A Study of Factors Affecting and Causing English Speaking Anxiety Among MCU Bachelor Students

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to 1. study the factors affecting and causing English speaking anxiety among MCU Bachelor students of Faculty of Humanities at Mahachula longkoarnrajavidyalaya University, and 2. study the levels of English-speaking anxiety among MCU Bachelor students of Faculty of Humanities at Mahachula longkoarnrajavidyalaya University. The population for this study consisted of 45 MCU bachelor students majoring in English program at the faculty of humanity, as determined by a particular sampling technique. The questionnaire on factors affecting anxiety in English speaking was adapted from Horwitz et al's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (1986) and for sources of speaking anxiety were collated through semi-structured interview forms (SIF). In the study, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were utilized.

The results of this research revealed that 1) The factors affecting and causing anxieties in English Speaking among MCU bachelor students of Faculty of Humanities at Mahachula longkoarnrajavidyalaya University have five factors; which are grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, self-confident, and background of English. 2) The anxieties levels in English speaking of the English among MCU bachelor Students was at a high level with a mean of 3.6. The factors are "I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in the class", with the mean

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of 3.6. which is the highest level when comparing to other items. With the mean of 3.5 "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my English class" was moderate level of anxiety among MCU bachelor students. And with the mean of 3.3 "It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English" also showed that it was at moderate level of anxiety.

Keywords: Factors Affecting of Anxieties, Cause of Anxiety, Sources of Anxiety, Anxieties Levels, Speaking skill

Introduction

English is widely spoken and is considered an official language in a number of countries. English is the language that acts as a bridge language connecting people on a global scale. It is not only a commercial, industrial, and informational language; it also creates confidence, imagination, and the ability to discover, invent, innovate, and develop. English is taught as a second language in many countries. Speaking English is not an easy skill to practice for foreign language learners.

Students engage in a variety of processes and modes of instruction while learning the target language. Throughout these processes, students are confronted with internal and external factors that have a positive or negative impact on the process of English learning. One of the factors is the anxiety that may occasionally arise in response to a particular situation or event that can be considered significant. Horwitz et al. (1986) defined anxiety as "an idiosyncratic sentiment of stress, anxiety, apprehension, and dread associated with an automated nervous or sensory system stimulation." He added that many second language students intuitively observed it to have a negative effect on (L2) Second language learning, and it was prominent among the most extensively analyzed factors in the student's psyche during the learning process. However, language anxiety is not a new phenomenon.

For the last few decades, language anxiety has dominated a large body of research as a distinctive feature of language acquisition. Language anxiety has long been recognized as a barrier in second or foreign language education. In other words, language anxiety is a negative emotional state; it may also have a detrimental effect on the target language's ability to be understood or acquired. According to Scovel (1978), "anxiety is a highly complex experience that must be viewed as a composite of feelings, emotional states, and personality characteristics." The two distinct types of anxiety variations identified in the research are trait and state. Anxiety is a relatively stable personality trait. The learner in this category experiences anxiety in a variety of situations. 'State-anxiety' is a transient condition characterized by specific physical symptoms that occur at a particular moment or point in time. Situational anxiety is a reflection of and recurrence of specific situations. Language anxiety is also referred to as situational anxiety. According to MacIntyre et al (1989), situational anxiety can be viewed as trait anxiety restricted to a particular context. Speaking is widely regarded as the most fundamental and effective method of human interaction. It is the process by which people exchange ideas, points of view, viewpoints, and other types of information. Speaking is the most critical aspect of any language learning process. Students make every effort and exert considerable effort to improve this productive skill in a variety of ways. According to students, they are anxious during English speaking activities and are more anxious during speaking tests than during other skills tests. According to Young (1990), "from the students' perspective, public speaking and on-the-spot activities generate a high level of anxiety." To overcome speaking anxiety, necessary steps should be taken, as it has a detrimental effect on academic progress and career growth. The researcher analyzed the issue that was discovered in the situation field.

The researcher gathered data by questioning and interviewing students' anxiety levels during speaking performances and why they experience anxiety when speaking English. Once acquired as a persistent trait, language anxiety has

a pervasive effect on language learning and performance. Thus, it is necessary to investigate and study the impact and source of anxiety on language learning in order to ensure that students acquire language with the fewest possible difficulties. In the context of this study, MCU students enrolled in the faculty of humanity's English language program are required to pass an English language task. However, MCU students encounter many difficulties in the English classroom. They demonstrate a lack of motivation and engagement in class activities. Lack of confidence and language difficulties are the main reasons which were reported by the majority of MCU students.

