COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AMONG PART ONE BUSINESS STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM) KELANTAN

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ABSTRACT

Students who face communicative anxiety have either fear or uneasiness about their learning experience. This kind of feelings has hindered and impeded the language learning process and their abilities to perform well in any oral presentation. This present study aims at exploring the factors that lead to communication apprehension among Part One Diploma students from Business and Management Faculty, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Kelantan, Malaysia from psychological and socio-cultural perspectives. The study which involved 51 ESL students is conducted through a survey method using a set of questionnaire. The data were analysed using the SPSS statistical computer package (Statistical Package for Social Science). The means and percentages of each item in the questionnaire were used to look at the factors which contribute to communicative anxiety among the learners. The study revealed that both psychological and socio-cultural factors do affect English learners' communication apprehension.

Keywords: Anxiety, Communication Apprehension, Psychological Factors, Socio-cultural Factors

INTRODUCTION:

In this day and age, globalisation is coercing entrepreneurs to thoroughly and prudently contemplate their oral communication skills. The international as well as domestic marketplaces insist clear, unambiguous and culturally inclusive oral communication types. This is pertinent as there is overwhelming evidence that good oral competency can make an entrepreneur more all-round and versatile, hence become more competitive in today's job market (Devi & Farah, 2008). In relation to this, Allen (2002) claims that oral communication is extensively acknowledged as vital to the personal, academic, professional and civic lives of graduates. Communication apprehension (CA) is seen as a detrimental and unfavourable factor in acquiring the second language wherein it is seen as a pattern of anxiety which can affect the university students' participation and interaction in the English classrooms (Thaher, 2005). These fear and anxiety, according to Devi & Farah (2008), are then, associated with real or anticipated communication with another person or people in which it can be produced by simply considering or anticipating having to communicate.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The Academy of Language Studies of Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) offers ELC120, _Integrated Language Skills: Listening_ which is designed to build listening, speaking and reading skills to help students perform effectively and competently in the social and academic context. It is a 4-credit course wherein the course aims to raise the level of proficiency in the language to the intermediate level. Moreover, it emphasises the ability of the students to exploit the language using a variety of materials in varied situations. As the aims are accomplished through an increase in students' lexical density, an apt consideration to the development of higher-level grammatical construction, vocabulary expansion and extensive reading activities have been taken into account.

English lecturers of Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) often complain about the level of students' participation as well as interaction in English classrooms. Notwithstanding the fact that English Language is a medium of instruction at the tertiary level, many students, including the final year graduates, still endeavour and struggle to communicate in the target language' (Wan Zumusni, Noriah, Deepak & Suhaidi, 2009). According to Thaher (2005), one of the lecturers from English Department in An-Najah National University, Palestine, the lecturers look forward to their students to engage in class discussions, speak audibly, ask and answer questions and also read. Nevertheless, the researcher herself has found that these second language learners are reluctant to participate in as they are shy and afraid to lose face in front of their peers. They are said as not being confident and feeling at ease using the target language. Indeed, they are only keen to participate if they are encouraged and being called upon to participate in classroom activities. Thus, the students are unsuccessful to accomplish the course objectives.

Additionally, living in an educational world when orality is seen as a need demands good communication skills in English. Even so, learners of English time and again show poor results in English subject. This is apparent based on the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) 2006 results which indicate one-third of students who graduated from public universities have very low English Language proficiency. In fact, 29.2% of the 120,000 graduates scored Band One and Two in the MUET, which identifies them as "Extremly Limited User" and "Limited User" respectively (Chapman, 2007). According to Tanveer (2007), these poor performance arise as the second language learners often express a feeling of stress, nervousness or anxiety while learning to speak English and they also claim to have a 'mental block' against learning English. The problems lamentably, are experienced by the beginners as well as the more advanced learners. Though they exhibit compulsive and mesmerizing efforts, these attempts still do not lead to these second language learners' intended performance.

