THIRD LANGUAGE LEARNERS’ ANXIETY ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Most English language learners have suffered from the feeling of anxiousness and stress in the classroom even though they are at the tertiary level of education. The existence of anxiety either high or low will impact the students’ language learning. The affective factor such as self-efficacy has a potential as a central role in the process of language learning. It could help or hinder learner’s progress. Thus, this study was designed to investigate the correlation between level of language anxiety and level of self-efficacy. 230 undergraduate students of various programmes under the Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies (FKI), University of Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Terengganu participated. The respondents of the study registered for the course English for Communication I. English Language was their third language of acquisition. The status of the English Language for students under this faculty is a third language after Arabic Language which is considered as a second language. A statistical analysis namely Descriptive Statistics and Inferential Statistics were applied. and the thematic analysis revealed that no statistical significant correlation between the level of language anxiety and the level of self - efficacy. The outcomes from the study have revealed pedagogical implications which can be implemented in language teaching and learning.

Keyword: Language anxiety, third language learners & self-efficacy

1. Introduction

As a developing country, Malaysian citizens are required to master more than one language other than their mother tongue which is a natural occurrence in a multicultural society. Indeed, Malaysia has a diverse and fascinating blend of culture and religion that is highly unique. Nevertheless, the need for mutual respect, national integration and a common language for the harmony and peace is required among communities. In Malaysia itself, the common language is Bahasa Malaysia although the prestige of the English language has been widely spoken for many years since pre-independence.

In the Malaysian education context, the need to be proficient in the English Language, both speaking and writing becomes significant as a tool for soft skills that are required for every student in the 21st century. According to Zawiyah (2005), excellence in writing and proficient speaking in English are two important skills required because of the need to communicate internally and also externally with all levels around the world. In fact, at the tertiary level, the emphasis on English literacy has been narrowed down to students and hence English language is predominantly used in the teaching and learning process across the academic domain based on students’ courses and disciplines (Normazidah, Koo and Hazita, 2012). Furthermore, the local government aims to implement English Language as a medium of instruction in Malaysian Education to enable the learners to communicate
effectively and use the language correctly in the social context and professional situations. Students who have knowledge of more than one language have an extra important skill needed in the 21st century. Since they are mastering languages other than their mother tongue, they are preparing themselves to face the challenges of globalization. Furthermore, the government has maintained a policy for making English a strong second language because as Malaysians, we need to be proficient in the language in order to involve in economic and professional fields. In addition, the Razak Report also stated that English is enforced to be taught in all schools (Razak Report, 1956). In Malaysian public universities, English as a second language (ESL) is a compulsory subject for undergraduates which plays many important roles in the social context as well as economic and education lives of the students.

Since Malaysia is a developing country, the need to learn English is necessary for everyone who wants to be competent. However, learning English requires a few years and it is not easy if the surrounding environment is not encouraging enough for the learners to master the skills. This problem is due to the affective factors that influence learning language which are known as language anxiety (Brown, 2007). The affective factors can be form of the willingness to communicate, self-esteem, inhibition, self-efficacy, risk taking, anxiety, empathy and extroversion. These feeling could influence on how an individual responds, belief and value of the strategies that can contribute the progress of language acquisition. Thus, looking at the scenario and the problem dealing with language anxiety, the purpose of this study is to identify whether there is any significant correlation between the learners’ level of language anxiety and level of self-efficacy.

2. Literature Review

In the field of education, the important factor to attract students to learn any language is to create a conducive environment. Having a conducive environment could wipe out hindrances by reducing the learners’ anxieties which could enhance the learning experience and facilitate language learning.

2.1. Theory of second language acquisition

The difficulties in language learning can be directly related to the hypothesis of Krashen's affective filter which explains how affective factors are closely related in the process of language learning. He stressed that the learners whose attitude were not optimal for language learning would not only tend to seek less input, but they would increase the level of the filter. He also mentioned that although the learners could understand the meaning, however, the input would not reach the part of brain for the production and comprehension of language which is known as Wernicke's area and Broca's area (Ehrenwald 1900,1988). He also highlighted that those learners with high anxiety would prevented from receiving input in the classroom as well as prevent them from reaching the language acquisition device. These important factors can also determine the input of learning for each individual.

2.2. Language anxiety

Some learners come across with many difficulties in the process of language learning. There are some affective factors either positive or negative effect which could influence their learning abilities. The emotional factors that usually experienced by language learners is language anxiety. It relates to cognitive, affective and behavioral responses that
will result in poor performance and failures in evaluating ability and achievement of individuals (Mohd Ariff, Siti Rosmaini and Dawson, 2008). The existence of anxiety as the most important affective element in learning language has been confirmed by many researchers such as Bailey (1983), Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, (1986), MacIntyre and Gardner, (1994) and Young, (1991). These symptoms can affect the quality of life of an individual because language anxiety can hinder or help the language learners in learning situations of the target language (Bailey, 1983; Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994; Young, 1991). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994 pp 185-186) have distinguished language anxiety from other anxieties where the existence of anxiety becomes reliably associated with the language class. Many researchers have confirmed that the learners experience anxiousness and worry in language learning. These types of feelings are known as anxiety could be in the form of trait anxiety, situational specific anxiety or state anxiety which exists in the process of language learning.

