Students' English learning anxiety and their English achievement

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Abstract: This study sought the relationship between students' English learning anxiety in the classroom and their English achievement. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was used to collect the data from 122 respondents. The descriptive analysis revealed that the level of anxiety was moderate whereas the achievement was average. The result of comparative analysis showed that there was a significant difference of both variables based on gender. Correlative analysis revealed that there was a significant correlation between both variables. The result showed that the respondents experienced anxiety in the classroom, and it affected their English learning. The finding indicated that the lower their anxiety, the better they learned English.

Keywords: anxiety, English learning

Introduction

Anxiety is the feelings of uncomfortable, tension and apprehension one experiences in facing certain situations which is considered challenging or threatening (Aydin et.al. 2006; Passer & Smith, 2004). According to Brown (2000) anxiety is one of the psychological factors that influence English language learning. Learning English is challenging, especially in EFL context, including Indonesia. According to Katemba (2013), Indonesian students who are learning English find it difficult to express their ideas when interacting with other students and it was caused by anxiety. Therefore it is very important to carry out studies on English learning anxiety in EFL context such as Sulawesi Utara, Indonesia.

Ansari (2015) found out that anxiety in speaking hindered the students in getting involve in speech and discovered that the students were unwilling to communicate because of their perspectives that they were not good in English. And as the result, they tend to choose silent than to speak the words or utterances. Oxford (1999) stated that once learners suffer in speaking, due to the mistakes they commit, they tend to avoid speaking. Students experience anxiety not only when they perform the language but when they are having test as well. Salehi and Marefat (2014) reported that there was a correlation between foreign language anxiety and test anxiety. The result of both variables were related to each other. In other words, if the language anxiety are high then the test anxiety will be high.

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), there are three components of foreign language anxiety. The first is communication apprehension which is defined as "a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people" (p. 127). Because speaking is one of the most important skills in English language learning, anxiety in speaking therefore should become one of the most important aspect to be noted in learning English. The realization of this type of anxiety is all kinds of public speaking performance as well as both group and individual speaking performances.

The second component is test anxiety. It is defined as "a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure" (p. 127). This anxiety is experienced when the students are afraid of the result of the test because of their insufficient understanding of the English lesson or because of their awareness about the result of the test that they might possibly get. Sometime poor test performance in the past might trigger this type of anxiety. Being anxious during English test can prevent the students from answering the questions effectively.

The last is fear of negative evaluation, it the "apprehension about others' evaluation, avoidance of evaluation situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (p. 128). The students sometimes choose to not to speak and become quiet because they assume negatively about others' perceptions toward them or because they perceive that they are not able to impress others with their poor competence (Park & Lee, 2004).

Several studies on English learning anxiety and its relationship with English learning achievement as well as the difference of learning anxiety based on gender have been carried out in various contexts and came up with different results. Such study was still rare in Sulawesi Utara context, therefore it was important to carry out this study in Sulawesi Utara. The main purpose of this study was to find out whether there was a relationship between students' anxiety in learning English and their English achievement. It was also sought to find out the difference of both variables based on gender. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of students' English learning anxiety?
2. What is the level of students' English achievement?
3. Is there any significant difference in students' English learning anxiety based on gender?
4. Is there any significant difference in students' English achievement based on gender?
5. Is there any significant relationship between students' language anxiety and their English achievement?

Research Design

This study applied the quantitative research, which used questionnaire as the instrument, especially the researcher utilized descriptive, comparative, and correlative methods. The descriptive method was used to determine the level students' English learning anxiety in the classroom and their English achievement. The comparative method was utilized to compare the gender, grade, and major in both variables. And the correlative method described the significant correlation between students' English learning

anxiety in the classroom and their English achievement.

Respondents / Sampling Technique

The respondents of this study were SMA A, grade 10 and 11 (Science and Social class). There are 122 students—60 students of all X grade classes, and 62 students of all XI grade classes as the respondents who enrolled in semester II 2015/2016 academic year. Convenience sampling method was employed in the collection of the data.

Instrument / Data Collection

The instruments was an adapted questionnaire of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986) which is and contains 33 items. the questionnaire was categorized into communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and anxiety in English Classroom. The instrument was translated into Indonesian and had been undertaken the process of validation and was tried out to find out the reliability. The reliability value of Cronbach Alpha was 0.7. Respondents' achievement was their English final grade.

