

## **Non- English Language Teachers' Anxiety Towards the Usage of English Language in the Classroom**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The teaching of English as a second language (ESL) today takes place in a wide variety of contexts with learners coming from different language background. Educational institutions in Malaysia have always focused on promoting the quality of English language. Instead of focusing on students' and the language, this paper is set to investigate the quandary faced by the educators themselves, in this case, the non-English teachers in POLISAS and their uneasiness in using the language. An earlier study by Horwitz (1996) indicated that anxiety can slow down a teacher's ability to effectively present the target language, interact with students and serve as positive role model to the students. Furthermore, teachers with higher levels of language anxiety may also communicate negative messages with the students. For this study, 100 non-English teachers are chosen. The distributed questionnaires which cover three anxiety levels: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The data collected were then analyzed and the results indicated that all aforementioned anxiety levels are in medium range. The findings also implied that gender plays no role in this study thus refute Spielberger's that females are more emotionally stable Besides it also shows that the higher the teaching experience one has, the less anxiety he/she will experience. It is also found out that teachers with a higher level of proficiency suffer less hassle. The paper concludes with the overall summary and implications of the study.

*Keywords:* Teacher, language use, anxiety.

### **Introduction**

Being a teacher is more than just teaching and giving input to students. There are overwhelming responsibilities that are expected to be carried out by teachers. It is important for the teachers to be able to convey the knowledge to the learners, as they are the core reason why a teacher's job exists. Horwitz (1996) stated that teachers who suffer higher levels of foreign language anxiety are likely to employ the minimum use of the target language in the classroom. Foreign language anxiety can also slow down a teacher's ability to effectively present the target language, interact with students and serve as a positive role model to the learners. The reluctance of many polytechnic lecturers to use English language is quite understandable as English is not their first language. The implementation of English as a medium of instruction in the process of teaching and learning in all polytechnics in Malaysia has started in 2008. Since then, it is expected of all content lecturers to be using the target language in the classroom.

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As part of the requirement by the Department of Polytechnic Education, all lecturers are expected to be observed and evaluated at least once a year by a higher-ranking staff. One of the criteria being observed is Empowerment of English Language in Teaching and Learning, which carries 15% of their total score. Lecturers are expected to fully use English in the classroom, are easily understood and use assessments and teaching materials that are in English. It is, therefore, critical for them to prepare themselves to be fully equipped with good English language proficiency, in addition to the existing responsibilities as a teacher. When the non- English language lecturers may be very competent in the subject matter, they may not be able to teach effectively due to the language constraint and eventually resort to teaching in their mother tongue. Such anxiety is common among teachers who have low English language proficiency. This, as a result, causes teaching anxiety among these teachers and would affect the learners at not being given enough exposure to the use of English language.

### **Research Objectives**

This study tries to identify the overall second language anxiety among the technical lecturers in polytechnics. It also aims to determine the level of anxiety in relation to the factors that contribute to anxiety namely Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation as stated in FLCAS (Horwitz, 1986).

### **Research Questions**

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the overall anxiety of the technical teachers in polytechnics based on the three factors: Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation?
2. What is the level of teachers' anxiety based on the three factors: Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation?
3. Is there any relationship or correlation between English Proficiency and experience with the teachers' anxiety teaching in English?

### **Methodology**

This study is quantitative in nature as it involves the validation of a survey instrument. There were 100 respondents involved in this study. The respondents were lecturers from Politeknik Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah who taught in five different main departments namely Mechanical Engineering Department, Civil Engineering Department, Electric and Electrical Engineering Department, Commerce Department, and Food and Technology Department. The respondents were required to answer a set of 33 items regarding the contributing factors of anxiety in second language teaching. Applying convenience sampling technique, researchers distributed 150 questionnaires and out of this number, 108 were responded. 8 questionnaires were then discarded due to missing values and poor data quality.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part is Demographic Background which identifies the respondents' gender, teaching experience, background of English, age and department. The second part is adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It uses the measurement scale of foreign language anxiety called FLACS (Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale) introduced by Horwitz (1983). The FLACS consisted of three different factors that contribute to the feeling of anxiety in language classroom which was the Communication apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Test Anxiety. Table 1 below shows the respondents' profile.

