

A Study of Factors Affecting Undergraduates' Anxiety with Foreign Language Communication at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya

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Abstract

This study aims to (1) analyze the correlation of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety with foreign language communication, and (2) to study factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety with foreign language communication. The 200 undergraduates at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, who enrolled in Chinese and English courses in the 2nd semester of 2014 academic year were the participants in this study selected by simple random sampling technique. The research instrument was a questionnaire which was theoretically developed based on the literature review about factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety with foreign language communication. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data. The results revealed that (1) the correlation of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety with foreign language communication was significant at a positive moderate level, ranking from 0.4- 0.6, and (2) student factor affected their anxiety with foreign language communication at a high level whereas teacher and environmental factors affected their anxiety with foreign language communication at a moderate level.

Keywords : Anxiety, Communication, Foreign language

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Introduction

Foreign languages play a significant role in society nowadays in the area of business, science and technology, tourism, sports, and especially education- United Nation and World Health Organization. Therefore, communicative foreign language instruction is so important. Johnson & Morrow (1981) proposed the principle of communicative language teaching as a way to promote students to learn the language from practice: authentic activities and simulation. This proposal is consistent with Lertwatcha (2013) that mentioned environmental factors affect students' language use, and students' anxiety in foreign language communication occurred when there is no appropriate environmental factor.

The majority of students have problems with communicative foreign language use as a result of an inappropriate environmental factor, no chance to communicate by using the foreign language in their daily life, the lack of self-confidence, embarrassment, and nervousness in using the foreign language Mounprasert (2008). These findings are also consistent with the result of the studies of Ritthirat & Chiramanee (2014), Adulrattanakul (2011), Soonsatham (2014), Wongjarupun (2012), and Rawang (2012) which revealed that students' anxiety were due to their lack of self- confidence, limitation of vocabulary and grammar use, fear of pronunciation and making errors. Also, a sense of evaluative emotion and self- esteem is also involved as students view themselves as having no ability to confront that particular situation, it can cause cognitive anxiety (Anuban, 2008 and Thongnamwon, 2006).

To study factors affecting students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use, its result can be revealed in terms of students' attitudes as well as their anxiety in learning the foreign language. Also, teachers can find solutions when factors affecting students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use have been exposed from the study (Opasee, 2011 and Barabas, 2013). According to the significance of the study factors affecting students' anxiety mentioned earlier, this study, therefore, aims to study factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use of undergraduates at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Thailand. The information gained from this study could benefit foreign language teachers with their teaching and learning preparation, finding ways to reduce students' anxiety in the communicative foreign language use, and developing strategies to promote their subsequent communicative language skills.

Research Questions

1. Is there any significant relationship between factors affecting students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use?
2. How much does each mentioned factor affect students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use?

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the correlation of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use
2. To study factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use.

Variables used in this study

Independent variable is factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use.

Dependent variable is the undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use.

Population and Samples

Population

The population used in this study were undergraduate students at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Thailand who enrolled in English and Chinese courses in the second semester of 2015 academic year.

Samples

The samples used in this study were 200 undergraduate students at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Thailand who enrolled in English and Chinese courses in the second semester of 2015 academic year, and were selected by simple random sampling technique.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire was the research instrument used in this study and was constructed based on the research conceptual framework as well as the literature review and related studies. The questionnaire was divided into three parts which were;

Part 1 General information of respondents

Part 2 Factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use. A five- point -rating- scale- items asking about reasons and causes of students' anxiety within the dimension of students, teacher, and environment respectively.

Part 3 Additional opinion and comment. It consisted of open ended- questions asking respondents to freely answer and express their own opinion about anxiety in communicative foreign language use.

There were 6 steps in developing the questionnaire, the research instrument as follows;

1st step: Reviewed the relevant theories, literature, and related studies about anxiety in communicative foreign language use.

2nd step: outlined the research conceptual framework. Constructed items based on the reviewed theories and literature.

3rd step: Ensured the content validity of the questionnaire in terms of the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) by asking three experts to view all items constructed in the questionnaire. This was also to ensure the consistency of all items in the questionnaire.

4th step: Revised the items according to the experts' suggestions.

5th step: Piloted the questionnaire by asking undergraduate students who share similar characteristics with the target sample group to complete the questionnaire to ensure the reliability of the research instrument.

6th step: Revised and finalized items in the questionnaire.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed to 200 undergraduate students in the first semester of 2014 academic year. The researcher was the one who only contacted and coordinated with the faculty for the data collection and distributed to them by himself. The 200 questionnaires were fully returned.

Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.) was used to describe the general information of respondents. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (correlation analysis) was used to study the correlation of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use respectively.

Results

The results of the study can be presented into two parts: The general information of respondents and the correlation analysis of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use which are detailed as follows;

General information of respondents

Based on 200 respondents, it was found that female undergraduate students are the majority of respondents (86.5%) whereas male respondents were 13.5%. When divided respondents based on their GPA, the majority of respondents' GPA was ranked between 2.51- 3.00 (37.5%), and the minority of respondents whose GPA were lower than 2.00 was about 4% of all respondents. When divided respondents based on their fields of study, 55% of them were Hotel majoring students whereas 10.5% were Tourism majoring students.

The correlation analysis of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use

According to the study of the linear relationship of independent variables and a dependent variable, it was revealed that all variables had a positive relationship at the moderate level. All correlation were significantly ranked from 0.4 – 0.6 at 0.01 significant level. Table 1 shows the correlation matrix of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use.

