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Anxiety in English Language Learning Among Thai Students

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Abstract

English language anxiety appears in some International students while learning in the country that use any language other than their native language. International students may get anxious while learning in another country. This research tries to answer two issues. The first one is the factors causing anxiety of Thai students in English language learning and the next one is the strategies of Thai students in coping their anxiety in English language learning. The data for this qualitative study were gathered from observation and semi-structured interview. The participants are two Thai students who took English Education Department in IAIN Salatiga. From the data, the researcher find that there are three factors causing anxiety of Thai students in English language learning namely communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The researcher also find that there are two strategies of Thai students in coping the anxiety in reading class. They are preparation and peer seeking. The results of this study are hopefully can be beneficial to English teacher and students. Not only for domestic students, but also International students.

Keywords: *thai students' responses; factors of anxiety; strategy of anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a set of very specific universal principles which are intrinsic properties of the human mind and part of our species' genetic endowment as stated by Chomsky (William Downes, 1984). Learning language cover some aspects. One of the important aspects is linguistic aspect which cover grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, structure and etc. Beside those aspects, the learners also need to master the skills of the language such as listening, writing, reading and speaking.

While learning English in school, there are not only domestic students who learn English in their country but also International students. To name of view, International students here are Thai students who take English Education Department in IAIN Salatiga. The experiences that students have in the classroom with such difficult languages may be different from the experiences of students in languages that are more familiar to English. Before coming to the

university, the Thai students usually using Thai language as their first language. They use to know English as their second language. Probably, English language is a little bit difficult to understand for them.

For domestic students, it may be easier to follow up the class because they just learn English as their second foreign language. For Thai students, it becomes more difficult because have to learn English and Indonesian as their second language. They have to learn Indonesian also because Indonesian is the first language that people used in university.

In this case, the researcher took Thai students as the subject of the research. There are three Thai students who took English Education Department in IAIN Salatiga. It can be seen when the researcher was in the same class with Thai students. Thai students have higher anxiety than domestic students, because they should learn two language at the same time. It has shown that these Thai students faced difficulties in English language learning. They found some difficulties in learning English language in the class. It may comes from friends that they met in class, or even the lecture who taught among four skill in English language learning.

The researcher found some problems while observing these Thai students. This study will describe two questions, which are as follows: What are the factors causing anxiety of Thai students in English language learning at the third semester of IAIN Salatiga? What are the strategies of Thai students in coping their anxiety in English language learning at the third semester of IAIN Salatiga?

The result of this research is expected to give contribution to the improvement of the effective English teaching learning process in general by knowing students anxiety, especially for International students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part presented review of the related literature that relevant to the topic of the research. The literatures review on English language learning, International students and the nature of anxiety.

English Language Learning

Language is a tool in the way as arm with its hand is a tool, something to work with like any other tool and at the same time part of the mechanism that drives tools, part of us. Language is not only necessary for the formulation of thought, but it is part of thinking process itself (Bolinger, in Geoffry et al, 1980). Language is related to reality and thought by the intricate relationships we call meaning.

Meanwhile, English, as a world language, is taught among others in school. English can be a first or second language. But in rest of world, English is a foreign language. That is, it is taught in schools, often widely but it does not play an essential role in national or social life (Geoffry et al, 1980). By learning a foreign language we see our own in perspective, we recognize that there are other ways of saying things, other ways of thinking, other patterns of emphasis.

To learn English as a foreign language, students need to know based English skills such as reading, speaking, listening and writing.

Reading

Reading is the skill should be mastered in learning English as foreign language. Kinds of text books and materials are written in English. It needs comprehension in reading text to get better in catching the idea and information. The definition of reading is propose by several experts. According to Weaver (2009) reading is a process to determine, what the reader's brain, emotions and beliefs bring to the reading. It means that reading is the reader's way in interpreting the printed words. It is supported by Linse (2005) argues that reading is making sense of printed word.

Reading is defined as getting information from the text and interpretation. In other words, reading is the ability to draw from the printed text and interpret the informtion appropriately (Carnie, 1990). Carnie says that reading is the ability to get information from the text. According to Daiek, reading is an active process that depends on both an author's ability to convey meaning using words and your ability to create meaning from them (Anter Nancy, 2004). Based on theory of Daiek, reading is a process that depends on the skill of author to explain or convey the meaning in a text by using the words and how the author delivers the opinion to create new word or meaning of sentence and then explore it to be sentences or paragraph.

