INVESTIGATING LANGUAGE ANXIETY AMONG MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS : CURRENT SITUATION, SOURCES AND STRATEGIES

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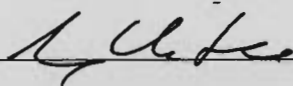*(candidate for the degree of)*

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ABSTRACT

The construct of anxiety is believed to have a significant influence on L2 learning. The present study investigated anxiety from 5 perspectives: the relationship between anxiety and achievement, anxiety and gender, sources of anxiety, manifestation of anxiety and strategies coping with anxiety. A total of 120 students (60 males and 60 females) from Sekolah Menengah Teknik Alor Setar answered Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom Scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) and 8 students (4 males and 4 females) were interviewed. The school-based results were used to represent students' achievement. SPSS 13.0 was employed to analyze the quantitative data and the interviewed data was transcribed and analyzed. The results showed a significant negative correlation between anxiety and achievement but no difference in gender. Participants agreed with the sources of anxiety suggested by Horwitz (1986) namely communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and expressed other sources of anxiety such as writing activities and inability to comprehend what is being said. In terms of the manifestation of anxiety, participants showed both physical and psychological signs of anxiety. Some of the symptoms were stutter, palpitation, shaky, tremble, short of breath and restless. Some of the psychological symptoms were to avoid volunteering and demotivated to complete the given tasks. There were five main strategies to cope with anxiety, namely preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking and resignation. Based on the findings the author made some pedagogical suggestions in reducing anxiety in language classrooms.

ABSTRAK

Perasaan bimbang atau 'anxiety' merupakan salah satu faktor mempengaruhi pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Kajian ini bertujuan mengkaji isu kebimbingan pelajar dari 5 perspektif iaitu : perhubungan di antara kebimbangan pelajar dan pencapaian pelajar, kebimbangan dan jantina, faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada perasaan tersebut, cara pelajar meluahkan rasa bimbang serta strategi-strategi yang diambil oleh pelajar untuk mengatasi masalah kebimbangan semasa belajar Bahasa Inggeris. Seramai 120 pelajar (60 pelajar perempuan dan 60 pelajar lelaki) dari Sekolah Menengah Teknik Alor Setar dipilih untuk menjawab soal selidik 'Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom Scale' yang dihasilkan oleh Horwitz, Horwitz dan Cope (1986) dan 8 orang pelajar (4 lelaki dan 4 perempuan) ditemubual. Keputusan peperiksaan sekolah digunakan sebagai pencapaian pelajar. Data yang diperoleh daripada FLACS dianalisis menggunakan SPSS 13.0 manakala data yang diperoleh daripada temubual ditranskrip dan dianalisis. Keputusan kajian mendapati terdapat korelasi negatif di antara kebimbangan dan pencapaian pelajar tetapi tiada perbezaan di antara jantina. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan para pelajar mengalami kebimbangan semasa berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggeris, menduduki peperiksaan serta kebimbangan terhadap penilaian negatif. Para pelajar yang mengalami perasaan tersebut menunjukkan simptom fisikal serta psikologi yang ketara. Terdapat lima strategi yang digunakan oleh pelajar untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut. Berdasarkan hasil kajian penulis mengutarakan beberapa cadangan berbentuk pedagogi bagi mengurangkan kebimbangan dalam kalangan pelajar semasa mengikuti kelas Bahasa Inggeris.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

With increased globalization, the growth of bilingualism and even multilingualism is seen prominent. The change in the world economy and the advancement in technology make people realize the need to learn a second language in order to be more competitive. Graddol (2006) estimated that by the year 2010, around two billion people will be learning English worldwide. Despite the fact that many people are bilinguals, some people are totally failure at second language learning (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982). A plethora of researches on second language acquisition (SLA) have been conducted in understanding the complex nature of L2 learning. The goals of SLA researchers, then, are not only describing how L2 is acquired but also explaining this process and providing answers to why some learners are better at it than others.

Ellis (1985) in discussing the key issues in SLA proposed a five-factor framework for investigating SLA. The framework posits a number of interrelated factors, which are: situational factors, input, linguistic output, learner process and learner differences. Under the last factor that is learner differences, scholars further identify a whole range of learner factors that has potential influence on SLA including age, aptitude, cognitive style, personality and motivation (Ellis, 1985). In line with this, the humanistic psychologists such as Erik Erikson, Abraham Maslow and Carl

Rogers stress that the affective aspects of learners such as their thoughts, feelings and emotions (William & Burden, 2001) are also crucial in second language acquisition.

The present study is very much related to the humanistic approach of language acquisition, which focuses on one of the affective aspects of learners, namely the anxiety. Krashen (1981) explains learners' affective aspect through his "affective filter hypothesis". He claims that students do not take in all the comprehensible inputs but tend to filter them. How much they take in or filter the input depends on their affective aspects such as motivation, self-confidence as well as the anxiety level. The higher the motivation and self-confidence and the lower the anxiety level, the weaker the filter and thus allows students to absorb more input. In other words, highly anxious students tend to have greater filters which in turn interfere with their language acquisition.

The anxiety experienced during second language learning is called "language anxiety". Language anxiety can be defined as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

The early study of anxiety can be traced way back two decades ago when Scovel (1978) attempted to explain conflicting findings of studies on the relationship between anxiety and achievement (Horwitz, 2001). Later, many studies were

conducted to investigate the two variables (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Ardi Marwan, 2007) which also yielded mixed results. Worde (2003) listed the studies that revealed negative correlation between anxiety and achievement. Some of them are : Aida (1994); Bailey (1983); Crookal & Oxford (1991); Ely (1986); Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986); Horwitz & Young (1991); Ganschow & Sparks (1996); MacInytre and Gardner (1988, 1989, 1991, 1994) and Young (1990, 1991, 1992).

Chastain (1975), however, found that test anxiety showed no relationship to proficiency in regular French or German courses (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). The issue is even complicated when the same study done by Chastain showed the positive relationship between test anxiety and grades in Spanish.

Llinas and Garau (2009) conducted a study investigating the effects of language anxiety on course achievement of the three different levels- beginner, intermediate and advance Spanish learners. They found out that the advanced learners show higher anxiety level compared to the beginners. However, the higher level of anxiety among the advanced learners did not necessarily affect their final grades. The study showed that students who experienced high level of anxiety achieved high grades in advanced foreign language course. This confirms that anxiety can also play the facilitative role in language learning.

The difference in the results is due to several factors. One of the most significant factors is the debilitative and facilitative roles of anxiety. Facilitating anxiety, as the name suggests, facilitates learning and is considered to be an asset to performance in L2 learning whereas debilitating anxiety which is more common interpretation of anxiety, is considered to be detrimental to performance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Other possible factors that may contribute to the mixed results are cultural differences in L2 classroom, the instrument employed in the study, the language skills involved and the language instruction of L2.

Besides investigating the relationship between anxiety and achievement, many other studies focus on the sources of anxiety in language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) believe that there are three sources of anxiety related to language learning especially in relation to various kinds of activities that the learners engaged in: 1)communication apprehension, 2) test anxiety, and 3) fear of negative evaluation. Tobias (1986) on the other hand focused on the anxiety resulted from the three stages of instructions namely input, processing and output level (MacIntyre & Gardner,1989). Anxiety can also result from differences in students' L1 coding abilities (Sparks and Ganschow, 1991, as cited in MacIntyre, Noels & Clement, 1997).

Another study done by Tanveer (2007) on factors that cause language anxiety suggested that language anxiety can be generated from within and outside of the language classrooms. He divided the factors into two perspectives, namely

psycholinguistic, socio-cultural perspectives. In brief he claims that language anxiety is related to learners' own self that is how they perceive language learning, how they see themselves, and how they perceive communicative events. In addition, language learning difficulties, learners' cultures and social status also contribute to language anxiety.

A more recent research conducted by Yan and Horwitz (2008) aimed to investigate learners' perceptions of how anxiety worked together with other variables in second language learning. This research employed a three-stage grounded- theory analysis in order to answer the research questions. They found out that among the most immediate sources of anxiety were "comparison with peers, learning strategies, language learning interest and motivation" (p.173). Besides that, students perceived "regional difference, test types, gender, class arrangement, teacher characteristics parental influence and language aptitude" (p.17) as remote sources of anxiety.