Data Analysis Techniques

To determine the respondents' level of anxiety and English achievement, Mean was employed. In order to find out the significant difference in respondents' English learning anxiety and their English achievement based on their gender, Independent Sample t-test was used. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistic was used to determine the significant correlation between students' English learning anxiety in the classroom and their English achievement.

The 5-point Likert Scale was used in order to interpret the data of students' English learning anxiety. Interpretation of 5-point Likert Scale are the followings

1 = 1.00 – 1.49 : very low
2 = 1.50 – 2.49 : low
3 = 2.50 – 3.49 : moderate
4 = 3.50 – 4.49 : high
5 = 4.50 – 5.00 : very high

Respondents' achievements were interpreted by the grading system based on the standard of

National Education Department of the Republic of Indonesia, as follows:

A = 100   : Very Good
B = 80 – 99   : Good
C = 60 – 79   : Average
D = 30 – 59   : Poor
F = 1 – 29   : Very Poor

Results and Discussions

The Level of Students' English Learning Anxiety

The results showed that the mean score of English learning anxiety in the classroom was 3.10 (see table 1). It is in the range of 2.50 – 3.49 which was interpreted as moderate level. It might mean that the respondents were moderately anxious in learning English. They were neither high nor low in experiencing anxiety in English classroom.

The Level of Students' English Achievement

The result showed that the mean score of the respondents was 76.18. It meant that the grade was average. It can be interpreted that the respondentswere good in learning English and they could pass the standard grade of English subject. They were either low or high in terms of English achievement.

The Significant Difference in Students' English Learning Anxiety Based on Gender

In order to find the significant difference of students' English learning anxiety based on gender, the data was analyzed with Independent t-test. The standard level of error (α) is 0.05. The probability of error (p) in students' anxiety based on gender was 0.61. While the standard level of error (α) is 0.05. Since$p>α$ therefore it meant that there was no significant difference in students' English learning anxiety based on gender.

The Significant Difference in Students' English Achievement Based on Gender

In order to find the significant difference in students' English achievement based on gender, the t-test was employed. The probability of error (p) in students' English learning anxiety based on gender was 0.02 and the standard level of error (α) is 0.05. The p value was lower than α value which meant that there was a significant difference in students' English achievement based on gender.

The Significant Relationship between Students' Language Anxiety and Their English Achievement

In order to find the significant correlation between students' anxiety and achievement, the data was analyzed with correlative method. The r value was -.34 (negative correlation), while the value of p was 0.00. This meant that the relationship of both variables was significant.

Conclusion

Anxiety is one of the factors that influences learning, and it is very common to find anxiety in English classroom. According to the findings of this study, the 122 students in tenth and eleventh grade at SMA A in North Sulawesi sometimes felt anxious when they were learning English. It might be concluded that the male students were better in learning English the female students. The anxiety the respondents experienced was found to have a significant relationship with their English learning. The higher the students' English learning anxiety, the lower the students' English achievement would be. In other words, by decreasing the students' English learning anxiety then the level of their English achievement could be increased. The greater desire students had to improve their English achievement, the lesser the anxiety would become.

Recommendations

It is important for English teachers to be aware about the challenges students face as they learn the subject, and it might cause them to become anxious.They may struggle with their English activities, such as speaking in front of the class, doing test, and others activities. The students also might feel anxious of being negatively evaluated by peers and also their teachers. The finding of this study strongly indicates that anxiety will affect their learning.Thus it is

suggested that the English teachers must encourage the students and find appropriate ways to increase students' self-confidence in learning. And it is better to create the English class more fun and inclusive so that not only the students can participate all the English subject's activities, but they can reduce the anxious feelings during those activities.

In addition to that, it is important for students to be aware of their English learning anxiety. Therefore, they should be informed that they need to encourage their own selves in order to reduce the anxiety in English classroom. The students need to try to resolve the assignments or projects, to study more in test, try to memorize new vocabularies, or to practice in speaking by themselves before the English class begin.

The last, further study is needed to be conducted in different and more boarder populations by using the same variable and methodologies. Moreover, the further study might be conducted to clarify the links between English learning anxiety and other aspects of learning such as motivation, self-confidence, and English achievement.

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