Speaking

There are many definitions of speaking in language learning proposed by some experts. Clark and Clark define that communication deals with two basic activities: listening and speaking. In speaking, people express their thoughts through words and talk about perceptions, feelings, and intentions they want other people to grasp and understand. Meanwhile Spratt (in Prucesia, 2013) points out that using speech to convey meaning to others is involved in speaking. Unlike writing or reading, speaking also involves interaction which carries out a two-way communication using language and nonverbal codes to keep the listener pays attention to what the speaker is saying and to check that the listener understand the speaker's meaning.

According to Chastain (in Surinah et al, 2015), speaking is a productive skill since it produces ideas, messages, and suggestion and we need to practice it. To increase the skill in communicating in English, it is not enough in the classroom but practice out side of the classroom. It will be influenced our speaking skill. Speaking in linguistics term has various definition. In Hornby, speaking means saying something to express ideas and opinion. According to Kushartanti (in Surinah et al, 2015) speaking is a set of voice uttered by one and understood by someone else. It means to deliver thought or opinion.

Listening

According to Nunan (in Dara et al, 2017), listening is a process of decoding the sounds that are heard from the phonemes to the text completely. Brown (in Dara et al, 2017) suggest that learning to listen really means learning to respond and continue responding to listening as a chain. Listening skills means the skill of listening in order to understand the meaning of what is being listened to. The process of listening will help learners to respond to what is being asked/said. Moreover, listening is the key to all affective communication; without the ability to listen effectively messages are easily misunderstood, communication breaks down and the sender of the message can easily become frustrated or irritated.

Writing

Writing is considered as a productive skill along with speaking (Harmer, 2007). When students deal with language production, it means that they should use their knowledge to produce the language to achieve a communicative purpose either in the form of spoken or written language.

As for writing skill, the context in terms of five aspects: task, situation organizer, writer, setting and materials. Ideally for communicative approach, all of these five aspects should be considered when defining writing ability, but it is not the case with most of studies on writing ability and the teaching of writing. The choice of context, therefore, is an issue (Jyi-Yeon, 2009).

Second Language Learning

Second language are any languages other than the learner's 'native language' or 'mother tongue'. They include both languages of wider communication encountered within the local region or community (e.g. at the workplace or in the media) and truly foreign languages, which have no immediately local uses or speakers. They may indeed be a second language learners are working with, in a literal sense, or they may be their third, fourth, or even fifth language (Mitchell and Myles, 1998). Therefore, 'second languages' are any languages learned later than in earliest childhood. They encompass both languages of wider communication encountered within the local region or community.

International Students

International students are those who have crossed borders for the purpose of study. (OECD, 2013). Several authors claim that international students, who have been previously raised and educated in cultural and social environments different from those of the host country, constitute an important source of diversity; they are rich resource for international education on college campuses, enriching not only student population but also campus culture and intellectual life stated by Choudaha et al (in Luo & Drake, 2013).

Arambawela, Hall, and Zuhair (in Wearing et al, 2015) found that the main factors influencing the satisfaction of international students are quality of education, facilities, the reputation of institution and their degree, possibility for better careers, and 'the overall customer value'. Most of international students report some degree of culture shock when they arrive and begin their studies typically manifested as stress, anxiety, and feelings of powerlessness, rejection and isolation stated by Oberg (in Zhao et al). Being exposed to new values, attitudes and behavior patterns is not necessarily debilitating, however; indeed, the experience can be transformative. In fact, some research shows that international students seem to be able to cope relatively well when faced with other stressful life events stated by Leong (in Zhao et al).

From the definition of International students above, it can be conclude that some of the international students may anxious with their learning process. It may be caused they had to live a new life with different background, culture, and language. It happens to the Thai students also. They took English language learning in Indonesia, so they have to learn both languages. They feel difficult to adapt both of the languages, then they become quite along the teaching-learning process.