Anxiety is also studied from the teachers' perspectives. Ohata (2005 a) interviewed experienced ESL/EFL to examine their perception on anxiety as well as how they dealt with anxiety in their actual teaching. He claims that there are some differences between teachers' perception and students' perception regarding the role of anxiety in L2 learning.

In brief, scholars see anxiety as a complex and multi faceted psychological phenomenon that needs to be studied from different perspectives and using a variety

of approaches. Apart from the common aspect of study to investigate the relationship between anxiety and achievement in L2 as in Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), Aida (1994), McIntyre and Gardner (1988), Ilnas and Garau (2009), other studies were conducted to find out the potential sources of anxiety (Tanveer, 2007), how anxiety interacts with other variables such as instructions factors by Yan and Horwitz (2008), motivation (Neff,2007), identity (Stroud & Wee, 2006) and perfectionism (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). In addition, a number of studies have actually looked into the effect of anxiety on specific skills in language learning such as writing (Nor Shadrah, Nuraihan, Noor Lide, 2005), speaking skill (Tanveer, 2007) and reading (Saito, Horwitz & Garza, 1999). In a more comprehensive study, Cheng, Horwitz and Schallet (1999) attempted to differentiate oral and writing anxiety. All the studies mentioned took the students' perspective but Ohata (2005) chose to study the anxiety from the teachers' perspective.

In terms of methodology, many studies were quantitative in nature. One of the prominent instruments employed is Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986). However, it can be difficult to give voice to quantitative data in terms of offering explanation. For example, using the FLCAS, researchers are investigating three limited sources of anxiety, namely communication apprehension, fear of negative social evaluation and test anxiety. This instrument is used to identify language-anxious students but in this context, quantitative studies fail to give deeper insights into other sources of anxiety from the participants own view. Thus, more and more studies were done using the

qualitative approach which allows more exploration on the construct and enable the researcher to answer the "why" and "how" questions more effectively. In line with this, focus group method (Pappamihie, 2002) and semi structured interview (Ohata, 2005) were employed.

It is also interesting to note that this universal construct does not only draw interest of Western researchers but also scholars from different parts of the world such as Japan, China, Spanish, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Indonesia and Malaysia. In Malaysian context, however, the study is far from being extensive and sufficient in explaining this psychological construct among the Malaysian learners.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) believed that language anxiety is not a stable factor and there is a need for research into reducing the effect of anxiety which is vital in facilitating L2 acquisition. So, with all the studies conducted on a variety aspects of anxiety hopefully provide teachers with sufficient information in making informed pedagogical decisions regarding anxiety in their classrooms.

1.2 Problem Statement

As mentioned earlier, the studies on language anxiety arrived at different conclusions. Besides the two roles of anxiety in L2 – facilitating and debilitating, the results obtained differ most probably due to a number of reasons, including different settings and subjects involved and different instruments used. Despite many previous researches done on anxiety, little study is done in Malaysian setting. The researcher

feels that Malaysian learners have the possibility to experience language anxiety due to several reasons.

First, it is believed that subjects from different settings or cultures possess different beliefs and attitude towards language learning. Young (1992, as cited in Horwitz and Yan, 2007) suggested a number of factors associated with anxiety in a foreign language learning including motivation, cultural factors, beliefs about language learning and teaching methodology. Gardner's socio-education model (1982) attempts to interrelate four features on L2 acquisition namely "social and cultural milieu, individual learner differences, the setting in which L2 takes place" (Norris-Holt, 2001). The model further strengthens the idea that learners in different socio-cultural setting possess different beliefs about cultures and language which have a significant impact on L2 acquisition. Horwitz (2001) also proposed cultural differences when considering the issue of language anxiety. It is believed that Malaysian culture is different from the Western cultures where most of the studies were carried out. Even though there were studies conducted in Asia, the subjects mostly were Chinese and Japanese and to the best knowledge of the author, there is little published literature on anxiety based on Malaysian context. So, it is interesting to investigate the language anxiety in Malaysian setting so as to be compared with the studies done by other researchers in other countries.

Besides cultural differences, the focus of instruction may also give an impact on L2 anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). She further quoted Aydin (1999) who found classroom practices like speaking in front of a class was one of the factors contribute to

language anxiety. In Malaysia, the aim of the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum is to equip students with communicational ability and competency to perform language functions, using correct language forms and structures besides developing the four skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as accompanying grammar, sound system and vocabulary (Thang and Kumarasamy, 2006). Based on the curriculum specification outlined by the Ministry of Education, the aim of the English language syllabus for upper secondary level is to extend learners' English language proficiency in order to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition and for future workplace needs (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2002). To achieve the objectives, the nature of instruction requires students to engage in a lot of speaking and writing activities in order to develop their communicative competence. However, in the process of developing communicative abilities, the author believes that students may experience "communication apprehension" as termed by Horwitz et al. (1986).

Moreover, English is expected to be taught as a subject in the setting of second language. As a second language, students have the opportunity to use the language outside the classroom, which, in turn facilitate their L2 acquisition. Unfortunately, the reality is English is still a foreign language to many parts of Malaysia especially rural areas. Students from these areas have no exposure to English apart from classroom instructions that they receive. This is even more complicated when teachers, who are exposed to Western models of language teaching, may apply those models without making necessary adjustment to Malaysian setting. Thus, the focus

of instruction, the model of teaching in Malaysian classroom may contribute to conflicts and anxiety among learners.

Another factor that has potential influence on anxiety is gender. Gender-related anxiety research has revealed conflicting results. Spelberger (1983, p.19, as cited in Tanveer, 2007) stated that "females are more emotionally stable than males in their reactions to highly stressful and relaxing circumstances". Zhao Na (2007) also revealed that male students have more anxiety of English classes than female students. However, Machida (2003, cited in Tanveer, 2007) who conducted a study on Japanese language as a foreign language found out that female learners are more anxious than male counterparts. With the conflicting findings, it is interesting to investigate the anxiety between two genders in the selected school in Malaysia so that teachers are more aware of the issue and thus are able to make informed pedagogical decisions regarding gender related anxiety.

Another factor that might contribute to language anxiety in Malaysia is fear of evaluation. During the six years at primary level and five years at their secondary level, students are constantly being assessed through school-based examinations and public examinations so as to see their performance. So, in this context, the students may experience anxiety due to fear of failure in the examination.

In brief, based on the cultural, pedagogical aspects and the status of English teaching which differ from other studies, the researcher feels that there is a significant need to

conduct a study on anxiety in Malaysian setting so as to obtain valuable information for the ELT classes. It is also the keen interest of the researcher to find out the relationship between anxiety and the achievement in English so as to see the role of anxiety; either facilitative or debilitative. More importantly the researcher also would like to find out the sources of anxiety among Malaysian students and compare them to the existing literature. Apart from that, it is also important to investigate the manifestation of anxiety and strategies in coping with language anxiety from the students' perceptions since these findings will help teachers in Malaysia particularly in applying appropriate strategies to reduce the level of anxiety among students.

Thus, the primary goal of this research is to investigate the sources of anxiety experienced by second language learners in one particular school in Malaysia and to find out whether there is a difference in higher performers and low performers. The levels of anxiety between the two groups enable the researcher to make conclusion on the correlation between anxiety and performance in second language learning. The study also aims to make comparison between the language anxiety of male and female students as well as to investigate the factors that can reduce anxiety among them. Most importantly, the study also looks into students' perceptions on how anxiety is manifested and how anxiety is alleviated which has little attention in the literature.

1.3 Research Objectives

The major purpose of the research is to investigate the difference of anxiety level among high performers, medium performers and low performers in Sekolah Menengah Teknik Alor Setar. The second objective is to compare language anxiety among the male and female students. This study also seeks to find out why L2 learners feel anxious while learning English. In other words, the researcher is keen to know the sources of anxiety from the students' perceptions. Besides that, the study also investigates how anxiety is manifested in learners as well as looks into factors that can reduce language anxiety among them.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Is there any relationship between students' language performance and language anxiety ?

2. Is there any difference between the anxiety level of male and female students?

3. What are the sources of anxiety that the learners believe influence the learning of English?

4. How is anxiety manifested in the students?

5. Which factors do students believe may help reduce language anxiety?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study has important implication for pedagogy in ELT. The issue of language anxiety is being studied by many researchers from different countries because of the possible influence it has on L2 learning. However, this study is conducted in

Malaysia which has different cultural settings and different pedagogical approaches compared to studies conducted by other researchers. Thus, based on the idea that anxiety can vary depending on context, it is interesting to find out the relationship between language anxiety and performance of students in Malaysian context. The findings not only can be compared to other studies but also can give some ideas to the Malaysian teachers regarding the construct. At this point, the present study, similar to many other studies, intends to statistically demonstrate the existence of language anxiety.

