

Anxiety and Willingness to Communicate in Indonesian EFL Context

How Do They Correlate?

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Abstract: This paper discussed how EFL students' language anxiety correlates with their willingness to communicate. It also identified the types of students' anxiety as well as their anxiety level. Quantitative descriptive approach was employed in the study and the freshmen of English Study Program Universitas Brawijaya were taken as participants. The results indicated a strong positive correlation between learners' foreign language classroom anxiety and their willingness to communicate. The students' types of anxiety were fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension. In addition, students had high level of anxiety, which makes them find difficulties in language learning process and tend to have low desire to speak.

1 INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is one of influential factors in foreign language learning. It has been defined as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object (Huang, 2012). There are three categories of anxiety, namely: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994), and language anxiety, in particular, is a form of situation-specific anxiety. It is basically the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) found that anxiety in interpersonal settings and associated with recall of vocabulary and learning is communicative anxiety. EFL learners have different levels of willingness to communicate (WTC) due to their different communication behaviors. Some are active participants, whereas others tend to be passive. Language anxiety has been considered as one of the main barriers for WTC.

Anxiety has potential to negatively affect foreign language learning process, since it makes learners afraid of making mistakes in speaking, which then leads to hesitation to communicate. By knowing the sources of anxiety, EFL learners can handle their fears on foreign language classroom. Teachers also must be aware that by decreasing the anxiety of their

students, it will make the classroom becomes less-threatening for them.

Some researchers have analyzed the relationship between the competitiveness of learners and self-esteem as a potential source of learner anxiety. Bailey (1983, cited in Young, 1991) found that anxiety might be the consequences of the competitive nature of L2 learning, and language tests and learners' perceived relationship with their teachers. This was supported by Young (1991) who revealed that six potential causes of language anxiety are involved in students' language learning, which include personal and interpersonal, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures and language tests.

This paper tries to figure out the correlation in another EFL context, which is Indonesian. It tries to identify students' anxiety and elaborate on the relationship between language anxiety and willingness to communicate in EFL contexts as Indonesian, specifically in Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya. In addition, this paper also discussed the types of anxiety perceived by the students of English Study Program Universitas Brawijaya, as well as their anxiety level.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Anxiety

Horwitz et.al (1986) state that anxiety is subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and wrong associates with an arousal of the autonomic nervous. It means that when learners are trying to explore their language, there is a feeling, known as anxiety, which makes them not confident in doing it. Sometimes, that feeling affects their readiness to speak up, even make them doing some mistakes in grammar, spelling, and pronouncing some English words.

Foreign language anxiety may not be easily detected and it can affect the goal of learning language. This feeling is very common for EFL learners since it affects communicative aspects of language learning, such as listening and speaking (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994, p.283). Liu (2007) conducted a study showing that Chinese students experience anxiety when they have a single performance such as a presentation in English class. It causes the students have lack of vocabulary, low English proficiency, and have memory disassociation.

However, anxiety that is experienced by EFL learners might be different from one another, depending also on the situation. According to Horwitz et al (1986), there are three kinds of foreign language anxiety namely communicative apprehension, test anxiety, and negative evaluation.

With regard to the level of anxiety, according to Horwitz et.al (1986), there are three categories: low, moderate, and high level of anxiety. These levels of anxiety can be indicated by knowing the result of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) score. The score of FLCAS ranges from 33 to 165. The students whose score is lower than 99 are categorized as having low anxiety level, while the students who get higher score than 99 are categorized as having high level anxiety. However, if the score is exactly 99, they are categorized as cut-off line, which means they have moderate level of anxiety.

2.2 Willingness to Communicate

Willingness to communicate is defined as a stable predisposition toward communication when free to choose to do so. It means that a person who is willing to communicate tends to have no obstacle in doing so. The proper objective to learn second language is to create willingness to communicate.

Higher willingness to communicate among learners provides more opportunities to practice in second language and facilitate authentic second language usage (MacIntyre et al, 2001).

There are some variables that lead to different level of willingness to communicate (McCroskey, 1992). Those are introversion, self-esteem, communication competence, cultural diversity, and communication apprehension.

There are different levels of willingness to communicate based on what context and with whom they communicate. In order to identify it, the appropriate instrument is by using Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale proposed by McCroskey (1992). The WTC scale includes items related to four communication contexts which are public speaking, talking in meetings, talking in small group, and talking in interpersonal conversation, and also three types of receivers which are strangers, acquaintance, and friends.

3 METHODS

3.1 Design

This is a correlational study using quantitative approach since the analysis used statistical method.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were the students of English Study Program Universitas Brawijaya. The first-year students (of academic year 2016/2017) as many as 98 were taken as population based on preliminary assumption that they have higher level of anxiety (nervousness) compared to the second or third year students since they are starting their university study.

3.3 Instrument

Two questionnaires were employed in this study, namely Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale.

Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is "a self-report measure which assesses the degree of anxiety, as evidenced by negative performance expectancies and social comparisons, psycho-physiological symptoms, and avoidance behaviour (Horwitz et al, 1986). It is the most commonly used tool for assessing Foreign Language Anxiety. This instrument is composed of 33 items,

each of which is answered on the five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (values 1–5). The items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, 32 were negative, so the score was reversely computed.