	Student factor	Teacher factor	Environment factor
Student factor	1	0.444 (**)	0.567 (**)
Teacher factor	0.444 (**)	1	0.582 (**)
Environment factor	0.567 (**)	0.582 (**)	1

** Significantly at 0.01 level

Figure 1 : Correlation matrix of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety

Factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use

The results of factors affecting 200 undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Thailand can be presented according to each item and aspect in the questionnaire. The findings revealed that student factor affected their anxiety in communicative foreign language use at the highest level whereas teacher and environment factors affected their anxiety in communicative foreign language use at the moderate level. Tables 2-4 show the factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use in this study.

Item no.	item	mean	S.D.	result
1	I am not confident when I have to use a foreign language in conversation.	3.63	0.88	high
2	I am worried about my grammar accuracy when I speak.	3.94	0.86	high
3	I am afraid of mispronunciation	3.78	0.90	high
4	I feel nervous when I have to talk without any preparation.	3.84	0.84	high
5	I think others speak better than me.	3.82	0.86	high
6	Even with preparation, I feel anxious when I have to talk.	3.61	0.83	high
7	I am worried about my vocabulary limitation	3.69	0.86	high
Student factor		3.76		high

Figure 2 : Student factor and its items analysis

Item no.	Item	mean	S.D.	result
8	Question types from teachers in the classroom make me feel anxious.	3.91	0.72	high
9	The teachers' expectation to communicate make me feel anxious.	4.00	0.70	high
10	The strict behavior of teachers make me feel anxious.	3.34	1.02	moderate
11	Teachers' communicative assessment is not consistent to the learning objectives.	3.13	1.00	moderate
12	There is no attractive classroom activity	3.30	1.00	moderate
13	Teacher is not be able to monitor all of the class.	3.11	1.05	moderate
14	The teaching techniques are not matched to the students' ability.	3.05	1.10	moderate
Teacher factor		3.40		moderate

Figure 3 : Teacher factor and its items analysis

Item no.	item	mean	S.D.	result
15	Friends always laugh at me when I speak a foreign language ungrammatically.	3.23	1.12	Moderate
16	The negative views of friends will occurred when I speak a foreign language ungrammatically.	3.13	1.09	moderate
17	I feel anxious doing public speaking.	3.45	0.90	moderate
18	Friends tease me when I try to speak a foreign language.	3.09	1.10	moderate
19	The environment where I live is not facilitated to the use of a foreign language which causes anxiety in communicative foreign language use.	3.81	0.99	high
20	The lack of technology in practicing a foreign language.	3.50	0.98	high
21	I feel under pressure because the others have a better use of foreign languages.	3.54	1.00	high
Environment factor		3.39		moderate

Figure 4: Environment factor and its items analysis

Discussion

The relationship of factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use

According to the findings in this study, teacher factor had a significant positive correlation with student factor at the moderate level which is consistent with Johnson & Morrow (1981) who claimed that teachers play an important role in promoting and encouraging students to practice all language skills. Furthermore, environment factor had a significant positive correlation with student factor at the moderate level which is consistent with Opasee (2011) who cited that learning foreign language through social strategies can reduced students' anxiety.

Factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use

When considered factors according to this study, student factor affects students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use at the high level whereas teacher and environment factor affect students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use at the moderate level. In terms of student factor, it affects students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use at the high level which is consistent with Mounprasert (2008) who mentioned that student factor causes their anxiety in communicative foreign language use. This result was also consistent with (Ritthirat & Chiramanee, 2014; Adulrattanakul, 2011; Soonsatham, 2014; Wongjarupun, 2012; Rawang, 2012) who proposed that the lack of students' self- confidence, problems of language use, unwillingness to speak, and fear of making mistakes cause them anxiety in communicative foreign language use.

In terms of teacher factor, it affects students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use at the high level which is consistent with Johnson & Morrow (1981) who claimed that teachers should provide authentic activities and situations that encourage students to communicate, facilitate them in practicing the foreign language, and ignore their language errors, or the language barrier, while using a foreign language in order to build their self-confidence in the language use. The results also indicated that the impact of the use of teacher questions in a foreign language and teacher's expectation in foreign language communication of students also affect students' anxiety at the high level.

In terms of environment factor, it also affects students' anxiety in communicative foreign language use at the high level which is consistent with scholars: Adulrattanakul (2011) and Lertwacha (2013) who mentioned that living in an environment without having that target foreign language use can cause anxiety in communicative foreign use.

Conclusion

According to the study of anxiety in this paper, cognitive anxiety (Anuban, 2008; Thongnamwon, 2006) tends to be consistent with the results of this study as cognitive anxiety is caused by self-evaluative emotion. This result is also consistent with Barabas (2013) who claimed that student, environment, and learning activities are the three factors main among eight factors that affect anxiety in communicative foreign language use.

Recommendation

Recommendation for practice

1. The results of this study can be rich information for foreign language teachers in developing their courses aiming to improve students' communicative language use.
2. The information gained from this study can be a guideline to reduce students' anxiety level and promote their self-confidence.
3. Foreign language teachers can provide students with appropriate language activities in order to reduce their language anxiety.

Recommendation for future study

1. To study about students' language anxiety should be studied extensively.
2. Factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use should be done with students in another faculty in order to meet the appropriate instruction and learning process of universities.
3. Factors affecting undergraduates' anxiety in communicative foreign language use should be done with students in another campus in order to meet the appropriate instruction and learning process of universities.

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