However, this study attempts to go beyond the simple identification of the relation between anxiety and achievement. The researcher believes that one promising means to better understand this construct would be to employ the qualitative method particularly the interview protocol to further investigate the sources of anxiety from the students' perceptions apart from the ones suggested by Horwitz (1986). The findings will hopefully provide new insights to the existing literature and at the same time raise awareness among language teachers on the sources of anxiety which in turn help them in making classroom environment less stressful and more conducive for L2 learning.

In addition, the present study also attempts to deal with this issue from a variety of perspective as suggested by Young (1992). For this reason, the study extends the scope of the work to investigate how anxiety is manifested in students and how they alleviate their anxiety before offering pedagogical suggestions to teachers. This is

again obtained through the interview conducted. To the best of the author's knowledge, there is little study done in Malaysian context investigating those aspects of anxiety; thus, this study may bridge the existing gap.

To summarize, the present study is rather comprehensive in the sense that it looks into the issue from a variety of perspectives. Based on the research questions, the study attempts to answer the questions of "what" as in question 1 and 2, "why" as in question 3, "how" as in question 4 and "so what" as in the final question regarding the topic language anxiety. With this effort, hopefully the study may provide significant insight on this complex and multidimensional phenomenon which can contribute to the existing literature.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

A few limitations to the study must be noted. First, the study has a limited sample size. The survey was conducted among students of Sekolah Menengah Teknik Alor Setar only. Furthermore, the sample for both male and female subjects is small; consequently, the results do not necessarily reflect the context of language anxiety at other educational settings. Second, the study is limited in terms of time. The researcher feels that longitudinal study on anxiety by conducting observations and interviews may produce better results. For future studies, it is recommended that the research be done in a larger scale, involving bigger sampling size from different settings such as both urban and rural areas and consisting of a variety of ethnic groups.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to give a better understanding on the definitions of anxiety by discussing types of anxiety and its role in language learning. The chapter also establishes the conceptual foundations of the construct "language anxiety" by discussing the anxiety and performance, the sources of anxiety, the manifestation of anxiety as well as the strategies of coping with anxiety.

2.2 Defining Anxiety

Generally, anxiety is "a feeling of uneasiness and apprehension about a situation typically one with an uncertain outcome" (Ormrod, 2004, p 445). Anxiety can be associated with "threats to self-efficacy and appraisals of situations as threatening" (Papamihiel, 2002, p.331 cited in Ardi Marwan , 2007). For the purpose of investigating the anxiety in a language classroom, it is vital to define language anxiety as a separate and distinct phenomenon. Horwitz (1986) defined language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process" (p.128).

2.2.1 Types of Anxiety

The construct of anxiety is classified into several types in order to help researchers investigate this affective aspect of learners efficiently. Scovel (1978) believed many researches on anxiety produce inconclusive findings due to problematic definition of anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Thus, many psychologists make distinction between "trait anxiety" and "state anxiety". Trait anxiety refers to a person's character and it is a permanent disorder (Worde, 1998). A person who possesses trait anxiety has the tendency to feel anxious regardless of situations or may be chronologically feel anxious in certain situations. State anxiety on the other hand occurs when an individual is exposed to a particular condition or situation. For example, a person who has a stage fright and is asked to recite a poem in front of a crowd may experience anxiety due to the situation.

Ellis (1996) offers a slightly different classification of anxiety. He believes anxiety can be classified into three types: trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety, as defined by other psychologists is related to individual personality, whereas he uses the term "situational-specific anxiety" to describe the fear related to a specific event, for example when learners experience language anxiety in their second language class. He claims that state anxiety is the combination of both trait and situation-specific anxiety.

According to Oxford (1999), persistent state anxiety may lead to trait anxiety. Language anxiety starts as state anxiety, that is when a learner feels fear or worry to

perform in the second language and this type of anxiety disappears over time. However, if the language anxiety does not decrease or it is persistent, it may become a trait rather than a state anxiety. At this stage the learner consistently feels fear and worry whenever he attends second language lessons.

Ormrod (2004) associates anxiety with the concept of "arousal". Both anxiety and fear, according to him, "reflect the high end of the arousal continuum" (p 445). He further proposed that anxiety has two components: the cognitive aspect of anxiety and the affective aspect of anxiety. When a person is anxious cognitively, he may experience troubling thoughts and fail to deal with the stressful situation. On the other hand, an individual who experiences affective aspect of anxiety shows more physiological responses such as perspiration, muscular tense and behavioral responses such as restlessness.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that language anxiety is a kind of state anxiety experienced by students during their L2 learning. This anxiety can influence both cognitive and affective aspects of learners.

2.2.2 Debilitative and Facilitative anxiety

Based on the past research, it is well documented that anxiety can play two different roles in language learning: debilitative or facilitative. Facilitating anxiety "motivates the learners to "fight" the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approach behaviour" (Scovel, 1991, p.22, as cited in Tanveer, 2007). An example of

facilitative anxiety might be students who believe in risk taking as part of their language learning process, may perceive anxiety as a drive to learn more about the language. Much research on facilitating anxiety showed, despite the high level of anxiety, learners achieve success in L2 learning. Llinas and Garau (2009) listed a few studies which confirmed facilitative anxiety: Chastain (1975), Fratzen and Magnan (2005), Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), Gregersen (2003), Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) and Oxford and Ehrman (1995).

Debilitating anxiety, in contrast, "motivates the learners to "flee" the new learning task, it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behaviour" (Scovel, 1991, p.22, as cited in Tanveer, 2007). It is believed that debilitating anxiety interferes with L2 learning. In the first study using FLCAS, Horwtz (1986) found that there was a significant moderate negative correlation between language anxiety and grades. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) also found significant negative correlations between French class anxiety and vocabulary learning tasks.

2.3 Anxiety and Achievement

Scovel (1978) claimed that the relationship between the anxiety and achievement is unable to be established (Horwitz, 1986). Crandall (1999) also shared the similar view that the relationship between anxiety and performance is not simple and therefore many studies that aim to quantify the effects of anxiety on language learning yield mixed results. Despite the inconclusive findings, SLA researchers are still interested in investigating the two variables in order to have a better understanding on the affective aspect of the learners.

Explaining the effects of anxiety on learning and performance, Ormrod (2004) claimed that when learners engage in an easy task, they will experience a small degree of anxiety which causes a small arousal; and this type of anxiety is said to facilitate learning. High degree of anxiety, on the other hand creates a high degree of arousal which interferes learning or performance. This debilitating anxiety is experienced when learners engage in more difficult task. This explanation can best be described as below:

high

Performance

low

low   arousal   high
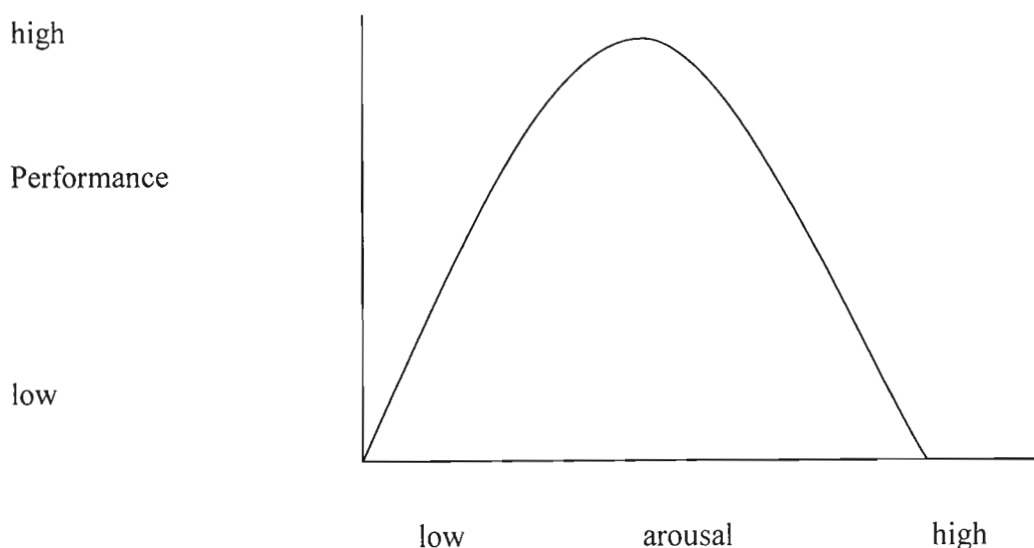
Figure 2.1: The inverted U curve depicting a curvilinear

relationship between Arousal and performance

(Source : Ormrod. (2004). Human Learning 4th Edition.)

