency which is often included in the job requirements. Many students realize the importance of the English language when applying to study in international programs in universities despite their limited language ability. To clarify, they have a hard time trying to comprehend the contents in each class. Foreign language anxiety has been a crucial issue discussed recently. This is in accordance with many studies regarding foreign language anxiety that have been conducted in various learning contexts. For example, Sadiq (2017) studied anxiety in English Language learning in Saudi Arabia and the result revealed that EFL students had moderate level of anxiety.

Moreover, many students who study in an international program in Thailand are anxious because the courses require good English language competency in order to accomplish certain tasks. Not only Thai students but also non-Thai students, especially students from Asian countries who further their studies in international programs in Thai universities. Although a number of studies on English language anxiety in Thailand were carried out with Thai EFL students in English classrooms, a very small number of research has been done with students undertaking international programs. Since English is used as the medium of instruction in all courses in international programs, it is worthwhile to investigate the sources of foreign language anxiety and to examine the students' level of English language anxiety.

This research aims to examine the levels of the English language anxiety of students, investigate the relationships between the English language anxiety and students' learning achievement, and analyze the sources and levels of the English language anxiety according to the six components of performance anxiety of Thai students and non-Thai students.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the levels of the English language anxiety of students in an international program at Dhurakij Pundit University

2. To investigate the relationships between the English language anxiety and learning achievement of students in an international program at Dhurakij Pundit University
3. To analyze the sources and levels of the English language anxiety according to the six components of performance anxiety of Thai students and non-Thai students in an international program at Dhurakij Pundit University

Literature review

Foreign language anxiety or FLA, according to Horwitz (1986), is defined as the unpleasant emotional reactions of students toward their language learning. In the academic and social context, three anxieties related to foreign language anxiety have been identified as follows: communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1970), test anxiety (Sarason, 1978), and fear of negative evaluation (Watson and Friend, 1969). Communication apprehension is a kind of fear or anxiety derived from shyness when communicating with people. Students with communication apprehension may encounter difficulty when speaking in groups or in the public or when listening to or learning the spoken language. The second component related to FLA is test anxiety which refers to a kind of performance anxiety rooted in the fear of failure (Gordon and Sarson, 1995). Students with test anxiety generally place unrealistic expectations on themselves. They will probably come across the feeling of failure unless their test performance is perfect. The last component affecting foreign language anxiety is fear of negative evaluation which can be defined as the anxiety concerning others' evaluation, avoidance of the evaluative situation, and the fear that they will be evaluated negatively by others. Based on the three constructs of foreign language anxiety above, Horwitz, et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) in order to judge students' anxiety in terms of foreign language learning. Many studies have been conducted using the FLCAS in order to examine students' foreign language anxiety. To prove their theory, Horwitz et al. (1986) conducted a study in which 75 native English language learners of Spanish were tested by FLCAS at an American university. The study showed that many of these students encountered significant anxiety, which inevitably affected their performance in that language. FLCAS was later tested by Aida (1994) and Liu and Jackson (2008). Aida adapted the FLCAS for American students in the Japanese classroom and proposed four components of foreign language anxiety; namely, speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, fear of failing the class, comfortableness in speaking with native Japanese, and negative attitudes toward the Japanese class.

Similarly, Liu and Jackson (2008) tested the FLCAS with Chinese students in the EFL classroom and proposed three components of foreign language anxiety; namely, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. In essence, foreign language anxiety has been identified as a distinct variable that hinders foreign language learning. In order to cope with and solve the problems arising from foreign language learning, it is necessary to understand the sources of students' anxiety thoroughly (Han, 2013).

Conceptual Framework

This study was conducted under the framework of foreign language anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), Aida (1994), and Liu and Jackson (2008).

Table 1 shows components of foreign language anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al., Aida, and Liu and Jackson

Horwitz et al. (1986)	Aida (1994)	Liu and Jackson (2008)
1. Communication apprehension	1. Speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation	1. Communication apprehension
2. Fear of negative evaluation	2. Fear of failing the class	2. Fear of negative evaluation
3. Test anxiety	3. Comfortableness in speaking with Japanese people 4. Negative attitudes toward the Japanese class	3. Test anxiety

These components of foreign language anxiety were subsequently adapted by Parawat (2011) to construct the components of foreign language anxiety which include communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, fear of being less competent than others, negative attitudes toward language class, and beliefs about language learning.