Last but not least, lack of interests and desires in learning English is another issue which play a part in hindering the language learning process. Motivation is an influential factor in second language learning. Hilsdon (1997) proposes teachers commonly use nominalization in order to focus attention and select an individual. A warm and sympathetic atmosphere, therefore, can lessen the students' fear and tension. In relation to this, Harmer (1983) adds if the students find the methods the teacher applies are boring, they will lose motivation and have negative attitudes towards learning the target language. Teachers, consequently, have responsibilities to create an atmosphere of acceptance and security to boost their students' motivation in learning English.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

This study specifically intends to answer the following research questions:
1. Do psychological factors lead to communication apprehension in English classrooms?

2. Do socio-cultural factors result in communication apprehension among English learners?

LITERATURE REVIEW:
COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AS A CONSTRUCT:

Speaking skills are so focal to our thinking about language learning as when we refer to "speaking" a language, we often mean "knowing the language" (Arnold, 2000). MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) claim many researchers have pointed out that the skill which producing most anxiety and worry is speaking. Hence, "one of the most studied topics in the field of speech communication is the tendency on the part of some people to avoid, and even, fear, communicating orally" (Daly, 1991, p.3).

The early proponents, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) define CA as a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people. Besides, it is also imparted that CA relates to communicative incompetence which stems from anxiety or fear (McCroskey, 1982). Moreover, Berger, McCroskey & Baldwin (1984) emphasise that it is the way a person feels about communication, not how they communicate.

According to McCroskey & Andersen (1976), CA has been shown to have harmful effects on learner's achievement in interaction-oriented classrooms, such as foreign language classrooms. In line with the previous statement, Thaher (2005) claims CA is a pattern of anxiety which can affect the students' oral communication and thus the students' achievement. On the whole, most of the research in speech communication area is based on McCroskey's conceptualization of CA as an individual's level of fear associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person (McCroskey, 1977 as cited in Feigenbaum, 2007).

FACTORS OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION:

The factors of CA will be discussed thoroughly from the psychological and socio-cultural perspectives. The psychological factors which lead to CA are strongly linked with learners' sense of 'self' and language classroom environment. The socio-cultural factors, on the other hand, stems from social and communicative aspects of language learning.

From the psychological perspective, the concept of learners' sense of 'self' poses as much of a threat and is likely to challenge an individual's competence in communicating which may lead to embarrassment (Horwitz et al., 1986). Self-concept is defined as the totality of an individual's thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and values having reference to himself as object (Laine, 1987). However, Laine's basic conception of self-concept is distinct from the one that Horwitz et al. (1986) have proposed which only puts an emphasis on the anxiety in oral communication.

Besides, Tanveer (2007) proposes the term self-esteem has been used in much the same meaning as self-concept and has been found to be strongly linked with language anxiety. In relation to this, Krashen (1980, as cited in Tanveer, 2007) claims people with low self-esteem are concerned about what their peers think about them; they are worried with pleasing others and this contributes anxiety in a lot of people. On the contrary, individuals who have high levels of self-esteem are less likely to be anxious than those with low self-esteem (Horwitz, 1986).

As language learning poses a threat to learner's self-concept, in response learners may generate some particular beliefs about language learning and its use (Tanveer, 2007). According to a research done by Horwitz et al. (1986), certain beliefs about language learning play a part to the student's tension and frustration in the class. These beliefs are most likely to originate from learners' perfectionist nature in which the perfectionist ones like to speak flawlessly, with no grammatical and pronunciation errors, and as easily as native speakers. These high or ideal standards create ideal conditions for the development of language anxiety (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990 as cited in Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

Horwitz (1998) in Ohata (2005) noted a number of beliefs derived from the learner's irrational and unrealistic conceptions about language learning, such as 1) some students believe that accuracy must be sought before saying anything in the foreign language, 2) some attach great importance to speaking with excellent native (L1), 3) others believe that it is not ok to guess an unfamiliar second or foreign language word, 4) some hold that language learning is basically an act of translating from English or any second or foreign language, 5) some view that two years are sufficient in order to gain fluency in the target language and, 6) some believe that language learning is a special gift not possessed by all.