The Nature of Anxiety

According Horwitz, Horwitz, and cope (1986) anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Furthermore, anxiety is one of psychological trouble, that may have some symptoms such as sweating, palpitations, worry, forgetfulness in language learning. Anxiety is general symptom that can be rooted in previous failure, being afraid to lose face, or lose face, or lacking of self confidence. Based Souad (2011) there are three types of anxiety. They are: trait anxiety, situation-specific anxiety, and state anxiety. Each of them have different level.

Anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object. Janassen & Grabowski (in Souad 2011: 29) conceptualized anxiety as two elements, worry and emotionally. Worry is associated with the cognitive component and emotionally with disagreeable sensations that one usually experiences for short duration. It can be conceptualized as “a state in which an individual is unable to instigate a clear pattern of behavior to remove or alter the event/object/interpretation that is threatening an existing goal”.

Brown (in Jafarigohar, 2012: 159) states that anxiety is a part of human emotion which includes fear and uncertainty, uneasiness and frustration or tension. Another definition comes from Spielberger (in Acharya, 2019: 74) that the term anxiety is most often used to describe an unpleasant state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of autonomic nervous system. Anxiety appears when someone feels worry about something, especially something which they don't understand. Language anxiety usually found in International students because they get to use foreign language as the second language.

Second or Foreign Language Anxiety

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's conceptualize foreign language 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” (Yukie Aida, 1994). Language learners usually express anxiety, apprehension and nervousness when learning a new language. Language anxiety can originate from learners' own sense of 'self', their self-related cognitions, language learning difficulties, differences in learners' and target language cultures, differences in social status of the speakers and interlocutors, and from the fear of losing self-identity. Consideration of language learners' anxiety reactions by a language teacher is deemed highly important in order to assist them to achieve the intended performance goals in the target language (Tanveer, in Hashemi, 2011).

MacIntyre (in Souad 2011) defines language anxiety as “the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language”. Another definition of language anxiety is stated by MacIntyre and Gardner (in Souad 2011: 31) as “the feeling of tension and apprehension specially associated with second language context, including speaking, listening, and learning”. Another definition of language anxiety with respect to foreign language anxiety was given by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (in Souad, 2011:) as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning.

Causes and Effects of Language anxiety is attributable to different causes. The primary sources of language anxiety explicated by Horwitz are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

1. Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people.
2. Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure.
3. Fear of negative evaluation seems similar with test anxiety but fear negative evaluation is broader in scope because it is not limited to test taking situation, rather, it may occur in any social.

Anxiety affects the curiosity of students which in turn reduces the functioning of cognitive abilities & capacities like logical thinking, keen observation, questioning etc. And because of these the comprehension as such is affected (Vazalwar, 2011). According to MacIntyr&Gardner (in Ying Zheng, 2008) Concept clarification and instrument validation greatly help to account for a better understanding of the effects of anxiety on second/foreign language learning and performance. These kinds of effects are projected on at least five aspects. First, academically, language anxiety is one of the best predictors of language proficiency. It seems clear that high levels of language anxiety are associated with low levels of academic achievement in second/foreign language learning.

Secondly, socially, learners with higher language anxiety have the tendency to avoid interpersonal communication more often than less anxious learners. This issue becomes even more prominent when the authentic communicative competence is emphasized in current language education.

Third, cognitively, anxiety can occur at any stage of language acquisition. Anxiety can become an affective filter that prevents certain information from entering a learners' cognitive processing system. Anxiety can influence both speed and accuracy of learning.

Fourth, anxiety arousal can impact the quality of communication output as the retrieval of information may be interrupted by the "freezing-up" moments that students encounter when they get anxious. Finally, personally, language learning experience could, under some circumstances, become a traumatic experience. This kind of unpleasant experience may deeply disturb one's self-esteem or self-confidence as a learner.

Strategies in Coping Language Anxiety

Based on Kondo and Yang investigation to develop a typology of strategies that students use to cope with language anxiety (Kondo, 2004), there are five categories in overcoming language anxiety. Those are: a. *Preparation*; refers to attempts at controlling the impending threat by improving learning and study strategies (e.g. studying hard, trying to obtain good summaries of lecture notes), b. *Relaxation*; involves tactics that aim at reducing somatic anxiety symptoms. Typical items are 'I take a deep breath' and 'I try to calm down', c. *Positive thinking*; characterized by its palliative function of suppressing problematic cognitive processes that underline students' anxiety (e.g. imagining oneself giving a great performance, trying to enjoy the tension), d. *Peer seeking*; distinguished by students' willingness to look for other students

who seem to have trouble understanding the class and/or controlling their anxiety (social comparison), e. *Resignation*; characterized by students' reluctance to do anything to alleviate their language anxiety (e.g. giving up, sleeping in the class).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative data method, conducted at IAIN Salatiga from November to December 2020. The subject were two Thai students at the third semester batch 2018, the students of English Education Department who took English language learning in IAIN Salatiga in the Academic Year 2019/2020. The subject was chosen because they were the International students in IAIN Salatiga who may feel anxious while learning English in class.