Objectives of Research

      1. To study the factors affecting and causing English speaking anxiety among MCU Bachelor students of Faculty of Humanities at Mahachula longkoarnrajavidyalaya University.

      2. To study the levels of English-speaking anxiety among MCU Bachelor students, Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkoarnrajavidyalaya University.

Research Methodology

      The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting and causing anxiety in speaking English and to study the English-speaking anxiety level of 1st year MCU students, Faculty of Humanities, at Mahachulalongkorn rajavidyalaya University, Wang Noi, Ayutthaya, with the method of conducting research as follows

      Population and sample

      The population used in the research was 45 first year MCU students who are studying in the Faculty of Humanities, at Mahachulalongkornraja vidyalaya University. 45 participants were divided into two groups. 15 students were used for the interview and 30 students were used for conduction questionnaire.

Research tools

The research tool used in this research was a questionnaire which was divided into 3 parts as follows:

Part 1 General information of the respondents were collected such as gender, age, experiences of speaking English in classes, and their English proficiency level.

Part 2 Interview to investigate factors affecting and causing anxiety of speaking English.

Part 3 Questionnaire to measure the level of anxiety in speaking English

Data collection

The steps of collecting data are as follows:

1. The researcher conducted this research by using two data collection instruments to obtain both the quantitative and qualitative data. The Student Interview Form (SIF) was used to ascertain the sources and causes of speaking anxiety through semi-structured interview forms, and questionnaires were constructed using a modified version of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (MFLCAS). The FLCAS was widely used and adapted by subsequent researchers as a self-report instrument for drawing specific anxiety responses to foreign language classroom settings.

2. Two experts check and evaluate the interview and questionnaire's accuracy and completeness, determining whether it meets the purpose or not.

3. The questionnaire was validated using similar samples to determine the interview questions and questionnaire's confidence and accuracy.

4. Collected data were sorted based on the data analyzed as following;

Objectives of the research, summary of results, discussion of results, recommendations, and presentation of research results descriptive analysis and research articles.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed by collecting data from interview and questionnaires in order to process and analyze the following information.

1. Analyzing general information about the preliminary data of the respondents using statistical value as a percentage.

2. Analyzing data on factors affecting and causing anxiety in Speaking English from interviews based on percentages.

3. Analyzing data by calculating the mean and standard deviation on the level of anxiety related to English speaking. Surveys of English-speaking anxiety using a 11-item Likert-type response scale in which respondents express their perspectives on English-speaking anxiety by selecting one of these responses (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (2) disagree, or (1) strongly disagree. Data analysis on factors affecting and causing English speaking anxiety and English-speaking anxiety levels with criteria of five levels according to the Likert Scale as the following;

Mean 4.51 – 5.00 refers to the highest level of anxiety.

Mean 3.51 – 4.50 means high level of anxiety.

Mean 2.51 – 3.50 means moderate anxiety.

Mean 1.51 – 2.50 means less anxiety.

Mean 1.00 – 1.50 refers to the lowest level of anxiety.

Results of Research

According to the research questionnaire, there are several factors that influence and contribute to English speaking anxiety among first-year MCU students at the faculty of Humanity at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. The findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Analysis of Sources of General Information

From the general information of the respondents, it was found that the respondents in the study, 95.6% were males, 4.4% were females, aged between 21 - 25 years, representing 51.1% and age 26 - 30 years, representing 33.3%. And the 30 years above accounted for 15.6%. The experience or

exposure of learning English program, representing 100.00%. And most of the students' English proficiency was at a fair level accounted for 62.00 percent and needed to be adjusted, accounted for 38.00 percent.

2. Analysis of Sources of English-speaking Anxiety

The factors influencing and causing English speaking anxiety among MCU Bachelor students. 15 students were interviewed, and a total of 48 responses were obtained. Multiple factors were mentioned as causes of anxiety when speaking English, which are based on the following;

Factors and Causes of Anxiety	Responses	Percentage (%)
Grammar	13	27.1
Vocabulary	11	22.9
Pronunciation	11	22.9
Self-confidence	8	16.7
Background of English	5	10.4
Total	48	100.00

Grammar was referenced by (27.1%) of students as a major factor and cause of English-speaking anxiety; vocabulary and pronunciation each accounted for (29.9%); self-confidence was mentioned by (16.7%) as a factor or cause of English-speaking anxiety; and background in English was mentioned by only (10.4%) as a factor or cause of English-speaking anxiety. All of the factors and causes can be divided into two categories namely lack of exposure and academic background as following;

Sources of Anxiety	Categories	Theme
Grammar Vocabulary Pronunciation Self-confident	*Lack of Exposure*	Factors Associated with Anxiety of Speaking English Language
Background of English	*Academic background*	

The findings of this study indicated that English language anxiety is prevalent among MCU bachelor students. Language exposure is critical for the student's language development. Several students' anxiety responses may have social explanations, as was demonstrated. It is also difficult for students to recollect and remember vocabulary. Language anxiety is also found and amplified by a lack of vocabulary and its excessive use. Academic background also plays a major role in students' life. Anxiety is not solely caused by language acquisition, but also by cultural differences. Students' proficiency in learning is significantly influenced by their prior knowledge.

