A STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY OF THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THAILAND

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Abstract - This present study investigates vocational students' foreign language anxiety towards English language learning in school and find differences between gender, learning achievement and the education programs of vocational certificate students towards foreign language anxiety. The 326 students who study for Vocational Certificate 1-3 in Bangkok were the participants. The research instrument used in this study was Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, et al. (1986).The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS version 16. The results showed that the foreign language learning anxiety level of participants was in moderate level. Meanwhile, there is no significant difference between foreign language learning anxiety with gender and education program. On the other hand, there is a significant difference between foreign language learning anxiety and learning achievement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Thailand officially stepped into the AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) in 2015. AEC is set to promote economic, political, social and cultural cooperation across the region (Lehmacher, 2016). There are 10 ASEAN country members of the AEC, including Thailand. People in these 10 countries use their own language in their own countries, but there is a need to use some language which is used as the interlanguage, and English has been chosen and set as the interlanguage for communication. This suggests to us that English is more effective and powerful than in the past. From the coming of the AEC, it influences many things in Thailand, and certainly influences Thai education, unavoidably.

Every student in Thai education has to study English as a foreign language. Normally, every academic and vocational school in Thailand sets English language as a core subject following the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008). Students learn many skills and competences in English, such as the four skills of listening, writing, reading, and speaking; grammar and conversation. These are all basics of every language, and students can develop and apply these facets of knowledge in English. In academic schools, students intensively practice and study various necessary facets of English, such as grammar, writing, speaking and listening and reading comprehension. When students in academic schools finish their 12 years of study from schools, they are able to bring these necessary facets of English use fluently in their own lives and use them to apply for university admission. On the other hand, students in vocational schools see the importance of job training rather than academic matters. They focus on job training following their own interests, such as nursing, accounting, administration, marketing, tourism or mechanical technology (Thailand teaching, 2015). The students have to study and have deep knowledge of technical terms in their job training. In terms of their English studies, this kind of studying is called ESP (English for Specific Purposes). Hall (2014) defines ESP as "an approach to the education of English orientated for specific purposes, such as scientific, technological, economic, academic areas, etc. It is based on the design of specific courses designed to respond to the needs of students who beyond the learning of everyday language or those requiring practice regarding certain professional areas." There are many technical terms in English and words used in quite specific situations, yet students can do well because they pay attention and study hard for it.Sometimes, vocational students can be stressed and pressured because they are also set to study English following the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008), as in academic schools. Sometimes, they are not familiar with this kind of foreign language learning much because their courses focus on their job training or technical terms more than academic parts. However, in fact, learning this foreign language may well be necessary for their jobs in future because of the AEC. There are many jobs that are popular across the AEC, such as doctor, dentist, engineer and accountant (Uasean, 2013). Sometimes, if vocational students have to study foreign language in class, they may feel much worry and suffer from foreign language learning anxiety. To understand clearly about foreign language learning anxiety, Horwitz et al. (1986) defines it as 'situation-specific'; students may suffer from

strained feelings when they learn English as a second or foreign language. When vocational students study a foreign language with misunderstanding, they may feel negative towards the foreign language learning experience. When they feel worried or have some negative thinking in language learning, they may avoid studying and ignore classes entirely it in the end.

Objectives of the study

1. To investigatevocational certificate students' foreign language anxiety towardsEnglishlanguage learning in school;
2. To find differences between gender, learning achievement and the educationprogramsof vocational certificate students towards foreign language anxiety.

Research Question

1. How did vocational certificate students show their foreign language anxiety towards English learning in school?
2. Is there any significant difference between gender, learning achievement and their education program of vocational certificate students towards foreign language anxiety?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign Language Learning Anxiety

Anxiety is linked to language learning and considered as an important aspect of language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) define foreign language learning anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." Likewise, Gregersen(2003) defines foreign language learning anxiety as "a distinct construct that can affect foreign language learning". According to Gardner and Macintyre (1993), language learning anxiety is a worry or fear occurring when a learner has to use the second/foreign language. Similarly, Oh(1992) defines foreign language learning anxiety as "a situation-specific anxiety students experience in the classroom, which is characterized by negative self-centered thoughts, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, and emotional reactions."

Horwitz et al. (1986) divides them into three: test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and communication apprehension. First, Test anxiety is defined as the anxiety from the fear of failure in test taking or "a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure". Learners who face an anxious test experience will worry, feel down, and experience difficulty when taking the test. Test anxiety can occur in the foreign language classroom when students have to take tests or quizzes for language evaluation. The students will encounter stress and nervousness in taking tests that can result in anxiety.