Research Methodology

This research was conducted with a quantitative research method. The samples were 36 university students in English for Business Communication International Program in the Faculty of Arts at Dhurakij Pundit University in Thailand. They were in first, second, and third years including 24 Thais and 12 non-Thais from China, Myanmar, Sri Lanka,

Cambodia and Korea. English was used as the medium in teaching in all of the classes. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire adopted from a study of foreign language learning anxiety conducted by Parawat (2011). The questionnaire was constructed and modified by the researcher from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), Aida (1994), and Liu and Jackson (2008). The questionnaire consisted of 31 items representing the six main components of performance anxiety which were communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, fear of being less competent than others, negative attitudes toward the language class, and beliefs about language learning. The items in the questionnaire were placed on a 5-point Likert scale which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was tested for the content validity by three experts and piloted by Parawat (2011). As a result of this, the questionnaire employed in this study had the acceptable level of reliability, where the: Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient value was .93. The data was collected at a meeting of the students from the first to the third year of study. The results from the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS program. The mean and standard deviation of each item of the questionnaire were calculated according to the 5-point Likert scales (5: strongly agree, 4: agree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 2: disagree, and 1: strongly disagree) in order to measure the individuals' foreign language anxiety. However, the outcomes of items 13, 14, 16, 22, 25, 28, and 31 were calculated with the reversed values since they represented relaxation or confidence in using English. The interpretations of the mean scores of each item from the questionnaire are as follows: 1.00-1.49 means no anxiety or very little anxiety, 1.50-2.49 means little anxiety, 2.50-3.49 means moderate anxiety, 3.50-4.49 means high anxiety, and 4.50-5.00 means very high anxiety. Then, the data were grouped according to the six components of performance anxiety and calculated again for mean and standard deviation in order to find the level of the English language anxiety for each component. After that, in order to find the relationship between the students' learning achievement and level of English language anxiety, the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was employed. The students' average scores which reported their study performance were categorized into three groups as follows: 3.50-4.00 refers to high-achieving students, 2.51-3.49 refers to moderate-achieving students, and 0.01-2.50 refers to low-achieving students. Finally, in order to analyze the differences in the sources and anxiety levels of Thai students and non-Thai students, the mean scores of the six main components of performance anxiety from Thai students and Non-Thai students were explored.

Results

According to the first research objective, it was found that each item showed the impact of anxiety at different levels ranging from low to moderate level. The items representing the least anxiety according to the mean shown in the table was item 12 (I often feel like not going to my English class), with a mean score of 1.78. On the other hand, the item with the highest mean was item 6 (I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am) with a mean score of 3.44.

Table 2 shows levels of English language anxiety perceived by students studying in an international program.

Item	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English in class.	2.72	1.00	Moderate
2. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in the English class.	2.78	1.22	Moderate
3. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.	2.72	1.13	Moderate
4. I feel very self-conscious about speaking in front of other students.	2.64	1.17	Moderate
5. The English class moves so quickly. I worry about getting left behind.	2.50	1.05	Moderate
6. I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	3.44	1.18	Moderate
7. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.	2.81	.98	Moderate
8. I have anxiety about the consequences of failing my English class.	2.72	1.18	Moderate
9. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	2.39	.99	Low
10. I feel worried about the differences between what I have prepared for a test and the test.	3.31	1.19	Moderate
11. The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.	2.53	.94	Moderate

Item	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
12. I often feel like not going to my English class.	1.78	.98	Low
13. I feel confident when I speak English in class.	3.00	.98	Moderate
14. I am usually at ease during English tests in my class.	3.05	1.04	Moderate
15. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in the English class.	2.86	1.01	Moderate
16. I don't feel worried about learning English.	3.33	1.09	Moderate
17. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	3.17	1.08	Moderate
18. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the English class.	3.22	1.17	Moderate
19. I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.	2.36	.89	Low
20. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	2.36	1.24	Low
21. Even if I am well-prepared for the English test, I feel anxious about it.	3.14	1.07	Moderate
22. I probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.	3.39	1.12	Moderate
23. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in class.	2.53	.91	Moderate
24. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	2.83	1.08	Moderate
25. I don't feel pressure in preparing well for the English class.	3.25	1.10	Moderate
26. I feel overwhelmed by the number of pronunciation rules I have to learn in order to speak English.	2.42	.93	Low
27. I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	2.81	1.16	Moderate

