

THE INFLUENCES OF LECTURERS ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY

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ABSTRACT

This study is to find out the influences of lecturers' attitudes on foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) levels of students. The study has been carried out at the fifth semester students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin academic year 2015/2016. The data have been collected by means of questionnaire and interview, designed to measure the FLCA levels. The aim of which is to obtain information about the effects of lecturers' attitudes on students with different anxiety levels. FLCA tested on three dimensions, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. It was a five point likert's scale questionnaire, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Strongly agree was coded by (5) and strongly disagree was coded by (1). The interview and questionnaire were translated into Bahasa Indonesia to make it easy for students to understand. The result of the study have revealed that, in the classroom the level of anxiety increases by the influence of lecturers.

Keywords: Anxiety, Language Anxiety, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

English is a language used as a tool of communication. It is spoken almost by one fifty of population in the world. Almost all people in the North America, in the British Isles, in Australia, New Zealand, and the Republic of South Africa, speak English; event the immigrants of those countries speak English as their second language. English is also a language of science and technology. Many books and other written forms are written in English more than that of other languages. At schools, it becomes a compulsory subject and is used as medium of instruction, particulary at schools where English becomes the second language.

In learning a language as foreign language or second language in this case English, non native speaker students have diffrent difficulties to master that particular language." One factor that influences the success and failure in learning and teaching language is anxiety" (Fadillah 2009:2). Anxiety plays an important affective role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. Anxiety could be described as feelings of uneasiness, frustration, nervousness, and worry. A

learner's emotion feelings or attitudes might affect learning efficacy, motivation, and self –confidence. Anxiety is also often linked to fear that one will fail in some way: on an assignment, on a test, when speaking in the class or when communicating with foreigners.

Psychologists make distinction between three categories of anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety as Scovel (1978) noted, refers to “ a more permanent predisposition to be anxious” while state and situational-specific anxiety are usually experienced in relation to some particular events or situation, (Brown, 2001)

For many students, foreign language classes can be more anxiety provoking than other courses they take (Horwitz et al, 1986). FLCA may have different causes such as conspicuousness, lack of knowledge, lack of self-confidence, shyness or high expectations of others (Bekleyen, 2001). However the beliefs and behaviors of language instructors can also be direct causes of students' anxiety. So from the background above, the writer wanted to know the influences that the students get from their lecturers.

B. Scope of the Study

The study was limited only to the students at the fifth semester of English Departement of STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin academic year 2015/2016, and the study investigated about the influence of lecturers on FLCA.

C. Research Question

What are the influences of lecturers on FLCA?

D. Objective of the Study

To explore the influences of lecturers on FLCA.

E. Significance of the study

This study is ultimately expected to give insight in the form of language anxiety and information needed for language lecturers in making the classroom environment less stressful.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Previous research

English is studied as first language, second language or foreign language. Students who study English as first language have little difficulty in acquiring the language, while students who study English as second or foreign language have difficulties in acquiring the language. The success or failure in learning English is influenced by many factor internal and external factors, one of the internal factors is anxiety.

The study of language anxiety is not a new field, it is one of issues in acquiring second or foreign language that attract linguist, educators and reseachers to conduct research. Phillips (1992) suggests that her students in a French class showed a moderate negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and

their oral exam grades, she concluded that students with higher language anxiety tended to say less and to use fewer dependent clauses and target structures than low anxiety students. Aida (1994), had conducted a study on 96 students (56 males and 40 females) who were enrolled in 2nd year Japanese at the University of Texas at Austin and the result of the study revealed a moderate negative correlation between anxiety and course grade, indicating that the higher the students' level of anxiety, the more likely they were to receive low grades. Saito and Samimy (1996), conducted a study of 257 students' anxiety in beginning, intermediate and advanced-level college students of Japanese at the University of Texas of Austin. The result of the study indicate that with these students of Japanese, the best predictive variable of their performance was different from the beginning level to the intermediate and the advanced-level students.

Elkhafafi (2005) conducted a study about the relation between foreign language anxiety and listening anxiety to students' achievement and listening comprehension performance in Arabic courses. The result of the study revealed significant negative correlation among listening and foreign language learning anxiety, students; listening comprehension scores, and final grades as a measure of overall achievement. The relationship of both listening anxiety and learning anxiety to achievement, as indexed by listening scores and final course grades was negative.