The idea put forth by Ormrod (2004) is based on the Yerkes-Dodson Law which states that a high level of anxiety facilitates learning of easy tasks. The same high level of anxiety interferes with performance on a difficult task. And the law is applicable in the second language classes. Krashen (1985) maintained the similar

idea that an interaction is often found among anxiety, task difficulty and ability which inteferes at the input, process, retrieval and output level.

Arnold and Brown (1999) suggested that learners who experience anxiety may feel a "down-spiraling" (p 9) effect which makes them nervous and afraid. This results in poor performance and in turn creates more anxiety and even worse performance. In other words anxiety can be either the cause or consequence of poor performance. Arnold and Brown's (1999) idea is related to deficit model of anxiety and interference model of anxiety. The former argues that learners' low performance is due to their "deficiency in the acquisition stage" (Nor Shadrah, Nuraihan, Noor Lide, 2005, p2). The poor performance of the learners creates anxiety among them. The latter model claims however that learners feel anxious and therefore experience difficulties in retrieving the information and perform poorly in the language.

Tests can also serve as a threat or a challenge to a person. Horwitz et al. (1986) believed that test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure. When a person sees tests or test-taking situations as a challenge, then he will experience facilitative anxiety. However, when a person perceives tests or a situation to be threatening, the anxiety he experiences will interfere his performance (Ormrod, 2004). Students who have unrealistic perceptions or beliefs on language learning and performance may feel frustrated or disappointed towards their own poor performance in L2. Such beliefs can lead to higher level of anxiety which may be even more detrimental to their performance.

Eysenck (1979) in MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) offered a different view of anxiety in terms of cognitive interference. He suggested that anxiety-arousal is associated with distracting, self-related cognition such as excessive self-evaluation and worry over the opinions of others. This, according to him explains the reason anxious students perform less efficient compared to less anxious students. This idea was similar to MacIntyre, Noels and Clement's (1997) finding. Their study examined perceived competence in an L2 as a function of actual competence and language anxiety. They found that L2 anxiety, perceived L2 competence, and actual L2 competence were intercorrelated. Anxious students tended to underestimate their competence relative to less anxious students, who tended to overestimate their competence.

Besides that, studies show that high level of anxiety can override the motivation of the students. Neff (2007) conducted a study on 41 university students in Japan, focusing on the effects that anxiety and motivation have on the students' presentation. Results from his study show that even instrumental or integrative motivation at times is insufficient to overcome the learners' anxiety. Gardner et al (1992) noticed that intergratively motivated students are less anxious and therefore they hypothesized that perhaps anxiety and motivation are opposite ends of the same dimension. Noel et al (1999) were of the same opinion, claimed that students with low motivation tend to put less effort in L2 learning and may feel more anxious in L2 classroom.

Another study on anxiety and motivation was conducted by Wei (2007) among learners at China's institutions of higher learning reveals that there is no significant relationship between anxiety and motivation in general. However, the instrumental motivation and the integrative motivation have different effect on language anxiety. In this study, integrative motivation especially the desire to get involved in the target culture is able to predict the anxiety level to a significant extent.

The above theoretical foundation attempts to explain how the feeling of anxiety affects performance of the learners. It is obvious that the relationship between anxiety and performance is not simple. Some scholars see anxiety as the cause of poor performance while others believe it is the result of the poor performance. It is also crucial to take note that there are other variables such as students' perceptions, motivation and difficulty of tasks influence students' anxiety level and in turn influence their performance.

2.3.1 Anxiety and Gender

Apart from studying the relationship between anxiety and performance, it is also interesting to know the relationship between anxiety and gender. There were studies conducted on gender anxiety which again yielded mixed results. Aydin (2008) conducted a research investigating the language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation among Turkish EFL learners. He found that female learners have more worries over the test than the male students. Zhao Na (2007) on the other hand claimed that male students experience more anxiety than female students based on

the higher means in all anxiety variables in FLACS. The similar idea was put forth by Spielberger (1983, as cited in Tanveer, 2007) who claimed that "females are more emotionally stable than males in their reactions to highly stressful and relaxing circumstances" (p.19). On the contrary, Machida (2003, as cited in Tanveer, 2007) found that Japanese female learners were more anxious than their male counterparts

2.4 Sources of Anxiety

Investigating the relationship between anxiety and achievement is not sufficient without knowing the factors that cause anxiety among learners. To study the potential sources of anxiety, it is wise to look at the related framework and empirical findings.

2.4.1 Horwitz's framework

The first framework for sources of anxiety can be based on Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). They describe three types of anxiety in a second language class: 1) communication apprehension, 2) fear of negative social evaluation and 3) test anxiety. Communication apprehension is "a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with other people" (Horwitz, 1986, p.127). It is the result of learners' frustration and apprehension for not being able to express themselves in the target language or to understand another person in the target language. The learners then have mature thoughts and ideas but an immature second language vocabulary which impedes them from expressing their thoughts and ideas. Anxious learners tend to have trouble in speaking.

Fear of negative social evaluation is very much related to the communication apprehension. Failure in expressing themselves or unable to comprehend others well leads to the feeling of fear of being judge negatively by the society. The idea of unable to make proper social impression results in this type of anxiety. In this context, the learners feel that they are being judged and anxious over making mistakes and getting comments or corrections regarding their mistakes. This type of anxiety can occur in any social situation as well.

Test anxiety is related to the feelings of apprehension over academic evaluation. The nature of curriculum or educational system which requires students to be continually being assessed on aspects of proficiency may result in test anxiety among students. Learners who are not proficient feel that they might fail the tests or fail to achieve the standard set. Learners also feel anxious when they overemphasize the negative results of the examinations and feel helpless in facing tests (Zeider, 1998 cited in Harris & Coy 2003). Test anxious students tend to aim for perfection and set unrealistic demands on them (Horwitz, 1986).

Based on this framework, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) developed a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale to quantify the language anxiety level of learners. This scale, however limit the potential sources to the three sources discussed earlier. Other instruments to measure anxiety mentioned by Horwitz (2001) are French Class Anxiety Scale (Gradner & Smythe, 1975); The Englsih Use Anxiety Scale (Clement, Gardner & Smythe, 1977). The English Test Anxiety Scale

(Clement, Gardner & Smythe, 1980), the French Use Anxiety Scale (Gardner, Smythe & Clement, 1979) and Spanish Use Anxiety Scale (Muchnick & Wolfe, 1982).

2.4.2 Tobias' Framework

Another framework on anxiety can be viewed from Tobias' (1986) model (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989). The proposed model is related to anxiety resulted from instruction. Tobias states that the interference may occur at the input, processing and output levels of instructions. The input stage is where learners are exposed to the input or the stimulus. When the learners are anxious at this stage, learners tend to miss some input presented. Learners try to compensate the missing input by asking questions or reread the sentences. The problem arises when the learners are unable to take in the inputs.

The processing stage involves the "cognitive operations perform on the subject matter" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, p.286). Anxious learners at this stage may not be able to utilize their cognitive processing ability effectively, thus contributes to problems such as unable to comprehend a task, unable to organize the inputs and unable to store the inputs in their long term memory.

The last stage involves the learners' production of what they have learned. At this stage, learners retrieve the inputs they have organized stored in their memory and perform in the language. The performance is evaluated to see the learners'

competency in the language. Learners who are anxious may not be able to perform well and this in turn does not reflect their competency.

In brief, Tobias's model offers stages of learning in which anxiety may occur. Though the model consists of three different stages, it does not mean that learning takes place in a discrete manner. All the stages are interrelated and interdependent in the sense that the success of a stage depends on the success of the previous stage. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) employed this model in investigating the effect of anxiety input and output in both L1 and L2. In line with this, they developed a new anxiety measure structured around Tobias' three-part model (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Apart from the two models that provide the potential sources of anxiety, other qualitative studies yielded more factors that contribute to anxiety. Bailey (1983) had found that competitiveness, tests and learners' perceived relationship with their teachers also contributed to learners' anxiety. These three aspects were also found in Young's study. Young (1991) proposes six potential sources of anxiety: i) personal and interpersonal anxiety, ii) learners' beliefs about language teaching, iii) instructors' beliefs about language teaching iv) instructor learner interactions, v)classroom procedures and vi) language testing (Horwitz & Yan, 2007).