**Table 1**  
*Profile of Respondents*

| Variable                    |                    | Freq | %    |     |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|------|------|-----|
| Gender                      | Male               | 39   | 39.0 |     |
|                             | Female             | 61   | 61.0 |     |
| Teaching Experience (years) | 1                  | 7    | 7.0  |     |
|                             | 2                  | 12   | 12.0 |     |
|                             | 3                  | 16   | 16.0 |     |
|                             | 4                  | 12   | 12.0 |     |
|                             | 5                  | 14   | 14.0 |     |
|                             | 6                  | 13   | 13.0 |     |
|                             | 7                  | 12   | 12.0 |     |
|                             | 9                  | 3    | 3.0  |     |
|                             | 10                 | 5    | 5.0  |     |
|                             | 11                 | 2    | 2.0  |     |
|                             | 12                 | 2    | 2.0  |     |
|                             | 13                 | 1    | 1.0  |     |
|                             | 15                 | 1    | 1.0  |     |
|                             | SPM result (grade) | 1    | 1    | 1.0 |
|                             |                    | 2    | 8    | 8.0 |
| 3                           |                    | 11   | 11.0 |     |
| 4                           |                    | 15   | 15.0 |     |
| 5                           |                    | 34   | 34.0 |     |
| 6                           |                    | 20   | 20.0 |     |
| 7                           |                    | 11   | 11.0 |     |
| MUET result (band)          | 1                  | 5    | 5.0  |     |
|                             | 2                  | 41   | 41.0 |     |
|                             | 3                  | 37   | 37.0 |     |
|                             | 4                  | 12   | 12.0 |     |
|                             | 5                  | 4    | 4.0  |     |
|                             | 6                  | 1    | 1.0  |     |

### Literature Review

Responding to the growing need to cultivate communicative abilities in English, academic institutions need to come up with a variety of approaches to further enhance the grasp of English language among students. This includes the use of English in the teaching and learning of all courses. However, many teachers might not be adequately prepared to conduct lessons in English, thus improving their English language proficiency and teaching skills have become a matter of concern.

Generally, anxiety is seen as the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry, associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Spielberger, 1983). Dörnyei (2005) indicates two types of anxiety: trait anxiety (a stable predisposition to become anxious in an a cross-section of situations) and state anxiety (the transient, moment-to-moment experience of anxiety as an emotional reaction to the current situation).

The term specific anxiety reaction, according to Horwitz, (1986), was given by psychologist to distinguish anxiety that occurs only in specific situations and anxiety that people feel on regular basis. Foreign language anxiety is viewed as related to communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

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Communication apprehension is the anxiety experienced in interpersonal settings, found to be related to both learning and recall vocabulary items (Gardner, Lalonde et al., 1987; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Therefore, individuals with high level of communication apprehension appear to be at disadvantage from the outset because basic vocabulary learning and production are impaired. The frustration experienced by an individual being unable to communicate a message can lead to apprehension about future attempts to communicate.

Daly (1991) found that learners experience more language anxiety in highly evaluative situations or test anxiety. It is also found that the more unfamiliar and ambiguous the test tasks and formats, the higher the prevailing level of language anxiety (Young, 1991).

Aydin (2008) stated that there are three varieties in foreign language anxiety. Communication apprehension occurs in cases where learners lack mature communication skills although they have mature ideas and thoughts. It refers to a fear of getting into real communication with others. Test anxiety, on the other hand, is an apprehension towards academic evaluation. It could be defined as a fear of failing in tests and an unpleasant experience held either consciously or unconsciously by learners in many situations. Finally, fear of negative evaluation is observed when foreign language learners feel incapable of making the proper social impression and it is an apprehension towards evaluations by others and avoidance of evaluative situations.

McCroskey (1986) found a significant negative correlation between communication apprehension and willingness to communicate. In other words, the greater the anxiety is, the less likely the person will be willing to communicate. There is strong belief that communication apprehension is learned and is based on expectancies for success in communicating. When expectations are consistently confirmed, a person develops confidence. If, however, expectations are repeatedly inaccurate and there is a need to produce new expectations each time, apprehension will result (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987).

Conway and Huang (2007) stated that even good learners experience anxiety when learning a second language as it can cause a mental block to elicit new information. Similarly, a teacher who teaches a content subject should be competent in their field, but not necessarily in their second language. Teachers can be found to only experience anxiety because of the use a target language, and not because of their capability in teaching.

There are five interconnected variables that can trigger language anxiety, according to Daubney (2002). The five variables are speaking activities, motivation, self-esteem, inhibition and risk taking. Inevitably, these are what teachers would commonly encounter in a classroom setting, therefore leading them to experience language anxiety.

### Findings

The data for this study has been analysed by SPSS. The Distribution of scores is based on three different levels. The high level of division is (3.00-4.00), while medium (2.00-2.99) and low (1.00-1.99).

Table 2 shows 68 percent of the respondents' Overall Level of Anxiety is at medium level, with a mean of the respondents is (2.76). The Overall Level of Anxiety also indicates 3 percent is at low and 29 percent is at high.

Table 2 also shows the anxiety level and total mean value for each anxiety factor. The results indicate that respondents' Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation is at medium level with 67 percent, 70 percent and 58 percent respectively. Similarly, the total mean value for each factor is 2.85, 2.67 and 2.81, respectively.