Item	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
28. I feel happy when I am on my way to the English class.	2.41	1.18	Low
29. I'm often afraid that my English score will be less than what I expect.	3.31	1.09	Moderate
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of words I have to learn to speak in English.	3.06	.95	Moderate
31. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes.	3.36	1.12	Moderate
Overall mean	2.84	0.39	Moderate

From table 2, the overall results showed that the students in this particular group had moderate anxiety with the total mean of 2.84.

Table 3 shows levels of English language anxiety perceived by students studying in an international program according to the six components of performance anxieties

Component	Items	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation	Rank
1. Communication apprehension	1, 3, 4, 13, 18, 22, 23, 24	2.87	.54	Moderate	3
2. Fear of negative evaluation	2, 5, 9, 15, 16, 19, 20, 25, 27	2.74	.54	Moderate	5
3. Test anxiety	8, 10, 11, 14, 21, 29	3.00	.59	Moderate	2
4. Fear of being less competent than others	6, 17	3.31	.98	Moderate	1
5. Negative attitudes toward language class	12, 28, 31	2.51	.79	Moderate	6
6. Beliefs about language learning	7, 26, 30	2.78	.66	Moderate	4

It can be concluded from table 3 that students appeared to be afraid of being less competent than others.

According to the second research objective, the results revealed that there was no significant negative correlation between English language anxiety and the students' learning achievement in the low-achieving and high-achieving groups. However, the results from the moderate-achieving group of students showed a significantly negative correlation between English language learning anxiety and the students' learning achievement.

Table 4 shows correlation coefficient between foreign language learning anxiety and students' learning achievement

Level of learning achievement	Correlation coefficient (r)	Number of students
Low	-.003	13
Moderate	-.553*	14
High	-.240	9

Note: Correlation is significant for students with a moderate level of learning achievement at the 0.05 level.

From table 4, it **can be inferred** that the learning ability of the moderate-achieving group of students was affected by their anxiety.

According to the third research objective, the outcomes **revealed** that the distinct differences in the causes of foreign language anxiety of the Thai and non-Thai students, according to the six components of performance anxiety, were fear of being less competent than others with a mean of 3.52 and 2.87 and test anxiety with the mean of 3.15 and 2.72, respectively.

Table 5 shows levels of foreign language anxiety perceived by the Thai students and non-Thai students according to the six components of performance anxiety

Components	Thai students (n = 24)			Non-Thai students (n = 12)		
	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Communication apprehension	2.92	.59	Moderate	2.80	.47	Moderate
2. Fear of negative evaluation	2.79	.52	Moderate	2.62	.62	Moderate
3. Test anxiety	3.15	.58	Moderate	2.72	.55	Moderate



Components	Thai students (n = 24)			Non-Thai students (n = 12)		
	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
4. Fear of being less competent than others	3.52	.90	High anxiety	2.87	1.08	Moderate
5. Negative attitudes toward the language class	2.34	1.04	Moderate	2.86	.38	Moderate
6. Beliefs about language learning	2.77	.59	Moderate	2.72	.80	Moderate
Overall	3.01	.61	Moderate	2.75	.70	Moderate

It can be concluded from table 5 that Thai students were more anxious than non-Thai students. As illustrated in table 3, the students' English language anxiety was at a moderate level in all components. Fear of being less competent than others yielded the most scores, with a mean score of 3.31. This outcome indicates that the students were highly concerned about their English competency being inferior to that of their peers. The second component that the students were worried about was test anxiety, with a mean of 3.00, followed by communication apprehension with a mean of 2.87, beliefs about language learning with a mean of 2.78, fear of negative evaluation with a mean of 2.74, and negative attitudes toward the language class with a mean of 2.51 respectively.