The above studies confirm that there are numerous potential sources of anxiety in L2 learning. These sources of anxiety are best studied through qualitative studies which provide more opportunities for the participants to voice their opinions and views.

2.4.3 Anxiety and Culture

Another matter to address in this study is the influence of culture on anxiety. Horwitz(2001) posited that when considering the issue of language anxiety and classroom practice, it is important to keep cultural differences in mind. She further cautioned that it is possible that some practices perceived by one group of learners as comfortable can be stressful for a different cultural group of learners. A study done by Kojima (2007) on immigrant students revealed that there are differences in anxiety factors depending on students' cultural background based on four key anxiety factors: cultural, psychological, pedagogical and linguistic. However, similarities were found mainly in the impact of cultural differences on second language anxiety for both Spanish and Chinese speaking English learners.

Another study conducted by Neff (2007) indicates that Japanese students feel anxious due to different educational cultures of the Westerners and non-Westerners. This is most probably due to the perceptions of the non- natives towards the natives. Native speaker culture is thought as being individualistic which contrasts with the collective nature of the Japanese culture. The cultural conflict is also found in the study by Flowerdew (1995), as cited in McKay (2003, p.14)

Confucian	Western
Respect for authority of lecturer	Lecturer valued as guide and facilitator
Lecturer should not be questioned	Lecturer is open to challenge
Students motivated by family and pressure to excel	Student motivated by desire for individual development
Positive value placed on the effacement and silence	Positive value placed on self-expression of ideas
Emphasis on group orientation to learning	Emphasis on individual development and creativity in learning

Figure 2.2: Confucian and Western values as they relate to academic lecturers (McKay, S., L. (2003). Toward an appropriate EIL pedagogy: re-examining common ELT assumptions.)

In line with this, another relevant aspect that needs to be addressed is Communicative Language Teaching which is the dominant method in ELT (McKay, 2003). David Nunan (1991) lists four features of CLT: 1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language. 2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation. 3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only language but also on the learning process itself. 4. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom. (Administrator, 2008)

The basic fundamental of CLT is regarding the process of language learning and emphasizing learning to communicate as oppose to learning a set of rules. Communicative language teaching makes use of real –life situations that necessitate

communication whereby teachers set up situations that students are likely to encounter in real life (Galloway, 1993).

The teacher plays the role of a facilitator, classroom manager, motivator and at times co-communicator who is engaged in the communication along with the students. As a facilitator, the teacher should listen more and talk less (Larsen-freeman, 1986). Students should be allowed to be active communicators whereas teachers should step-back and observe (Galloway, 1993). Learners are no longer regarded as passive. They are seen as active participants in the negotiation of meaning (Savingnon, 1991). Students interact a great deal with one another. They do this in various configurations: pairs, triads, small groups, and whole group (Larsen- freeman, 1986).

Applying CLT which is a native speaker model, in a non-native classroom may contribute to cultural conflicts. So, it is predicted that such pedagogical approach or instructions may produce anxiety among students compared to traditional classrooms where students were passive learners. Moreover, it is a fallacy to assume that a good and workable model from the inner country is suitable and effective in a non-native setting (McKay, 2003).

2.5 Manifestation of Anxiety

Learners who experience anxiety show some psycho-physiological symptoms such as "apprehension, worry, dread, difficulty concentrating, forgetful, sweat or even palpitation" (Horwitz, 1986). She also claims that the learners may also use

strategies when they are anxious, for example, they attempt different types of grammar constructions, attempt more concrete messages than the interpretive ones and write shorter compositions.

Onwuegbuzie et al (1999) claim that highly anxious students may experience "perspiration, dry mouth, wet hands, general tension, muscle contraction, and increased heart beat" (Al-Sibai, 2005, p.3).

The similar symptoms are also seen in Tanveer's (2007) research on speaking skills of ESL learners. Using the semi-structured interview and focus-group interviews, he obtained data on how anxiety is manifested among learners. He claims that anxious learners show some signs such as "blushing, rubbing the palms, perspiration, staggered voice, reluctance, poor performance in spoken activities, less enthusiasm or willingness to speak, less interpretative, less eye-contact, reading from the script while giving presentation, either too fast or too slow speed of speech and etc"(p.54).

Besides that, Gregersen (2004) claims that highly anxious learners show more nonverbal clues such as "limited facial activity, less eye contact and less active illustrative and regulatory gestures"(Wei, 2007, p.2). Wei also suggested that learners tend to avoid speaking in class, being less willing to communicate and express themselves compared to the more relaxed students.

Worde (2003) states that some of the physical symptoms manifested by the learners are headaches, clammy hands, cold fingers, shaking, sweating, pounding hearts, tears, foot tapping, and desk drumming. The similar symptoms were revealed in the research conducted by Atay and Kurt (2006) who investigate writing anxiety among prospective teachers in Saudi Arabia.

From the teachers' perspective, the symptoms of anxiety are "playing with hair, avoiding eye-contact with the teacher, sweated palms, blushed faces, nervous facial expressions, trembling, shaky body movements" (Ohata, 2005 a .p.146). Teachers also claim that they would not be able to notice the anxious feelings of the students unless their anxiety is manifested through physical symptoms as described above.

2.6 Strategies of Coping with Anxiety

A study conducted by Kondo and Yi-Ling (2004) on how learners coping with their anxiety reveled that there were five general strategies employed by learners namely: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking and resignation. In 'preparation' strategy, learners make effort to improve their learning strategies which in turn improve their learning of L2 while in 'relaxation' learners deal with minimizing the symptoms of anxiety. The third strategy involves diverting stressful situations to more positive and pleasant ones which help learners to feel more comfortable and relief. In 'peer seeking', anxious learners attempt to find friend who share the similar experience while in the last strategy, learners take no action in reducing their anxiety.

Ardi Marwan (2007) based his study on Kondo and Ling (2004) found the similar strategies used by anxious learners except the resignation strategy. In his study, students actively seek for solutions in alleviating their anxiety and resignation is not popular among his participants. This is in contrast with Pappamihiel (2002) and Bailey et al (1999) who reported that avoidance is the most common strategy used by learners in coping with their anxiety. Another study which looked into the five strategies was conducted by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004). They found out that the most popular strategy was 'preparation' which was used more frequently by highly anxious students compared to students with low level of anxiety.

Another research done by Williams and Andrade (2008) claimed that many students feel that they should do something when they encounter anxiety provoking situations but at the same time they feel that their strategies might be ineffective and therefore the students "feel powerless and dominated by the event"(p.188).

From the past research, it is obvious that the discussion on strategies of coping with language anxiety focuses on the five popular strategies mentioned earlier. The author believes that much research on this aspect of anxiety should be conducted in order to obtain new insight on the issue.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology was carefully planned and was based on some theories and literature. This stage was crucial as it determined the reliability and validity of the data that was collected. This chapter describes the research design of the study, the population and sample involved, the research instruments used, the reliability and validity of research instruments, the procedure in data collection and the analysis of data collected.

3.2 Research Design

This study was a mixed mode research which involves both quantitative and qualitative data. Hammersley (1996) claimed that the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can be employed to serve three purposes: using one to verify the findings of the other, using one as the ground work for the other, and using them to explore different aspects of the same question (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002) and the three purposes applied to the present study. Basically, the present study was a correlational study to investigate the relationship between two variables; anxiety as the independent variable and achievement as the dependent variable. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002), a correlational research seeks to examine the strength and direction of relationships among two or more variable and the extent of

relationship is expressed as a numeric index. The quantitative data also revealed the anxiety level between male and female participants. Apart from that, the study was also qualitative in nature where interviews were carried out to obtain richer data from the participants on how they manifest their anxiety and how they alleviate their anxiety.

This research employed three methods of data collection. First it employed a survey method which used a questionnaire as an instrument. Surveys permit the researcher to summarize the characteristics of different groups or to measure their attitudes and opinions towards some issues (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002). Second, a small scale interview was conducted in order to triangulate the data obtained as well as to look deeper into the issue investigated. Third, the participants' current English examination results were obtained as representing students' achievement in English language.