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Table 2  
*Anxiety Level for Each Factor*

| Anxiety Factors             | Level   |           |           | Total Mean Value |
|-----------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
|                             | Low     | Medium    | High      |                  |
| Communication Apprehension  | 4<br>4% | 67<br>67% | 29<br>29% | 2.85             |
| Test Anxiety                | 7<br>7% | 70<br>70% | 23<br>23% | 2.67             |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 9<br>9% | 58<br>58% | 33<br>33% | 2.81             |
| Overall Level of Anxiety    | 3<br>3% | 68<br>68% | 29<br>29% | 2.76             |

The result of comparison analysis for English Language Anxiety and Teaching Experience is shown in Table 3. As all p-values are less than 0.05, it indicates that there is a significant association between each Anxiety Factors and Teaching Experience. The (-) negative sign for each r value indicates a negative association between English Language Anxiety and Teaching Experience. As the teaching experience increases, the English Anxiety level decreases. However, the two variables are not strongly correlated,  $r = -0.274$ ,  $p = \leq 0.05$ .

Table 3  
*Statistical Analysis: Correlation between English Language Anxiety and Teaching Experience*

| Anxiety Factors             | Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) | P-value |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Communication Apprehension  | -0.288                              | 0.004   |
| Test Anxiety                | -0.269                              | 0.007   |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | -0.228                              | 0.023   |
| Overall Level of Anxiety    | -0.274                              | 0.006   |

\*Significant where  $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$

The statistical analysis ANOVA is used to analyse and determine whether there are any significant differences between the means of three anxiety factors where the data presented. Table 4 and 5 show the analysis of one-way ANOVA for each anxiety factor. The F value for SPM is 4.41, while MUET is 7.70. Since all the P-values are less than 0.05, there is a significant different between SPM and MUET for the three anxiety factors.

Table 4

*Statistical Analysis: One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) - SPM*

|                             | F     | P-value |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Communication Apprehension  | 5.358 | 0.000   |
| Test Anxiety                | 3.719 | 0.002   |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 3.238 | 0.006   |
| Overall Level of Anxiety    | 4.407 | 0.001   |

\*Significant where  $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ 

Table 5

*Statistical Analysis: One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) - MUET*

|                             | F     | P-value |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Communication Apprehension  | 8.258 | 0.000   |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 7.279 | 0.000   |
| General Feeling of Anxiety  | 6.058 | 0.000   |
| Overall Level of Anxiety    | 7.702 | 0.000   |

\*Significant where  $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ 

### Discussion

The Overall Result of Anxiety shows that 68 percent of the teachers are at medium level of anxiety when it comes to teaching in English. The teachers' anxiety factors (Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation) are also found to be at medium level. This study also suggests that teaching experience does contribute to teacher's English language anxiety where the more experienced a teacher is, the less anxiety he experiences. Besides experience, English language background also has significant effects on the level of anxiety. As the result presented suggests that the higher achievement in SPM and MUET, the lower level of English language anxiety the teachers experience.

This result supports Horwitz's (1996) who stated that many non-native language teachers experience foreign language anxiety and this anxiety can have negative consequences for language teaching. The frustration experienced by an individual unable to communicate a message can lead to apprehension about future attempts to communicate.

Teachers' anxiety may influence teaching performance in many ways, by causing teachers to worry, feel uncertain, and have tensions while teaching in the classroom. Those with limited English proficiency always find a weakness of themselves teaching in English. As their core business is the content subject, this frustration is inevitable.

The best practice that can be highlighted is a continuous and extended use of English language in and beyond the classroom. As it is evident that experience does affect a teacher's English language anxiety, one should be willing to encounter more English language usage. It is important to develop confidence and self-esteem, and a relaxed environment reduces anxiety, which in turn improves motivation and confidence (Smith & Strong, 2009).

### Limitation & Recommendation

This study has its own limitation. As it involved only the technical teachers in one polytechnic, the results obtained do not reflect the whole polytechnics technical teachers in Malaysia. There was also only a total number of 100 respondents in Politeknik Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah who responded to this study. Thus the results of this study cannot be generalized to all the technical teachers in the institution. It is recommended that in future research, sampling from more polytechnics and bigger number of respondents should be involved.

This study is also limited to only two variables that possibly affect language anxiety. Future research could include more variables such as gender, support from employers or classroom evaluation.

### Conclusion

This study is carried out to identify the overall level of anxiety and the level of anxiety of three contributing factors which are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. It also aims to determine the relationship between the teaching experience and English proficiency with the second language anxiety.

Anxiety among teachers over their second language proficiency is likely a primary reason that classrooms slip easily from the target language into English. It is essential that the phenomenon of language avoidance be given greater attention. The value of second language is reduced if the teacher is reluctant to use it. Second language anxiety among teachers is a serious concern because it has the potential to affect the way teachers teach, the amount of the language students receive, and the role models to whom role model learners are exposed. In order to achieve the goal of using English in the classroom, teachers need to be proficient in the four language skills which are writing, speaking, listening and reading. This can be achieved through practice, and of course requires more effort from the teachers.

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