Horwitz et al (1986) have identified three components of anxiety causes namely communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. These three components can be seen as negative impacts in language learning. Obviously, learners’ self - perception of speaking ability is another cause of language anxiety (Horwitz et al 1986) whereby the learners always compare their speaking skills with native speakers of the target language. They are embarrassed to start the conversation or to share some ideas in the target language and this makes them silent in class as he or she worries about experiencing negative reaction from an anxiety. In a previous study, Brown (2001) stressed that speaking skills is a benchmark for an individual to succeed in the mastery of a language.

Language learners involved with any tasks that contribute to a certain degree of challenges can expose them to uneasiness, worry, fear and less self-confidence. However, at a certain time, these feelings may bring advantages to students in some aspects where anxiety could give positive impact to the learners, this is known as facilitating anxiety. Facilitating anxiety could contribute to the improvement in students' learning and academic achievement making students motivated to fight for the new learning task which gears the learner emotionally for approach behavior (Scovel, 1991, cited in Tanveer, 2007).

However with the facilitating anxiety, it could overcome the nervousness or fear in learning language and it may help to improve performance. Another affective factor that could contribute to positive effect is self-efficacy. Zimmerman (1995) defined self-efficacy as a personal perspective of how someone is capable to organise and execute tasks to attain designated academic performance.

2.3 Language anxiety and self-efficacy

Basically, self-efficacy refers to how an individual uses his or her ability, confidence level and beliefs in order to change his or her behavior to achieve their goals. It is an individual self-determination on the tasks and the seriousness of effort and perseverance in the face of resistance and challenges. Eventually, it could reduce the anxiety that can interfere when engaged in the activities.

Schunk (2003) has pointed out that the decrease of anxiety and increase of self-efficacy could be overcome by prior experiences and personal characteristics. By observing others perform a similar task, individuals should think that they are capable of accomplishing the task too. Self-efficacy is a potential to influence task choice, effort, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Schunk, 1995). It also can aim for the achievement in specific goals because it is relatively easy to evaluate progress toward an explicit goal.

Thus, it is important to the learner to believe in their strength to produce positive outcomes and get an idea of how well they can learn. They have to adopt the concept of self-efficacy which is part of intrinsic motivation that can enhance their learning when learners perceive they can perform well. According to Shunk (1990), the rise in self-efficacy is because students believe that they are able to learn and have an ability for further progress.
It is found that higher levels of efficacy could produce better academic performance and positive health-related behaviors (Steptoe and Wardle, 2001). Generally, individuals are not motivated to act or to do something if they believe the outcomes will be a negative result. This type of motivation, created from an internal stimulus, is capable of encouraging individuals to do something without expecting or asking for any reward. As students work on tasks, they will realize their progress toward their aims. The progress toward aims and completion of tasks imparts to students that they are capable of performing the task well, which enhances self-efficacy to continue their learning.

Bandura (1997) highlighted that students with high self-efficacy will be ready to participate more, work harder and less emotional reaction when they encounter difficulties rather than those who always think negatively about their abilities. They tend to suffer from stress and depression because they believe that they will anticipate failure and try to avoid challenges. It is the belief on what they are actually capable in accomplishing a particular task. These self-perceptions could help them to determine what actually individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have in order to meet the challenges.

Another study by Zimmerman (2000) also found that self-efficacious students undertake to face the challenging tasks more than inefficacious students. When students find their study important and interesting, they become more involved in the learning process and perform academically. Zimmerman and Kitsantas (1997; 1999) also found self-efficacy to be highly correlated with students' rated intrinsic interest in a technology learning task as well as in a writing revision task.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed quantitative research method which involved the distribution of questionnaires. The data were collected in 2013 from students of bachelor programmes under the Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia.

3.2 Participants

The questionnaire was administered to a total of 230 students from six programmes under the Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies. (For the detailed programmes, please see Appendix A). All of them in semester one who were registered in a course of English Communication 1 (UBI 3012) for session 2013/2014. In term of age, they are quite a homogeneous group, ranging from 19 to 21 years old. The selection of students from FKI as respondents in this study has fulfilled the criteria as third language learners. This is based on the factor of students' field of study which uses Arabic language as a medium of instruction. They acquired English learning as the third language acquisition after Arabic language which was a second language acquisition.

3.3 Instruments

The instrument of this research is a set of questionnaires which was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 1991) and General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995). All the items in the questionnaire were constructed in two language, English and Bahasa Malaysia and the researcher used a three-step back translation based on the principles of Brislin’s translation methods 1986. The component of each section in the questionnaire had the reliability
indexes via Cronbach’s Alpha were found to be 0.87 for language anxiety and 0.71 for self-efficacy respectively. The instrument was created into three sections: Section A: Demographic Information, Section B: Language Anxiety and Section C: Self–Efficacy. The survey was conducted on at Block A, UniSZA on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of November, 2013. The participants were given 10 to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

4. Data Collection and Analysis

As mentioned above, the collected data was analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17. A statistical analysis namely Descriptive Statistics and Inferential Statistics were applied to investigate the correlation between level of language anxiety and level of self-efficacy.