3. Analysis of The Levels of English-speaking Anxiety

The levels of English-speaking anxiety among MCU Bachelor students in the Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkoarnrajavidyalaya University were generally high. The results of the levels of English-speaking anxiety among Bachelor's students at MCU are as follows:

Items	N	Mean	SD
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	30	2.60	0.93
I don't worry about making mistakes in my English class.	30	2.36	1.06
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in the class.	30	3.60	0.96
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.	30	3.50	1.16
It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes in the same academic term.	30	3.36	.80
During the English conversation class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	30	3.30	1.02
I keep thinking that the other students' English is better than I am.	30	2.80	1.18
I am usually at ease during tests in my English class.	30	2.73	1.20

Items	N	Mean	SD
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my English class.	30	3.56	.77
I worry about the consequences if I fail my English class.	30	3.26	.98
I don't understand why some people get so upset over English conversation.	30	3.26	1.11
Valid N (listwise)	30		

The overall result of the findings presented in Table 3 indicates that the students in this study experience a high level of English-speaking-related anxiety. "I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in the class", with the mean of 3.6. which is the highest level when comparing to other items. With the mean of 3.5 "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my English class" was moderate level of anxiety among MCU bachelor students. And "It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English" also showed that it was at moderate level of anxiety. While the rest of the items or factors were only at a moderate level and were associated with less anxiety, which is a great result given that MCU bachelor students only experience anxiety in certain situations or areas.

Conclusion and Discussion

Factors affecting and causing English speaking anxiety among MCU Bachelor students of Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkoarnrajavidyalaya University can be summarized as (1) The factors or sources of English-speaking anxiety, were grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, self-confidence, and background of English were the sources of English-speaking anxiety. (2) The majority of MCU bachelor students in the Faculty of Humanities at Mahachulalongkoarnrajavidyalaya University displayed high level of anxiety when speaking English.

The factors were found to have an impact on the anxiety among MCU students in speaking English at a high level because students have inadequate or insufficient basic knowledge of the language. First one was grammar which MCU students appeared to struggle in their writing and speaking. It is crucial that students use correct grammar in both writing and speaking because it enables them to communicate or express their ideas clearly in a manner that is easily understood by others. The second was vocabulary, which is essential for students' ability to speak, write, read, and listen. Students who are learning English as a foreign language should be aware of the anxiety that can affect their English performance. A limited vocabulary will hinder their ability to communicate orally. The third one was pronunciation, which is another pivotal skill that students must acquire to have natural conversations. Pronunciation comprehensibility is important for students. It will be difficult for students to communicate with their classmates and teachers if they cannot pronounce words correctly.

As Levis (2005) stated, "the intelligibility principle implies that different features have different effects on comprehension," therefore, students' pronunciation intelligibility should not be taken lightly. The fourth one is confidence which plays a crucial role in all profession. Confidence is the ability to see oneself as capable of great things and to maintain a positive mindset. The concept of self-confidence refers to excessive self-assurance in one's personal judgment, skill, and power. MCU bachelor students should have more exposure in speaking English so that they can avoid anxiety, shyness, unrealistic expectations of perfection, false sense of humility, fear of change or mistakes, sadness, and so forth. The fifth is educational background. As we all know, language acquisition is significantly more challenging for students who do not have a strong academic background. The majority of MCU's bachelor's degree candidates were Buddhist student monks whose sole purpose in life was to

learn Pali and spread the teachings of the Buddha. Nunan (1992) states that "success is defined by the ability to carry on a conversation in the (target) language." And Liu (2007) furthermore mentioned that students' accomplishments are the result of their dedication, perseverance, and resolve. However, they can catch up to each other if given the proper tools and instruction. Based on the findings of Cohen, C., Bauer, E., and Minniear, J. (2021), teachers should implement more activities to enhance the learning experience of their class and the language acquisition of their students so that their students can overcome the complexities of the language learning process. Therefore, teachers have a substantial influence on their students' ability to communicate effectively in English.