B. Definition of Anxiety

Horwitz (2001, p 133) defined that "anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with and arousal of the automatic nervous system". The statement shown that anxiety is an unpleasant feeling felt by someone, a fear of something that happens in the nervous system. Psychologists make distinction between three categories of anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety, as Scovel (1978) noted, refers to "a more permanent predisposition to be anxious" while state and situation-specific anxiety are usually experienced in relation to some particular event or situation (Brown, 2001).

As everybody knows, anxiety plays an important affective role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. Anxiety could be described as feeling of uneasiness, frustration, nervousness, and worry. A learner's emotional feelings or attitudes might affect learning efficacy, motivation, and self-confidence. Anxiety is also often linked to fear that one will fail in some way: on an assignment, on a test, when speaking in class or when communicating with foreigners.

Many students who have experienced learning a FL have expressed how stressful it was to be in the classroom as it provoked anxiety. When learners experience moderate anxiety, they may skip classes, never volunteer, neglect to turn in homework, avoid speaking in class, respond in a barely audible whisper, or sit in the back of the classroom to minimize the humiliation or embarrassment of being called upon to speak (Cohen 1997). Furthermore, when learners experience severe anxiety, it can be detrimental and the effect irreversible to them: they may be terrified of taking a language course, traumatised by unsuccessful performance

and achievement, and consequently hate learning the language and choose not to study at all (Price, 1991).

C. Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety

Most students experience stressful on foreign language learning, especially in formal or classroom situations. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) wrote that listening and speaking were main sources of anxiety. Lack of preparation and free speech can make students feeling anxious. Considering anxiety as a highly influential construct in language learning, SLA researchers have tried to investigate the sources or reasons that language anxiety can stem from within both academic and social contexts, and have suggested a variety of strategies to cope with it. Social status of the speaker and the interlocutor, a sense of power relations between them, and gender could also be important factors in causing language anxiety for L2/FL speakers.

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) described three components of foreign language anxiety; they are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety.

1. Communication Apprehension

They propose that the language students has mature thoughts and ideas but an immature second language vocabulary in expressing thought and ideas. The inability to express the ideas or to understand another person makes students feel frustration and apprehension. Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with other people. Difficulties in speaking in groups (oral communication anxiety) or in public speaking, or listening to learning a spoken message are all descriptions of communication apprehension.

Students who have trouble speaking in groups possibly experience greater difficulty speaking in a foreign language class where they have little control of the communicative situation and their performance is constantly monitored. Moreover, in addition to all the usual concerns about oral communication, the foreign language class requires the students to communicate using the target language, in which students do not or have less mastery. The communication apprehension in foreign language learning derives from the personal belief that students has difficulty in understanding others and making other students understood, because of this, many students are silent in a foreign language classroom.

2. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Students are not sure of themselves and what they are saying, the students may feel anxious about what other students thinking about, it occurs in students that are over concerned with academic and personal evaluations of their performance and competence in the target language in language learning classrooms. Teachers and peers are as if listening to each sentence to correct mistakes. Students can experience this fear because they cannot present themselves in the target language as fully as they can in their native language.

Horwitz et al (1986:127-128) believe that, although communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation provide useful conceptual building blocks for a description of second/ foreign language anxiety, it is more than just the conglomeration of these three components” we conceive foreign language anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”. “ what makes language learning a distinct and unique process is its interaction with the concept of self”

3. Test Anxiety

An understanding of test anxiety is also pertinent to the discussion of foreign language anxiety. Test anxiety, as explained by Horwitz et al (1986), “ refer to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure” test anxiety is quite pervasive in language classroom because of its continuous performance evaluative nature. Unfortunately, for highly anxious students, second or foreign languages, more than any other academic subject, require continual evaluation by the instructor or the fluent speaker in the class (1986:129) . it is also important to note that oral testing has the potential to provoke both test and oral communication anxiety simultaneously in susceptible students.