Adapting the mean interpretation score from Oxford (1990) and Nor Asmah (2002), the scores of language anxiety and self–efficacy were interpreted as high, moderate, and low respectively.

A significance value of 0.18 and explains that the value is greater than the alpha value of 0.05, therefore, Ho3 (N=230) p > 0.05 (p =0.18) which the result concludes that there is no significant correlation between level of language anxiety and level of self–efficacy among language learners from FKI. This shows that “there is no significant correlation between level of language anxiety with level of self-efficacy among language learners from FKI, UniSZA, Kuala Terengganu” is accepted.

The result from the analysis of coefficient correlation between level of language anxiety and level of self–efficacy is showed in table 1. It indicates that r = -0.1, the negative value of r = -0.1 which explains that there is a negative correlation. According to Mohd Yusri (2010), he confirms that the negative value means that there is no correlation between two variables tested. Meanwhile, Cohen (1998 cited in Pallant (2013 pp 130) suggests the value of r = 0.1 to 0.29 refers to a small direction of the relationship. Whether it is a positive or negative sign of r value, it is considered as the same (r = 0.1, r = -0.1), but it is in a different direction. However, Chua (2013) suggests that the value of r between 0.1 to 0.3 or -0.1 to -0.30 indicates that the relationship between these two variables as a whole are very weak (Chua, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation between variables</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Sig (2 tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of language anxiety- level of self – efficacy.</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant level of 0.05

Consequently, it seems plausible to state that the students from FKI who demonstrated high level of self-efficacy tend to have a lower level of language anxiety than those who have low level of self-efficacy. Thus, it holds that students who feel nervous, afraid and shy to speak English Language inside and outside the classroom setting, invariably increase their level of self–efficacy to achieve successful in language learning. Hence, it will reduce the language anxiety.
5. Result and Discussion

There was no significant correlation existing between the learners' level of language anxiety and learners' level of self-efficacy found in this study. The coefficient correlation between level of language anxiety and level of self-efficacy generated a negative correlation between two variables with the value of $r = -0.1$. It is found that the strength of relationship is very weak (Chua, 2013). This shows a negative correlation where relationship between two variables in which level of language anxiety is not associated with level of self-efficacy.

In other words which could be explained that students who had high level of language anxiety will increase the self-efficacious tended to believe more strongly of their ability to learn English. Moreover they believe the confident level which could play a huge part in learning. Several researches such as Tuckman and Sexton (1992), Nalbone (2003) suggested that self-efficacy could influence academic motivation, learning and achievement. As expected, students of low language anxiety will have low self-efficacy because they are excellent students and they do not have to worry to work hard in the language classroom rather than those who relatively have high language anxiety in learning language. Therefore, the researcher reports that the level of language anxiety has no relationship with the level of self-efficacy.

One of the contributions to the finding is because of learners' belief in self-efficacy which motivates them to accomplish difficult tasks. Learners with high efficacy will realize that they have to work harder in order to acquire the target language as they have high level of anxiety in language learning. They will consider continuing to improve their learning process and do not think learning English is a waste of time. Zimmerman (2000) suggested that self-efficacy could influence in academic motivation such as choice of activities, level of effort, persistence and emotional reactions.

According to social cognitive theory, Bandura (1977) has described that self-efficacy is an individual's confidence in his or her ability to be successful in performing a particular task. Self-efficacy has been proven to be the most consistent factor to determine how much effort, persistence and resilience to be put on a particular task and it is a reliable predictor of students' task performance (Bandura, 1997). Thus, in language learning context, self-efficacy refers to a learner's cognitive process in judging learner's abilities and organizing the choice, effort and perseverance in order to perform specific language task. In the English Language classroom, highly self-efficacious students view difficulties tasks as challenges for them. However, with a stronger sense of commitment to their interests, they are able to recover quickly from difficulties and disappointments. Conversely, inefficacious students avoid challenging tasks and believe it is beyond their capabilities and lose confidence.

In this finding, as the level of language anxiety increases, the level of self-efficacy increases too. As a result, lecturers and language teachers are advised to hold a non-threatening classroom environment and encourage students to have friendly communication in English so that learners do not feel pressure in language classroom setting. Moreover, learners will be willing to participate in Speaking activities thus they can improve their level of confidence and improve the grammatical errors. In this way, some degree of anxiety is good for language learning which facilitating anxiety will overcome the anxiousness in language classroom. Further to this, the students should be encouraged to believe in their ability to perform certain tasks in order to achieve their goals. By increasing their self-efficacy level, they can improve their language learning.
References


Appendix A

The table shows the distribution of students based on degree programmes under FKI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Islamic Law (Syariah)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Islamic Theology (Usulluddin)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Islamic Outreach (Dakwah)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Islamic Theology with Counseling (Usuluddin dengan Kaunseling)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Anthropology and Islamic Outreach (Antropologi and Dakwah)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Al-Quran and As-Sunnah (Qiraat)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(28.7%)</td>
<td>(71.3%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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