Research Participants

The participants of this study was the anxiety in English language learning among Thai students. There were three the Thai students at the third semester batch 2018, the students of English Education Department who took English language learning in IAIN Salatiga in the Academic Year 2019/2020. But unfortunately, one of them return to Thailand because of health problem. She did not continue her study in IAIN Salatiga. So the participant become only two Thai students. The researcher acquired the data from the observation and semi structured interview with two Thai students.

Research Design

This research used qualitative method. It provides rich descriptive accounts targeted to understanding a phenomenon, a process, ora a particular point of view from the perspective of those involved (Ary et al, 2010). It aims to describe how are events, processes, and activities perceived by participants.

Data Collections Instruments

The research instruments were observation and semi-structured interview. In observation, The researcher used a checklist data to find out the anxiety of the students. it needs two or three times to do the observation in two or three weeks, in November - December 2019.

In this study, the researcher observed the activities in the classroom, about the process of the reading lesson in English class. The researcher observed in a class that there are Thai students. The researcher observed about:

1. The researcher prepared the observation checklist based on the theory.
2. The reseacher tried to analyse the students during the observation.
3. The researcher made a remark on checklist.

Meanwhile in semi-structured interview, the researcher made an interview with Thai students in the third semester of IAIN Salatiga. The topic of the interview was about the Thai students' anxiety when they learn English language. The researcher asked about their communication in English learning class, their anxiety in English language learning, and their strategies to overcome their anxiety. The researcher made some questions based on the theory

and observation. The researcher made 15 questions and created probing questions during the interview. Then explored it into other questions to get insight of to the topic of the question.

Data Analysis Procedure

After collecting the data from observation and semi-structured interview, the result were validated. The reasercher choosed triangulation of technique. Triangulation of technique is a triangulation which uses many techniques to validate data. It was the technique of examining the validity of the data which used the things outside the data in order to examine the data and to compared the data between observation and interview. By this triangulation technique, the researcher compared the data from observation and interview. Also, will be collaborated with related theories.

FINDINGS

This part presents the findings from observation and semi-structured interview concerning with the problem statement based on this study. The findings were about describing the factors causing anxiety of Thai students in English language learning and how the strategies of Thai students in coping their anxiety in English language learning.

The researcher was going to explain the data resulted from observation and interview given to the two Thai students of English Education Department who had learned English language at the third semester of IAIN Salatiga. The data was gained from observation and interview. The interview questions were arranged based on theory of factors which affect learning based on FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) theory by Horwitz et al (in Khaidzir, 2015) and strategies in dealing the anxiety theory by Kondo.

The results from semi-structured interview show that factors caused anxiety among these two students almost the same. Both of them have the typical opinion about it. It was a little bit difficult to learn English language in Indonesia because English is the second language that used, the first language is Indonesian language where they do not really mastering on it. The teaching learning that used was still classical, where they were passive in class. The responses of the informants show that there are some factors causing anxiety, there were: Language limitations, Fear of making mistakes, Personal perception, Lack of confidence, and Lack of pronunciation.

There were some strategies that used by Thai students to overcome their anxiety in learning English language, as follows: Reading a lot, Study hard, Using dictionaries, Asking for help, and Sitting position.

DISCUSSION

The discussion was about collaborate in theories from the experts. Compared the data from observation and interview, then would be collaborated with related theories. This part

would discuss the two Thai students' responses toward the factors causing anxiety and the strategies in coping their anxiety in English language learning.