Additionally, different teaching and learning activities in the classrooms, particularly ones that insist students to speak in front of the whole class, have been found to be the most anxiety provoking. Koch and Terrell (1991) in Horwitz (2001) found that more than half of their subjects in their Natural Approach classes, a language teaching method specifically designed to reduce learner's anxiety, expressed that giving a presentation in the

class, oral skits and discussion in large groups are the most anxiety-producing activities. They also found that students get more anxious when called upon to respond individually, rather than if they are given choice to respond voluntarily. Moreover, students were found to be more relaxed when speaking using the target language when paired with a classmate or put into small groups of three to six than into larger groups of seven to fifteen students. Similarly, Young (1991) found that more than sixty-eight percent of her subjects reported feeling more comfortable when they did not have to get in front of the class to speak. Thus, when it deals with measuring language anxiety mainly in oral communication, learning environments where students are engaged in must be taken into consideration.

From the socio-cultural perspectives, status is a significant concern in individuals' interaction with one another in social relationships. There exist status relationships between the speaker and the hearer in any social context in which they carry a significant impact on language and language use and Tanveer (2007) considers this as an important aspect in social interaction. However, Carrier (1999) posts one critical question as to whether in face-to-face interaction receiver apprehension can be triggered by the particular status relationship between the interlocutors in any setting. He then further states that the effects of status in terms of perceived power over another can also effectively silence a person in a conversation.

Anchored in the Theory of Social Interaction proposed by Wolfson (1989), inequality of status or social distance disfavour attempts at negotiation, and it can have a profound impact on conversational interaction. Likewise, studies of classroom interaction on the pattern of social relationship discover that the social relationship between teachers and students gives them an unequal status relationship as interlocutors can delay successful second language comprehension, production and ultimately acquisition (Pica, 1987 as cited in Tanveer, 2007).

Lastly, second language learners may also feel anxious and worried due to the fear of social embarrassment and a threat to their social identity. These learners' fear of losing self-identity and retaining positive self-image is infuriated when their attitudes towards the target language community and culture are hostile (Dewaele, 2002).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
RESEARCH DESIGN:

This study is conducted through a survey method using a set of questionnaire as it is 'to identify important beliefs and views of the second language learners of English' (Creswell, 2008). This research design is used as the researcher attempts to carry out a quantitative study on the communication apprehension among diploma students of Business and Management Faculty. The study focuses on the factors which make speaking English in some circumstances difficult than in others. Thus, this study seeks to apprehend the phenomenon of communication apprehension from the perspectives of the learner's own self and from the language learning process or from the social settings the learners are part of. As the study is based on the individuals' opinions and beliefs about communicative anxiety, a cross-sectional survey design is utilized. Therefore, this study is a descriptive research.

SAMPLING:

The participants of the study consist of 51 Part One Diploma students from Business and Management Faculty of University Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Kelantan. They were selected through simple random sampling wherein each student has an equal probability of being selected from the population (Creswell, 2008). These 51 students will be the representative of the whole population of Part One Business students in UiTM Kelantan. The respondents' background profile which includes gender and place of living was presented according to its independent variables as shown in the tables below:

Table 1.0: Respondents' Background Profile

Respondent's Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender: Male	21	41.2
Female	30	58.8
Place of Living: City	19	37.3
Village	32	62.7

As the study focuses on communication apprehension in English as a Second Language context, the subjects need to register for ELC120, *Integrated Language Skills: Listening* as a compulsory subject for them. One of

the components in the syllabus requires the subject to perform a role-play task, and this will determine their speaking anxiety while performing the oral task. Since all participants have to perform this oral task, the researcher then opts to randomly pick the subjects of the study by assigning a number to each individual before doing the sampling technique.