3.3 Population and Sample

The subjects of the study were 60 male and 60 female form four (grade 10 or 16 years old) students from Sekolah Mengengah Teknik Alor Setar. They were divided into three groups according to the results of their English paper in the school based examination. The classification was made by calculating the mean, standard deviation and z-score of the students' results. Z-score is widely used to indicate the positive and negative difference between an individual score and the mean as measured in standard deviation unit. A score exactly one standard deviation above

the mean becomes a z of + 1, and a score exactly one standard deviation below the mean becomes a z of -1(Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002). A z of + 1 is the cutting point for high performance and a z of -1 is the cutting point for low performance. The marks between the two are considered medium performance. In this present study, the mean of the students' results was 65.43, the standard deviation was 9.095, the highest mark was 89 and the lowest mark was 40. So, the marks for the high performance was between 75 and 89 , medium performance was between 57 and 74 and low performance was between 40 and 56.

All the participants were Malay students since the researcher would like to control the culture variable. This was a technical school which offered five technical courses and the selection for the entry was based on the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (Lower Secondary Examination) results. The students enrolled were the selected ones with at least five As in Penilaian Menengah Rendah.

The students were classified into high, medium and low performers so that their level of anxiety can be compared. The number of male students and female students was equal for the purpose of gender comparison.

3.4 Research Instruments

This research employed three instruments in the data collection. They were a questionnaire assessing students' anxiety, an achievement test and a set or predetermined questions for the interview. The questionnaire consisted of two parts.

One was demography section which intended to collect personal information of the participants namely gender, English examination result and class. The other section was the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986). FLCAS is developed to assess the degree to which the respondents feel anxious in a foreign language classroom based on the construct of foreign language classroom anxiety (Katalin, 2006). This questionnaire consisted of 33 statements, of which 8 items were for communication anxiety (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32), 9 items for fear of negative evaluation (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, 33) and 5 items for test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, 21). As for the remaining 11 items, they were put in a group which was named anxiety of English classes (Zhao Na, 2007).

The respondents were asked to rate each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. For this study, the words 'foreign language' was replaced by the word 'English'. The maximum range of FLCAS is 33 to 165, with lower score lower scores indicating lower anxiety and higher scores indicating higher anxiety. When statements were negatively worded, responses were reversed and recoded, so that, at any time, a high score represents high anxiety. A total of 24 items were worded in the anxious direction, while 9 were worded in the non-anxious direction.

The test that was used to assess students' English achievement was the school-based assessment English 1119/1/2. The test consisted of two parts namely Paper One and

Paper Two. Paper One consisted of two essays writing while Paper Two consisted of reading comprehension and summary, multiple choice questions and literature The whole paper was intended to assess students' overall ability in language use.

The questions for the semi-structured interview were predetermined. The questions were tested through a pilot study to ensure that they were understood by the participants.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

The FLCAS has been used in many studies of anxiety in foreign language learning and found to be highly reliable (Aida, 1994; Ganschow & Sparks, 1996; MacInytre & Gardner, 1989; Price, 1988; Schlesinger, 1995 cited in Worde, 2003). For Horwitz et al. (1986), the internal consistency was .93 (n = 75), and test-retest reliability over a period of 8 weeks yielded r = .83 (p < .001), with all items showing significant correlated item-total scale correlations.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual interview. Four students were interviewed. The purpose of the pilot study was to help generate questions for the interview protocol. The participants were asked four questions in order to obtain data on how anxiety is manifested, how to reduce anxiety as well as to obtain data for the triangulation purposes.

In the actual study, 60 male students and 60 female students chosen were gathered. The questionnaire was administered and students answered them within the given time. The questionnaire was collected immediately after the session so as to ensure that the researcher got back all the questionnaires distributed. The advantages of this method were: easy to reach a large sample in a variety of discipline, high response and easy for the researcher to provide assistance during the process of answering the survey. Then, 8 students, 4 high achievers and 4 low achievers were chosen randomly to be interviewed. The interviews were tape-recorded with the consent from the participants.

3.7 Analysis of Data

SPSS 13.0 was employed to analyze the data. A 'scale analysis' was done to check the reliability of each item in the questionnaire. The estimated reliability was .93 as suggested by Horwitz (1986) and in the present study the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.892. The researcher performed different types of data analysis based on the research questions as described:

Research question 1: Is there any relationship between students' language performance and language anxiety?

To answer this question, first, the students' results were computed in order to divide students into 3 groups: high, medium and low performance students as explained in 'population and sample'. Then the total anxiety was calculated. Third, in order to find out the anxiety level of the students, a descriptive analysis was done. The

ANOVA and a post hoc test were performed to make comparisons of anxiety and performance levels. At this stage the researcher was able to find out the level of anxiety for high, medium and low performance students. Then a Pearson's correlation was conducted to find out the correlation between the students' language proficiency and language anxiety. This correlation showed both anxiety and achievement were negatively or positively correlated and the significance of the correlation.

Research question 2: Is there any difference between the anxiety level of male and female students?

For this question, an independent sample t-test was employed. This gave the general idea regarding anxiety and gender. To further analyze gender anxiety, the group statistics of gender and sources of anxiety was done. This enabled the researcher to compare levels of anxiety of males and females with the sources of anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and English classroom anxiety.

Research question 3: What are the sources of anxiety that learners believe influence the learning of English?

Regarding this question, a descriptive analysis was performed to compute the means and standard deviations for each item and each kind of anxiety. Frequencies of each option also were tabulated to see the major sources of anxiety based on FLACS.

The analysis of the interviewed data progressed in three steps. First, the data was transcribed. Then, the transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed according to three basic categories: factors believed to cause anxiety, factors believed to reduce anxiety and manifestation of anxiety. Under each separate category, portions of individual responses were listed. Finally, the discussion was generated from these data.

3.8 Conclusion

Careful consideration and necessary measures were taken on all aspects of research methodology: research design, sampling, research instruments and their reliability and validity, data collection procedure and analysis of data. With due considerations, it is hoped that the methodology of this research is valid and reliable and able to produce valid and reliable findings as to achieve research objectives.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Results and Findings of FLCAS

The FLCAS has been extensively tested and widely used to investigate language anxiety. Similarly, in the present study, an analysis of item reliability of FLCAS was computed using SPSS (scale analysis). The result showed that the questionnaire demonstrated internal reliability, achieving Cronbach's Alpha of 0.892 (N= 120), which compares acceptably with Horwitz's (1986) finding of .93 (N= 75). As the Cronbach's Alpha values for all items were >.88, none of the items needed to be deleted.

To establish the ground work for the research on anxiety, the total anxiety was calculated and the mean of anxiety was computed. The result showed that the mean of anxiety was 109.66 as shown in Table 4.1. This result, as expected, indicated that in general, students in the study experienced high level of anxiety. The levels of foreign anxiety may vary in different cultural groups (Horwitz, 2001). Horwitz (1986) and Aida (1994) found relatively similar means of anxiety among American foreign language learners. Truitt (1995) claimed relatively higher levels in Korean EFL learners and Kunt (1997) found lower levels in Turkish learners (Horwitz, 2001). From the high mean of anxiety, students in Malaysia are relatively similar to Korean learners in terms of level of anxiety.

Table 4.1
The mean and standard deviation of total anxiety.

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Language anxiety	120	36	148	109.66	17.767

Based on the data collected from the questionnaire, the researcher was able to answer three research questions formulated earlier.

Research question 1: Is there any relationship between students' language performance and language anxiety?

With regard to the question, a Pearson's correlation was employed to see the correlation between students' results (representing achievement) and the total of anxiety. The result showed a significant negative correlation between the two variables as in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
The correlation between performance and anxiety

		Language Performance	Language Anxiety
Language performance	Pearson Correlation	1	-.417(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	120	119
Language anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.417(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	119	119

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result implies that the higher the anxiety levels of the students, the lower the results the students. This finding confirms the findings of a few other researches which employ FLACS. Horwitz (1986) in her first study using FLACS found a significant moderate negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and the grades of the students. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) also reported a negative correlation between French class anxiety and performance on a vocabulary task. Other findings which yielded a negative correlation were Rodriguez's (1995) study on Spanish-speaking EFL students with the correlation (r=-.57), Kim's (1998) study in an Asian EFL context and MacIntyre et al's (1997) study on anxiety and students' self rating.