Next, fear of negative evaluation,Horwitz et al (1986) defines fear of negative evaluation as "apprehension about other's evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively". Watson and Friend (1969) describe those who experience fear of negative evaluation as fearing evaluation from others, trying to avoid evaluation situations, and fearing being evaluated in a negative way. Although it is similar with test anxiety, it doesn't scope in test situation.

Last, anxiety is communication apprehension. Mccroskey(1977) defines communication apprehension as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person". It is also bashfulness when one has to communicate with other people. People who experience communication apprehension often face difficulties speaking in public.

METHODS

Participants

The participants of the study are 326 students who study for Vocational Certificate 1-3 in Bangkok. They were selected using sample random. The participants were selected from Vocational Certificate 1-3 who studied English Fundamental I. These vocational certificate students study in two main departments: the Commercial Department and the Industry Department. In the Commercial Department, there are accounting, marketing and business-computer programs, and the Industry Department has only an automotive program.

Research instruments

In this study, the researcher will use the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales (FLCAS). The following section discusses the research instruments in detail. There are 33questions rated on a five-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The answers or consequences of the instrument are based on the students' emotions and habits in classes. The FLCAS, a 33-item questionnaire, has been modified and translated into Thai from the one designed by Horwitz, et al. (1986), including the participants' information such as

gender, grades, education program and English tutoring. These 33 items divide into 4 main types: communication apprehension, test anxiety, anxiety of English classes and fear of negative evaluation following the related content. Items 1,4,914,15,18,23,24,27,29,30,32 focus on communication apprehension. Items 8,10,16,21 focus on test anxiety. Items 3,5,6,11,12.17,20,22,25,26,28 focus on anxiety of English classes, and items 2,7,13,19,31 and 33 focuses on fear of negative evaluation.

Data collection

First, the researcher translated the 33 items of the FLCAS into Thai. Then the researcher took the 33 translated items to check the accuracy with three professors. After the research instruments were completed, the researcher contacted a teacher from a Technological College about collecting data and sent the permitting letter to the college. After approval from the school Principal, the researcher went to the college to distribute the questionnaires to the participants and collected them completed from the teacher in one day. After collecting, the researcher brought the completed questionnaires to analyze the data with a statistic specialist using SPSS version 16.

Data analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis was used. The scores from the foreign language learning anxiety questionnaires were calculated and analyzed to investigate students' foreign language anxiety towards English learning using means, and standard deviation. T-test and ANOVA are also used to find differences between students' gender, learning achievement and their education program towards foreign language anxiety.

RESULTS

The result of high school students' foreign language anxiety level was moderate with $\bar{x}$ =3.34, SD =.51. Meanwhile, the mean score of the items ranged from 3.09-3.47 which indicated in moderate level, with the highest mean score with test anxiety.About foreign language leaning anxiety and gender, the result of this study showed that there is no significant difference between gender and foreign language anxiety. Meanwhile, it is found that male and female anxiety level is no significant difference with the mean score= 3.33 as male and 3.37 as female, though the mean scores of females were a bit high. The highest mean score is in test anxiety in males and females. Finding their education program and foreign language leaning anxiety, the result showed that there is no significant difference between industry and commercial department students and foreign language learning anxiety. The mean score of males and females is equal with $\bar{x}$ = 3.34.The highest mean score is in test anxiety in males and females. Meanwhile, the result of foreign language learning anxiety and learning achievement that has a significant difference, each varaible is different. It was found that there is no significant difference in mean score of test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in level .05. On the other hand, there is a significant difference in mean score of communication apprehension and anxiety of English classes in level .05 with $\bar{x}$ = 3.42 and $\bar{x}$ = 3.18 in significant difference in level .05.

SUMMARY

The result showed that vocational certificate students' foreign language anxiety level was moderate. In addition, there was no significant differences between gender and departments of vocational certificate students towards foreign language anxiety. Conversely, there was a significant difference between grades of vocational certificate students towards foreign language anxiety in communication apprehension and anxiety of English classes. However, there was no significant differences between grades of vocational certificate students towards foreign language anxiety in test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author wishes to express the deepest acknowledgement of gratitude to the Graduate School of Srinakarinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand who sponsored this research with funding, for which support it is an honor for me to have.

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