The Factors that Cause Anxiety in English Language Learning

After collecting the data from the Thai students' responses based on the observation and semi-structured interview. The researcher compared the data and collaborated them with related theories. Based on Horwitz's theory, the factors of anxiety divided into three classification, they were

Communication Apprehension

Based on the statements and compared with the theory from Horwitz that Communication comprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear of or any anxiety about communication with people. The researcher found that Thai students were lack of sociability caused from language limitations and difficult to response. It can be concluded from the statement:

"Kalau disana bahasa pengantarnya kan bahasa Thailand kak, kalo nggak paham itu bisa diomongin sama teman. Nah kalo disini susah kak, nggak paham bahasa Indonesia lagi terus kalo ngomong sama teman mau tanya-tanya gitu susah." (Thai language become the introductory language there, if I do not understand something, I can ask to my friends. But here, if I do not understand something, it is a little bit difficult to ask to my friends because I do not understand English language that well.) -Interview with second respondent on December 16, 2019.

From the observation in class, it could be seen that they were passive in the classroom. They did not mingle to the classmates or even interact the lecturer. They remained silent during the learning process. Sometimes the felt heartbeating or afraid of doing something in class such as reading an English text, speaking in English and pronouncing something. That was why anxiety appeared among Thai students.

Test Anxiety

The researcher classified the factors lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes as the test anxiety according to Horwitz theory. The responses from Thai students showed that they prefer to keep silent in class rather than being active because they were lack of confidence. As quoted from the statement:

"saya kebanyakan diam kak, soalnya nggak tahu mau ngomong apa. Susah juga mau ngomong ke teman, jadi lebih banyak diam." (I choose to be passive in class because I do not know what to speak. It is a little bit difficult to me to speak with my friend, so I become more passive in class.) -Interview with second respondent on December 16, 2019).

Thai students prefer to keep silent in class than being active, it because they were lack of confidence. They were nervous when the lecturer called out their name to ask them something. They also disappointed if they did not know the material clearly. They were shy to ask to their friend, but also shy if they asked to the lecturer during the class.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Thai students were afraid to speak sometimes because they were lack of pronunciation. From some English language learning skills, they always paid attention more to the pronunciation, and it made them anxious while learning English. Then it can be classified the factor lack of confidence as fear of negative evaluation based on Horwitz theory. As quoted by them:

“Takut salah pronounciation ketika berbicara.” (I’m afraid if I make mistake in speeling) –Interview with first respondent on December, 11 2019.

The biggest factor they felt difficult to learn English was the pronunciation. In every skills of English language learning, they always paid more attention to the pronunciation. It made them anxious while learning English.

The Strategies to Overcome Anxiety in English Language Learning

According to the theory from Kondo there were five strategies that students used to cope with language anxiety, they were: *preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking and resignation*. There were five strategies based on the theory, but there were only two strategies that done by Thai students in coping their anxiety. They were preparation and peer seeking

Preparation

Based from the semi-structured interview, they said that they studied hard. The differences of language affected their English learning in another country. They should study harder than other to get the point of what lecturers explained. Prepared the lesson before the class begin and finding new vocabularies also become part of study hard in preparation. They used dictionaries and learning through online media. When there was an English text that should be translated, she needed to translate it in Thai language first. It meant that she needed to work twice in translating an English text. It also happened when they wanted to speak or someone spoke to them in bahasa or in English, they needed to translate it into Thai first. That was how the way they thought.

They needed to open their dictionary often to expand their knowledge. They learning through online media as in google translate, google, youtube and so on. They also take a proper position to make sure that they could know what the lecturer were saying clearly. They also took a proper position to make sure that they could knew what the lecturers were explained clearly.

Peer Seeking

They asked for help to other students when they had some difficulties. They would ask to the same Thai students when the misunderstand something. If they did not get the answer, they would ask to the lecturer or even the domestic students.

CONCLUSION

The researcher found 3 factors that caused anxiety in English language learning, as follows:

1. Communication apprehension
 - a. Language limitations
 - b. Difficult to response
2. Test anxiety
 - a. Lack of confidence
 - b. Fear of making mistakes
3. Fear of negative evaluation
 - a. Lack of pronunciation

The researcher found two strategies from Thai students in coping their anxiety in English language learning, as follows:

1. Preparation
 - a. Study hard
 - b. Using dictionaries
 - c. Learning through media online
 - d. Sitting position
2. Peer seeking
 - a. Asking for help

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