DATA COLLECTION:

The instrument that is used in this study is questionnaire. This instrument is easy to conduct and will not require much time in gathering all types of information needed. This questionnaire used is being adapted from Thaher (2005) as the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.813 when it was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha formula. The questionnaire comprises 35 items and the items are categorized into the themes below:

No.	Themes	Items
1	Psychological Factors that lead to CA in ESL classroom	1-19
2	Socio-cultural Factors that result in CA in ESL classroom	20-35

All of the items request the subjects to select the level of agreement to the statements from the options:
- (SA) Strongly Agree
- (A)   Agree
- (N)   Neither Agree nor Disagree
- (D)   Disagree
- (SD)   Strongly Disagree

PROCEDURES IN COLLECTING THE DATA:

Since this survey uses a self-administered questionnaire, the researcher delivered the set of questionnaire by hand to the participants. In order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants who participate in the study, they were told that the questionnaire would be used for the research purposes only. The participants were also able to freely give their views and opinions without being conscious that they are being observed or judged. All information and opinions gathered were classified as confidential and the respondents are not required to include their personal identification such as name and address. Besides, the researcher also reminded the participants to be as objective as possible as there is no correct answer and there is no time limitation for the participants in answering the questionnaire.

PILOT STUDY:

The researcher pilot tests the items in the questionnaire to determine that the individuals in the sample are capable of completing the survey and the most significant thing is they understand the questions (Creswell, 2008). In this pilot test, the researcher selected 5 students to respond to the items in the questionnaire. After they have completed answering the questionnaire, the subjects in the pilot study needed to give comments on the instrument. These feedbacks were constructive and useful for the researcher so as to improve the questions in which some changes and modifications will be made before sending out the questionnaire to the sample of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The data were analysed using the SPSS statistical computer package (Statistical Package for Social Science). The means and percentages of each item in the questionnaire were used to look at the factors which contribute to communicative anxiety among the learners. The summaries of the findings obtained are presented in form of tables so that the data presentation is more systematic, and it will reveal the causal factors of communication apprehension from both psychological and socio-cultural perspectives. The researcher has used the following ranks for the data analysis:

80% and more	: very high degree
70% - 79.9%	: high
60% – 69.9%	: moderate
50% - 59.9%	: low
Less than 50%	: very low

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AND COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION:

The table below presents the means, percentages and ranks of students' responses for 19 items under psychological domain.

Table 2.0: Means, Percentages and Ranks of the Factors that Lead to
Communication Apprehension for Psychological Domain

No	Item	No. in Questionnaire	Means	Percentages (%)	Ranks
1.	I like the sound of the English language.	5	4.36	87.2	Very high
2.	I would rather listen to a good lecture or a speech in English.	1	4.06	81.2	Very high
3.	The English teachers' gender doesn't affect my classroom participation.	3	4.06	81.2	Very high
4.	I don't like making strange sounds in the English classroom.	2	4.02	80.4	Very high
5.	I feel relaxed to speak English when I prepare.	9	3.92	78.4	High
6.	I like talking with foreign people in English.	6	3.78	75.6	High
7.	I am afraid of making errors when I speak in English classes.	11	3.76	75.2	High
8.	My desire to speak English is more than my desire to write or read it.	15	3.73	74.6	High
9.	I feel better to communicate in English with a female instructor.	18	3.65	73.0	High
10.	I am a timid person by nature and I get nervous easily.	10	3.63	72.6	High
11.	I feel shy to speak English in front of male students.	13	3.02	60.4	Moderate
12.	My voice is not pleasant to hear.	12	2.94	58.8	Low
13.	I feel better to communicate in English with a male instructor.	19	2.94	58.8	Low
14.	In English large classes, I feel neglected.	17	2.9	58.0	Low
15.	I make a fool of myself when I speak up English in the class.	7	2.84	56.8	Low
16.	I don't like English people but I like learning English.	14	2.75	55.0	Low
17.	I feel afraid to discuss my problems with my English teacher outside the classroom.	4	2.67	53.4	Low
18.	I feel shy to speak English in front of female students.	16	2.5	50.0	Low
19.	In order not to participate in the English class, I like to sit at the back rows.	8	2.37	47.4	Very low
Psychological Factors Domain			3.36	67.2	Moderate