The level of anxiety in English speaking among MCU bachelor students in the faculty of humanities, was determined to be high. This study is consistent with previous research. Dalkiliç, N. (2001) found that anxiety could be caused by a variety of factors, such as inadequate knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, lack of self-confidence, and shyness. Some students remained silent throughout the entire lesson because they feel their anxiety is rising during class. Some students felt guilty because they could not speak the target language as well as their peers. Although students are well-prepared to talk, they may nevertheless have anxiety when speaking English. It was determined that the overall level of anxiety in English speaking among students was high. Especially when getting called by their teacher in classroom. This anxiety is regarded as situation-specific, and it is manifesting itself primarily in classroom settings where students are particularly stressed (Horwitz et al., 1986). Therefore, the teachers should demonstrate compassion for the anxious students and make them feel more at ease by assuring them that making mistakes is a normal part of learning a language. Since the majority of students believe that other students do not experience anxiety, it may be useful to

inform them that other students may also experience anxiety too. Additionally, it can be beneficial for teachers to provide the topics or lessons to their students in advance so that students will have more time to prepare before their classes.

New Body of Knowledge

There are five factors affecting or causing English speaking anxiety among MCU bachelors students in faculty of humanity: 1) grammar, 2) vocabulary limitation, 3) pronunciation, 4) self-confident, and 5) Background of English. The following graph illustrates the relationship between the source of English speaking anxiety and the primary factors or causes of English speaking anxiety among MCU bachelor students in the faculty of humanities at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
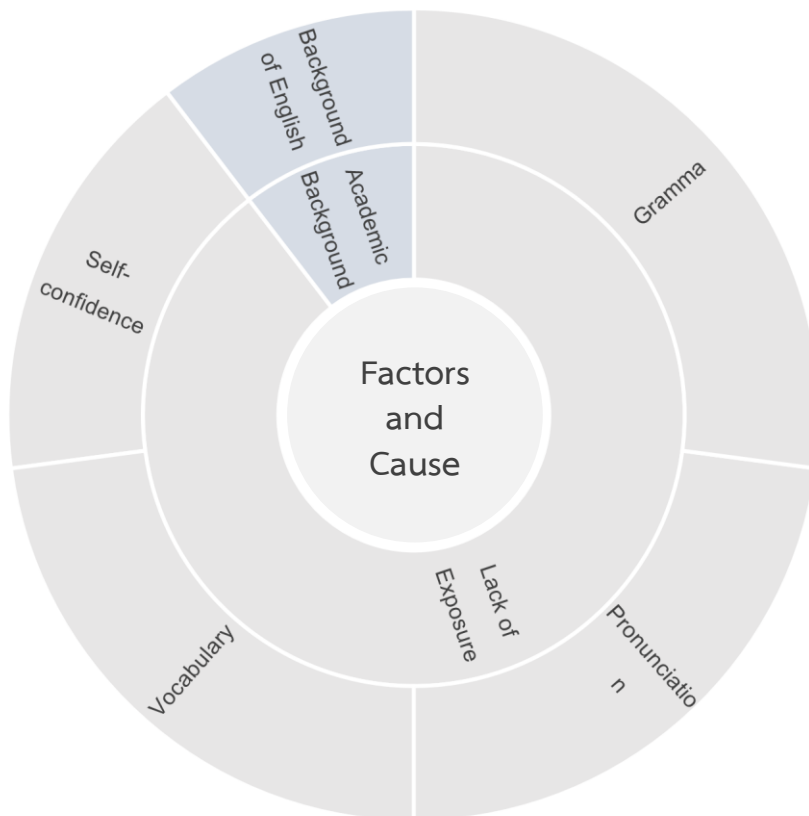
The level of anxiety in speaking English among MCU bachelor students in faculty of humanity, was generally at a high level of 3.6. Anxiety is prevalent among humans. Anxiety levels vary among individuals. The more anxious students are, the harder they think it is to speak English. These indicators of self-consciousness make students uneasy about speaking English.

Suggestions for Research

1. Suggestions for use

1.1 The information obtained from this study should be used to study and improve the factors affecting and causing English speaking anxiety among MCU Bachelor students in the following academic year.

1.2 Teachers or lecturers should assist their students in overcoming feelings of anxiety and encourage them to feel successful when using English to communicate professionally.

2. Suggestions for further research

The findings of this investigation bring the following recommendations for future research:

2.1 Anxiety in English speaking should be studied among other factors.

2.2 Should study factors affecting and causing anxiety in other targeted groups or populations.

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