The second questionnaire, Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale by McCroskey (1992) measures a person’s willingness to initiate communication. For the scoring, it has specific guide to compute the total WTC score, by adding the sub scores for stranger, acquaintance, and friend. Then divide by 3. All scores, total and sub-scores, will fall in the range of 0 to 100. The Total WTC :

>82 High Overall WTC, <52 Low Overall WTC

3.4 Data Collection

In collecting the data, first, the FLCAS and WTC scale were distributed to the students. Beforehand, the students were given instructions and were asked to faithfully answer the questionnaires. And then, the questionnaires were collected, and the participants were informed that the result of the questionnaire would be kept and used for research purpose.

3.5 Data Analysis

The first step of data analysis was inputting the data gathered from FLCAS and WTC Scale, then finding the result of students’ type of anxiety. Following that, the anxiety level of students was measured. The next step was calculating the correlation between students’ anxiety and their willingness to communicate using SPSS 20, and interpreting the results based on Pearson’s correlation.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 98 students of the first year in English Study Program Universitas Brawijaya Malang as the participants showed the following results (see Table 1) concerning their types of anxiety.

Table 1: Ranks of anxiety types.

Category	Mean score	Rank
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.28	1
Communication Apprehension	3.21	2
Test Anxiety	3.10	3

It is displayed in table 1 that fear of negative evaluation was the most frequent type of anxiety experienced by the participants. Meanwhile, communication apprehension takes the second place

and test anxiety ranked the third. The anxiety level of the participants was 104.74 indicating high level of anxiety. The correlation between students’ anxiety and willingness to communicate was measured by using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Correlation, and the analysis used SPSS 20 software. The following data were then obtained.

Based on the analysis, the correlation value was 0.653 indicating that foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate has high correlation. p value 0.00 shows that there is a positive correlation between the variables. In other words, H0 is rejected and it reflects that there is a correlation between foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate.

As can be seen from Table 1, in types of anxiety, fear of negative evaluation ranks the first, followed by communication apprehension and test anxiety. However, there is only slight difference between fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension. This means that both types of anxiety really affect the respondents. This might be influenced by the position of the respondents who are the first-year students who are still hesitant to speak and communicate in English language and afraid if they are judged by others.

Test anxiety ranked the lowest in anxiety types, which indicated that the respondents also had burden in facing academic test. Usually learners who have this anxiety assume that no matter how hard they prepare for the test, it will not make them succeed in it. This feeling can make learners nervous in doing the test. As a consequence, learners may not focus and it can be a reason of failure in the test. From the finding, item 10 which states “I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language classes” got the highest score.

Regarding the anxiety level of the participants, it was revealed that the mean score was 104.74 which indicate that the freshmen in English Study Program Universitas Brawijaya had high level anxiety. This is derived from Horwitz’ statement that the score under 99 is indicated as low anxiety, the 99 score means moderate level, while high anxiety is indicated by having more than 99 score.

From the statistical analysis, it was evident that there was a positive correlation between foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate of the students of English Study Program Universitas Brawijaya. It was indicated by the p value (significance value) of 0.00 which means that the correlation between two variables is significant. The coefficient correlation r was 0.653 which reflects strong correlation (Evans, 1996).

The results show that if the language anxiety is high, learners are less willing to communicate in the L2 and if their anxiety decreases, their willingness to communicate increases. This finding is supported by McCroskey and Richmond's (1990) statement that willingness to communicate has tendency affected by individuals' anxiety. When learners are able to speak in the classroom, it means they have ability to raise their confidence and do not feel intimidated by peers or teachers' judgments.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scale includes items related to three types of receivers and types of communication context. Types of receiver refers to whom a person willing to communicate, comprising friends, acquaintances, and strangers. There are also four communication context types, which are speaking in public, talking in meetings, talking in small groups, and having interpersonal conversation. In receiver type, the participants showed having more willingness to communicate with friends (74.48 – moderate level) and followed by acquaintances (56.02 – low) and strangers (42.08 – moderate).

In context type, the respondents had more willingness to communicate in group discussion, meeting, and public speaking, which were all categorized into moderate level of WTC. Interpersonal communication showed a low level of WTC.

The result of this paper is in line with Murtiningsih's study showing that anxiety and willingness to communicate is closely related. The high anxiety owned by the participants affects their desire to speak. It is necessary for the respondents to increase their willingness to speak because the categories among three receiver types are not at high level. As English program students, having willingness to communicate with people around them is crucial.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This paper discussed the relationship between EFL students' language anxiety and their willingness to communicate. The results indicated a strong positive correlation between learners' foreign language classroom anxiety and their willingness to communicate. This means that learners who were more anxious about language classroom tended to be more apprehensive about communicating in the L2. Previous studies had also confirmed this study's finding that the participants' unwillingness to communicate and their foreign language anxiety

were significantly correlated to their English language proficiency.

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