Table 2.0 presents the means, percentages and ranks of the psychological factors which lead to communication apprehension. The results show that the students' responses in this particular domain are moderate with a mean of 3.36 and a percentage of 67.2. From the data, it was found that the students' responses are very high on items 1, 2, 3 and 5, and high on items 6, 9, 10, 11, 15 and 18. However, the students show a moderate response only on item 13 while the responses are low on items 4, 7, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 19. Lastly, the responses are very low

on item 8. Thus, based on the findings, it can be summarised that most of the respondents believe psychological factors do moderately affect their oral communication activities.

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS AND COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION:

The table below presents the means, percentages and ranks of students' responses for 16 items under socio-cultural domain.

Table 3.0: Means, Percentages and Ranks of the Factors that Result in Communication Apprehension for Socio-cultural Domain

No.	Item	No. in Questionnaire	Means	Percentages (%)	Ranks
1.	In our culture, people should ask and search.	20	4.32	86.4	Very high
2.	My religion encourages me to learn the language of other people.	21	4.24	84.8	Very high
3.	English is the language of knowledge and civilization, so its learning is essential for all.	24	4.24	84.8	Very high
4.	People who know to speak English are respected in our society.	22	3.98	79.6	High
5.	My family encourages me to speak English.	34	3.953	79.06	High
6.	I must speak good English in order to be judged a competent person.	23	3.72	74.4	High
7.	The English society is more developed than the Malaysian society.	25	3.22	64.4	Moderate
8.	When I speak English, I feel that I am superior.	28	3.16	63.2	Moderate
9.	I don't like the attitude of English people towards the Malaysians.	27	3.12	62.4	Moderate
10.	English is necessary to tell people in the world about the Malaysian problem.	33	3.116	62.32	Moderate
11.	I hate the English people because they occupied our homelands in the past.	26	2.72	54.4	Low
12.	I like to speak English in large classes in order to be famous	35	2.279	45.58	Very low
13.	In my culture, girls shouldn't ask questions.	31	1.907	38.14	Very low
14.	I will lose my Malaysian identity if I speak English.	29	1.86	37.2	Very low
15.	Group work is not encouraged in our society.	32	1.837	36.74	Very low
16.	English is not important for my future profession.	30	1.535	30.7	Very low
Socio-cultural Factors Domain			3.076	61.5	Moderate

Table 3.0 shows the means, percentages and ranks of the factors that lead to communication apprehension for socio-cultural domain. The results show that the students' responses in the socio-cultural factors domain are moderate with a mean of 3.076 and a percentage of 61.5. The students' responses are very high on items 20, 21 and 24 whereas the responses are high on items 22, 23 and 34. In addition, most of the students show a moderate response on items 25,27,28,33 while the responses are low on item 26. Last but not least, the responses are very low on items 29, 30, 31, 32 and 35. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students deem that socio-cultural aspects contribute moderate effect on their communication apprehension.

CONCLUSION:

The major purposes of this study are to find out whether psychological and socio-cultural factors have an effect on the matter of English learners, Diploma Part One students from Business and Management Faculty UiTM Kelantan feel apprehensive or fretful as they learn how to speak English. The findings of the study indicate that the mean of psychological factors domain was 3.36, while the mean of socio-cultural factors domain was 3.076. Hence, these answer the research questions that both psychological and socio-cultural factors do have effects on English learners' communication apprehension.

The findings of this study have shed light on the difficulties and worries concerned with students' poor participation and interaction in English classrooms. It plays an imperative role in learning English as a second language because it can either be beneficial or detrimental according to how intensely it is felt by the learners (Thaher, 2005). She also adds a certain degree of CA is inevitable and predictable even though it fluctuates from individual to individual. As the fear and uneasiness towards speaking English can hinder the language learning process, the factors which cause these problems should be revealed.

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