Using ANOVA, the level of anxiety is also compared to the students' level of performance. There was a significant difference between the level of anxiety of high performers (the examination results above 75 marks) and low performers (the examination results below 57 marks). Similarly, the level of anxiety between high performance students and medium performance students (the examination results between 57 to 74 marks) were different. However, there was no significant difference between the low and medium performance students. The comparisons are clearly shown in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4. The results also showed that high performance students experienced less anxiety compared to medium and low performance students, The mean of anxiety for high performers was 98.56 whereas the medium performers was 109.87 and the low performers was 117.61 as shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.3
Comparisons between /within group

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between groups	3637.335	2	1838.167	6.346	.002
Within group	33888.657	117	289.647		
Total	37564.992	119			

Table 4.4

Comparisons among Level of Proficiency and Level of Anxiety

Dependent Variable: language anxiety
Tukey HSD

Performance Level	Performance Level	Mean Difference	Std Error	Sig
High Performance	medium performance	-11.318(*)	4.445	.032
	low performance	-19.053(*)	5.356	.002
Medium Performance	high performance	11.318(*)	4.445	.032
	low performance	-7.735	4.032	.138
low performance	high performance	19.053(*)	5.356	.002
	medium performance	7.735	4.032	.138

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 4. 5
Comparisons between Achievement and Anxiety.

Performance level	Mean	N	Std deviation
High performance	98.56	18	23.488
Medium performance	109.87	79	15.617
Low performance	117.61	23	15.793
Total	109.66	120	17.767

Research question 2 : Is there any difference between the anxiety level of male and female students?

Based on the question, an independent t-test was employed to find out the level of anxiety between two genders. The result in Table 4.6 revealed there was no significant difference between the two variables. This showed that both genders experienced similar level of anxiety.

Table 4.6
Anxiety and Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error Mean
Language Anxiety	Male	60	106.77	19.097	2.465
	Female	60	112.55	15.969	2.062

Table 4.7 showed the comparisons between genders in terms of different types of anxiety suggested by Horwitz (1986) namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, negative evaluation and general English anxiety. The results revealed that male and female students experience the similar level of anxiety level except for the test anxiety. T-test revealed that the mean difference between genders and test anxiety was -2.217, compared to communication apprehension -1.683, negative evaluation -1.833 and English anxiety -0.050.

Table 4.7
Gender and Sources of Anxiety

Anxiety	Gender	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
Communication Apprehension	male	60	26.57	5.622
	female	60	28.25	4.229
Test Anxiety	male	60	14.80	2.950
	female	60	17.02	2.831
Negative Evaluation	male	60	32.77	6.929
	female	60	34.60	5.311
English Anxiety	male	60	32.63	6.402
	female	60	32.68	6.296
Sum of Anxiety	male	60	106.77	19.097
	female	60	112.55	15.969

Research question 3: What are the sources of anxiety that the learners believe influence the learning of English?

Regarding the sources of anxiety, the results showed that the mean of negative evaluation was the highest (33.68), followed by English anxiety (32.66), communication apprehension (27.41) and the least was test anxiety (15.91) as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8
Descriptive statistic for each group of anxiety

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication Apprehension	120	27.41	5.025
Test Anxiety	120	15.91	3.087
Negative Evaluation	120	33.68	6.216
English Anxiety	120	32.66	6.323

Descriptive statistics showed that the participants demonstrated a range of anxiety level between 2.46 and 4.11. There were four items in the questionnaire that obtained means above 4.0. Those were:

1. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

2. I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.

3. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.

4. I get nervous when the instructor asks questions that I haven't prepared.

The first item and the third item showed that students' perception towards themselves and other students did contribute to the feeling of anxiety. They also express fear in failing their examination which is closely related to test anxiety. For item four, it showed that activities that need students speak spontaneously also made students anxious.

There were 22 items from the questionnaire which obtained means above 3.0 and only the other 9 items were below 3. The first factor of anxiety was communication apprehension. Based on the students' responses, it was clear that speaking spontaneously was feared most by the students. Apart from that lack of confidence also contribute to the feeling of anxiety. Students were also anxious when they did not understand every word of the teachers. The details are described in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9
Means of items describing communication apprehension.

Communication Apprehension	Mean
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	3.58
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	3.97
14. It would not be nervous speaking in the foreign language with native speakers.	3.08
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	3.08
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students	3.53
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	3.49
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	3.53
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	3.14

For the test anxiety, "worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class" was the most anxiety provoking to students. The fear of making mistakes and being corrected by the teachers was also one of the sources of anxiety. The details of test anxiety items are described in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10
Means of items describing test anxiety

Test Anxiety	Mean
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	2.85
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	2.96
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	4.11
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	3.13
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get	2.86

Negative evaluation was the most negative provoking factor for the students. There were 3 items which means were above 4. As mentioned earlier, students had the feelings that other students were better at language learning and other students can speak better than they did, and these ideas led to low self esteem and low self confidence in acquiring L2. Lack self confidence also made them anxious to answer questions which were not prepared, to volunteer answering questions and to be called on in language class. The details of fear of negative evaluation are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11
Means of items describing negative evaluation

Negative Evaluation	Mean
1.I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	3.56
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	4.03
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	3.40
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	3.62
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	3.81
23. I always feel that the other students speak the language better than I do.	4.04
25. Language class move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	3.61
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	3.61
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	4.02

For the general English anxiety, students thought that the preparation they made for the English class could ease their feeling of anxiety. When they were anxious, they tend to forget things they know. They also mentioned feeling overwhelmed by the

number of rules they have to learn in order to be able to speak in English. The details

of English anxiety were shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12
Means of items describing general English anxiety

English Anxiety	Mean
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	2.46
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	2.80
12. In language class, I can get so nervous when I forget things I know.	3.17
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	3.59
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.	2.51
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	2.82
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes	3.01
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	2.76
30. . I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language	3.48
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	3.41
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	2.65

4.2 Results and Findings of the Interview

There were five questions asked in the interview aiming to find out students' perception on the role of anxiety, the anxiety provoking situations, the symptoms of anxiety, the strategies of coping with anxiety and suggestion to reduce anxiety in language classrooms.

Answering the question on the role of anxiety in language learning, the participants expressed different opinions. Some participants claimed that anxiety can be both debilitative and facilitative.

Female, high performer: *Sometimes anxiety helps...I feel more motivated...but sometimes it is negative... I miss a lot of chances (in answering questions)*

Some participants believed that anxiety facilitated their learning.

Female, high performer: *I think it gives me some improvement, I it won't let me down. I think anxiety is good... not good enough and you want to improve...*

Male, high performer: *Anxiety helps me. I talk to friends and get ideas. I am not that anxious. I experience it but it does not bring harm to me.*

Some participants, on the other hand felt that anxiety was detrimental to their learning.

Male, low performer: *Anxiety is not helpful in examination. I don't volunteer because I do not have the confidence with my answers. My friend told me that I am anxious, now I practice their suggestion to reduce anxiety.*

The interviewed carried out for the pilot study also revealed that all the four participants agreed that anxiety was debilitative and negatively influenced their language learning.

For the sources of anxiety, the participants in both pilot study and actual study agreed on all the three sources of anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al (1986). The first source is communication apprehension.

Learning English is OK. I feel comfortable learning...I like reading...My mother is an English teacher. I don't feel worry. It is just when I have to speak spontaneously; I need more time to think of the sentences. In terms of learning English...no anxiety.

I feel anxious the most when teacher suddenly asks questions... for example, "Raza, you answer the question". We are not prepared. I hope before that ....like tomorrow we have class, teacher has already told us... then teacher can ask question...

Like...if speaking...I stutter like anxious...then...I like..not confident...like want to say but not confident...correct or

not...then..writing is Ok...not anxious..because writing ...can ..then...if

teacher call ...feel scared...if teacher wants to do oral...if teacher asks

me to read...it is OK...like reading in front of the class ...and when

teacher asks question ...scared...then...

Another source of anxiety is fear of negative evaluation such as fear of making mistakes

(Making mistakes)May be somebody will laugh...yes, (I don't want to

volunteer)

Making mistakes is OK. Many people make mistakes. Sometimes feel

embarrassed.

However, there were also students who did not see making mistakes as anxiety provoking.

I don't mind because I take it as a joke at the same time as a challenge

because people make mistakes. Actually to me mistakes are good

because you are learning in this school, I don't feel stressful. They (

friends) don't laugh...

When making spelling mistakes and people laugh, I just ignore them...

It is normal to make mistakes

The participants also believed that making mistakes might make their teacher angry with them.

Making mistakes... absolutely my friend will laugh. But that is not the reason why I don't participate... I am scared if teacher is angry with me when I make mistakes.

The participants also experienced test anxiety.