D. Factors Associated with Lerner’s own Sense of “self and “language Classroom Environment’

1. Self Perceptions

According to Horwitz et al. (1986:128), perhaps no other field of study poses as much of a threat to self-concept as language study does. They believe that any performance in L2 is likely to challenge an individual’s self concept as a competent communicator, which may lead to embarrassment. Self-concept is “ the totality of an individual’s thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and values having reference to himself as object”. (Laine, 1987:15) this self-concept forms the basis of the distinction, made by Horwitz et al. (1986:128), between language anxiety and other forms of academic anxieties. They posited,” the importance of the disparity between the ‘true’ or actual’ self as known to the language learner and the more limited self as can be presented at any given moment in the foreign language would seem to distinguish foreign language anxiety from other academic anxieties such as those associated with mathematics or sciences”

2. Learners’ Believe about Language Learning.

As language learning poses a threat to learners’ self-concept, in response learners may generate some particular beliefs about language learning and its use. Research on language anxiety, suggests that certain beliefs about language learning also contribute to the students’ tension and frustration in the class (Horwitz et al, 1986:127), for example, the followinga are such reported beliefs:

“I just know I have some kind of disability: I can’t learn a foreign language no matter how hard I try”

“ English is very hard to learn. I’ll never be able to learn English enough to go to England and talk to peaple” (the writer opinion)

3. Classroom Procedure

Different activities in the classroom procedure, particularly ones that demand students to speak in front of the whole class, have been found to be the most anxiety provoking. For instance, Koch and Terrell (1991, cited in Horwitz, 2001:118) found that more than half of their subjects in their Natural Approach classes- a language teaching method specifically designed to reduce learner’s anxiety- expressed that giving a presentation in the class, oral skits and discussion in large groups are the most anxiety producing activities. They also found that student get more anxious when called up to respond individually, rather than if they are given choice to respond voluntarily. In addition, students were found to be more relaxed speaking the target language when paired with a classmate or put into small group.

METHODOLOGY

The methods applied in this study is descriptive qualitative because this research try to explore the influences of lecturers on FLCA.

A. Participants

The participants of this study are students of the fifth semester of English Departement academic year 2015/2016. The total number of sample was 30 students. 15 students from morning class and 15 students from afternnon class. Therefore, the sample technique used was purposive sampling.

B. Instruments

This study has two instruments to collect the data namely questionnaires and interview. The interview intended to find out information from the students concerning the cause of anxiety. The questionnaires was used to obtain data of students anxiety, Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope’s Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used. The questionnaires consisted of 33 questions. Fifteen items were to measure students’ communication apprehension, nine items were to measure students’ fear of negative evaluation, and nine items were to measure students test anxiety.

C. Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed and interpreted following the grounded theory data analysis techniques dan procedures. It was discovered by Glaser & Strauss (1967). Grounded theory (GT) is a systematic qualitative research methodology in the social sciences emphasizing generation of theory from data in the process of conducting research. The first step give the key points with a series of codes, which are extracted from the text. The codes are grouped into similar concepts in order to make them more workable. From these concepts, categories are formed, which are the basis for the creation of a theory, or reverse engineered hypothesis.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The finding of this study based on the views and experience of the participants regarding language anxiety seem to be mostly corroborating the findings offered by the previous research on language anxiety, through not agreeing with every detail. The possible scores for the scale range from 33 to 165 (Horwitz et al, 1986). The scores obtained by the students were classified in different groups. As can be seen in table 1 below. Students with scores between 33 and 66 were considered as having a low level of anxiety whereas the students with scores between 133 and 165 were accepted as quite anxious.

Table 1. The Level of Anxiety

Levels	Scores
Low anxiety	33-36
Middle anxiety	67-132
High anxiety	133-136

The high, moderate and low anxiety groups of students were determined according to their scores obtained from the administration of the FLCAS.

Lecturers' Influences

Since this study is related to the effect of lecturers in general, the questions asked to the students did not focus on individual lecturer. There are three questions about the influence of the lecturer. Five students were chosen randomly from each group and they were interviewed according to the interview protocol.

Question (1). What kind of influences have you got from your lecturer in English lesson? (2) what are the effects?