Discussion

According to the first research objective, it was found that the results from the overall mean revealed that the students had moderate anxiety in all components. This finding was consistent with that of a previous study conducted by Sadiq (2017). Sadiq investigated the level of foreign language anxiety among English language learners in Saudi Arabia. The results showed that most respondents encountered a moderate level of anxiety in the language class. Additionally, Sampaothong and Simpson (2019) examined English language anxiety of English major students in the EFL classroom. The results indicated that the students in their study experienced a moderate level of English Language anxiety during their studies. The two major sources of students' anxiety, when considering the six components of performance anxiety, were fear of being less competent than others and test anxiety. As stated by Howitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), students with anxiety generally fear being evaluated by their peers and being less competent than

others. The second source was test anxiety. The findings from many previous studies, such as a study conducted by Basilio and Wongrak (2017) have reported that test anxiety is one of the sources of students' foreign language anxiety. They examined the factors that are most contributed to Thai students' English language anxiety. The results suggested test anxiety as the main source of the students' anxiety.

According to the second research objective, the results of the correlation coefficient between foreign language anxiety and the students' learning achievement from the low and high achieving students did not show a significant negative correlation. However, there was a significantly negative correlation between English language anxiety and the moderate-achieving group of students. Since the students in this group were neither high achievers nor low achievers, their lack of confidence in their English ability may cause anxiety. As a result, teachers are advised to pay more careful attention to students in the moderate achieving group, who may be facing anxiety in their learning. Many studies have been conducted to show the adverse effects of foreign language anxiety on students' learning achievement, such as the studies conducted by Aida (1994), Saito and Samimy (1996), Rodriguez (1995), and Kim (1998) which showed a significantly negative correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and the students' learning achievement.

According to the third research objective, the results showed that the overall mean score of anxiety levels in terms of the six components of performance anxiety of Thai students were higher than those of the non-Thai students. Fear of being less competent than others was the only source of anxiety for the Thai students, indicating a high level of anxiety. As a result, it is obvious that the Thai students were more anxious than the non-Thai students. Bailey (1983) stated that anxiety can be caused by a person's competitive nature since students themselves are prone to compare. Further, according to Hashemi and Abbasi (2013), students' own concerns over their ethnicity, unfamiliarity, social status as well as their relations within the class or gender can cause anxiety.

Body of Knowledge

The findings in this study showed that students in English for Business Communication International Program in the Faculty of Arts at Dhurakij Pundit University had moderate anxiety. The two main sources of performance anxiety were fear of being less competent than others and test anxiety. Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that the learning ability of the moderate-achieving group of students was affected by their anxiety. On top of that, it is shown that Thai students were more

anxious than non- Thai students. As Riasati (as cited in Yiamsawat, 2016) asserted, students' anxiety in the classroom environment can be caused by teachers' seriousness and bad temperaments. In order to prevent and reduce such anxiety, having a good personality and building better relationships with students are recommended for teachers.

Conclusions

Based on the six academic performance anxiety factors between two subject groups: Thai and non-Thai students, their levels of the English language anxiety and sources, the relationships between the English language anxiety and their academic achievement were investigated and analyzed in this study. The overall results indicated that students had moderate level of English language anxiety and it had an impact on students' academic performance in English-medium setting. Fear of being less competent than others and test anxiety were two major sources of students' English language learning anxiety. According to the outcomes, more English language learning anxiety existed within the moderate-achieving group of students in particular, and they had significant negative correlations. The findings also showed the stark contrasts in the sources of English language learning anxiety entailing fear of being less competent than others and test anxiety between Thai and non- Thai students. Many factors such as the cultural differences, interlocutors' status, participation in class activities, and the learning styles of the learners can contribute to students' levels of English language anxiety (Yiamsawat, 2016). As a matter of fact, the teacher can play a crucial role in reducing students' English language anxiety in the classroom. Additionally, this study paves the way for a better understanding of a correlation between English language anxiety and the levels of students' achievement in a heterogeneous group of Thai and non-Thai students in English-medium classroom.

Suggestions

Since this study was conducted with a specific group of students, the results may vary, when compared to students in other learning contexts. As suggested by Han (2013), more studies should be conducted in different learning contexts since the results of many previous studies with different background variables have been mixed. Furthermore, it is recommended that more research is required to explore the relationships between English language anxiety and other variables involved in English medium instruction.

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