The students were asked to report both the negative and positive aspects of the lecturers' influences. Some of the students stated that the lecturers' attitudes were quite positive towards the students and they reacted positively, even the students made mistakes. However, other students complained about the lecturers' attitudes and described their behaviors as "disturbing" or "discouraging" the answers given to the first question, two factors were revealed

Table 2. influences of lecturers on students' anxiety levels

categories	LA (low Anxiety) groups	MA (Middle anxiety) group	HA (High Anxiety) Group	Total
Lecturer personality	2	1	3	6
Lecturer-student relationship	1	1	3	5
Total	3	2	6	11

Lecturers' personality: the students who were interviewed usually evaluated the lecturers according to their personalities. They stated that factors such as kindness, being energetic and listening with patience were quite important in providing a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Most of the interviewees felt more comfortable if the lesson was taught by kind and energetic lecturers. Students from HA and LA groups stated different opinions about their own lecturers, as the following informant reported:

The lecturers are really supportive and tolerant, even if I make a pronunciation or grammar error, they don't get angry

On the other hand, the students from HA group described the attitudes of some lecturers towards the students as rather "annoying". These students observed the lecturers' attitudes quite carefully. Even if the negative attitude of the lecturer was towards another student, this affected their contribution to the lesson.

When the lecturer asked a question to one of my classmate, when she gave an incorrect answer, he became very angry and made negative comments.

Being a good listener was another personality trait that was considered as important by the students, who reported that some lecturers did not listen to their answer carefully. They wanted to see the signs of positive reinforcement such as nodding and smiling or expressions like "good" or "ok". If the lecturer remained silent and motionless, they felt that their answers were wrong.

If the lecturer doesn't say or do anything when I speak, I think that I'm doing something wrong and I begin stuttering. The worst of it is when I complete my answer and the lecturer does not say anything. He just turns to another student as if he doesn't pay attention to me at all.

Some lecturers listened to the students with a discouraging look on their faces. This attitude had a negative impact on the students' self-confidence. As two informants from HA group noted:

I think some lecturers classify the students into two groups: successful and unsuccessful, if they think you are unsuccessful, they look at you rather scornfully. If the lecturer thinks that I cannot give the correct answer, I understand this from the way he behaves. These make me nervous.

Lecturer- Student Relationship: since the lecturers' personality strongly affects the relationship between the lecturer and students, this item is closely related to the previous one. Many of the participants pointed out that they wished to have a closer relationship with their lecturers. Participant 15, for example, stated that his attitude towards the lesson became more positive when the lecturer addressed him by his name.

Most of the lectures know only the name of a few students whom are their favorites. If a lecturer addresses me by name, I give answer more willingly.

The students also expressed their opinions about a number of factors such as the lecturers' way of calling on the students, correcting errors and giving turns.

Sometimes the lecturer asks a question and then chooses a name from the attendance list. I felt very anxious in a situation like this especially if I'm unprepared for the lesson.

As can be seen in the example above, the fear of being called on was a factor that highly affected the students, especially the students from HA group.

Question (3). If there is a negative influence, what do you do to cope it?

Since some of the students from the low and moderate anxiety groups did not generally find lecturers' behaviors as anxiety provoking, only eight students answered the question number 3.

Discussion

After analyzed the data, it can be concluded that the level of anxiety is in middle anxiety. Since this study is related to the effect of lecturers in general, the question asked the students did not focus on individual lecturer. There are three questions about the influence of the lecturer. Some of the students stated that the lecturers' attitudes were quite positive towards the students and they reacted positively even if the students made mistakes. However, other students complained about the lecturers' attitudes and described their behaviours as "disturbing or discouraging". Student from HA and LA groups stated different opinions about their own lecturers, the students who were interviewed usually evaluated the lecturers according to their personalities. They stated that factors such as kindness, being energetic and listening with patience were quite important in providing a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Being a good listener was another personality trait that was considered as important by the students, who reported that some lecturers did not listen to their answer carefully. They wanted to see the signs of positive reinforcement such as nodding and smiling or expression like "good or ok" if the lecturer remained silent and motionless, they felt that their answers were wrong, for some students when the lecturers listened to the students with a discouraging look on their faces, this attitude had a negative impact on the students' self confidence.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the study showed that the behaviours of the lecturers might increase the level of anxiety in a language classroom. The students with HA levels anxiety felt more discomfort and nervousness compared to the students with low level anxiety. Some situation might sometimes be interpreted differently by the students, thus, anxious students felt quite comfortable in the same situations. The result of this study point several practical ways instructors and college can help students to cope their anxieties by aware of the fact that anxiety is a problem that may affect the students' performance negatively.

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