I am anxious during examination. I am scared that I don't know how to translate my sentences.

In the exam, I will like go blank and then... I sometimes cannot remember even the simplest word that I cannot remember...

Besides speaking activities, writing activities also made them anxious. This was evident in both the pilot study and the actual study conducted.

Writing is not enjoyable. Poem and story are OK.

What make me anxious is to change the sentences in Malay to English. That is what I cannot do in writing. I rarely speak English

I am anxious when I have to write...because I have to think of the ideas.... Sometimes I don't have any ideas. I took a lot of time to write an essay . I am very slow in getting ideas. Another thing is I am scared to

ask teacher question... because my friends will say bad things ... So, I ask

my friend... In terms of speaking, I am ok.

Another thing is essay...because students now do not read much, so, lack

of vocabulary..that is why when they write essays they have no idea... no

words. When they cannot get the words, it is difficult for them to write

essays.

Worry most... essay because my grammar is not good .... Then... a lot of

essays...because cannot do ... a lot of grammar...because ...teacher used

to comment my grammar is not good...because of my grammar...I don't

know how to write essay...

I have some problems in writing like stories... like story line or because

my vocabulary is not that good... but when I read something, I

understand but when to write it back..., I have some problem.

All the participants interviewed did not have problems with reading activities. However, in the pilot study, there were participants who claimed that they were anxious whenever engaging in reading activities.

Lastly, impromptu tasks also contributed to anxiety.

I have a bit (of) problem in writing. Actually most of the time I

understand when someone is talking to me, I understand what he/she is

trying to say but then I have a big problem when the teacher asks me to

do some impromptu task like going in front of the class and talk about

something. I prefer something which is prepared... some prepared

speech...

In terms of manifestation of anxiety, the participants showed both physical and psychological symptoms.

I am stutter in my speech...I have to take longer time to answer the

question....my heart beat fast, panic, when teacher asks question, prepare

by writing on the paper....when panic breathe fast...

I look up and down, most of the time up. Sometimes I'm shaking and

sometimes if the teacher asks me question, I will be like quiet.

...Cannot speak, tremble... short of breath to talk... do not volunteer...

the feeling of anxiety last for the whole one period.

I feel pressured, feel like " what should I should do ?' I cannot write.

When I cannot write, I put my head down and up, scratch here and

there... then I change my sentence, I do not continue with the sentence. I

also sweat.

When I am stressed, I keep quiet. I think about my lesson, talk to friends.

I become restless..., cannot sit still. If I am not anxious I sit at my place

but(when) I am stressful... I go to my friends' place. I am lazy to do the task... no mood to do.

When I don't know what to do ... I feel like sleeping. I feel like I don't want to do the task and find other things to do and leave English...no motivation to do. If I sit in front, I will move the back of the class. That is the most effective way. If teacher asks something that we don't know, I just smile..

I just keep quiet like...the rest (other symptoms) no...only my heart beating fast and when I am anxious...I just keep quiet...when I forget...lazy to do...like no confidence at all to write essay.

I feel anxious...when I have that feeling...when teacher calls...I ..delay...I am anxious...then I have a lot that I cannot do in class, like talking to teacher...I go back home I speak with myself...I want...I really want to improve...

Feel anxious...restless...shaky...then feel numb...like...like my body feel hot...like..other than that...I will look at other places...if I talk to teacher...because I am scared...then...I don't know how to express myself, don't know how to explain...

The pilot study also revealed the similar results in terms of manifestation of anxiety. Other physical symptoms mentioned by the participants were cold hands, foot tapping and palpitation. From the psychological aspect, participants avoid volunteering and avoid answering questions. They also prefer to sit alone.

The participants were also asked about their strategies of alleviating their language anxiety. Basically the strategies employed were similar to strategies proposed by Kondo and Ling (2004) namely : preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking and resignation. In 'preparation strategy', students made an effort to prepare for the lessons as well as to find ways improving their performance in the language.

Usually I serve internet, find some poems, I read poems, I have my face profile and some of my friends they talk in English a lot , so, I be friends with someone who loves to speak English and then I can converse with them in English. In class, I will open the text book and read the text book

May be say will open the dictionary...I read...like...I study on my own...may be I open other books...study other books..

I try to seek for solutions and I try not to... just let it be...the solution...I attend tuition classes, in class I talk to friends...talk to sisters in English...then...what...ask someone who is better...ask how to speak in

English...there are words that don't know how to say...then I will ask

their opinion, how is my speech, how do I deliver...and other things..

Another strategy was relaxation where students made an effort to calm themselves

down.

Try to calm down, take a deep breath, try to understand what teacher

wants even though it takes longer time.

If it is too stressful with the work, I stop and drink some water, relax

before I proceed.

Sometimes pace up and down, sometimes speak to myself...find ways to reduce

anxiety,

The participants also resorted to resignation strategy.

If I am scared, I do nothing.

Besides that, in the peer seeking strategy, students tried to get some moral support

and help from their peers.

If I am very stressful and do not have any idea to do (the exercise), I ask

my friends for their opinion...

To reduce the anxiety, I assume that no one is in front of me, as if there is

nothing...the strategies... pray, read, get friends' support .

ask friends if I do not understand or see teachers if it is serious

The participants also employed a few strategies simultaneously.

First, get some water to drink. Revise what teacher teach .. think of some

ideas and do the task. If teacher asks question (that is not prepared) , I

try to delay the time by pretending searching for a book, ask teacher to

repeat the question.. when teacher repeats the question , I have more time

to think. When we look at familiar faces .. we can get ideas, my father

told me that. So, when I make a speech, I always look at my close friends,

when they smile at me or laugh , I will get the idea because by then we

are not stressful.

Smile.. is the best to reduce anxiety.

The participants also made some suggestions on how to make English classrooms
less stressful. They liked humor and thought that teachers with a sense of humor can
make classroom more relaxed.

Make jokes in class...

I think when teachers are like more strict, they will bring us to SAL room (Self-

Assess Learning Room) and show some movies, usually do some presentation...

very enjoyable, you have the chance to make jokes.

The participants also thought that teachers should inform them the activities for the
next class beforehand so that they can be well prepared.

Teacher should inform students exactly what she wants to do in the next

class. When we are prepared, we are not scared.

They also prefer group activities than individual activities.

Group activities are enjoyable but ...like individual ...feel scared...like

presentation...then debate...feel scared.

group work...ok...individual activities are ok but I think group activities

even better.

The participants also preferred individual comments rather than open comments made by teachers.

If teacher wants to comments, see the students personally and not make

comments openly. Students feel embarrassed.

Students also felt that they need more time in answering teachers' questions and preferred teachers to address the questions to the whole class and not individual.

...address questions to all students...ask for volunteers to answer

questions...story telling is enjoyable...answering questions need time.

Students also wanted to have personal coaching from the teachers.

Teacher always speaks English, so cannot understand fully. When we

write essays, teacher should go round from one student to another and

help.

May be...for students who are like me(weak in grammar) ...may be can

teach again grammar...like teach slowly...give meaning of new

words...like that...

The participants also believed that they need exercises on grammar, vocabulary and writing.

> *Do activities on grammar and vocab...write simple essay*
>
> *first....teacher should not push (force them to write long essays)*

> *For speaking, teacher should ask us to repeat after her, for example, "*
>
> *I have a cat." But the sentences must be more complicated. Singing like*
>
> *what we did in the primary school is also effective.*

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Discussion

A review of literature has shown that anxiety is one of the influential construct in second language learning. The present study investigated the issue of anxiety by focusing on five aspects: the relationship between anxiety and achievement, anxiety and gender, sources of anxiety, manifestations of anxiety and strategies coping with anxiety. This chapter discusses the data obtained from both questionnaires and interview by relating them to the existing literature.

The data obtained from the questionnaires first and foremost gave a picture of the current situation regarding the issue of anxiety in Malaysian secondary school context. Consistent with expectation, the quantitative data indicated that all students indeed had the feeling of anxiety in their English classroom. However, the level of anxiety varies according to the students' levels of proficiency. The high performance students experienced lower level of anxiety compared to their medium and low performance counterparts. The level of anxiety between the medium and low performance students showed not much difference.

The responses from the interview revealed the students' awareness regarding their feeling of anxiety. Similar to Worde (2003), students used the terms frustration, fear, nervous and anxious interchangeably. They are also mature enough to evaluate

whether the anxiety they experienced was facilitative or debilitative for their L2 acquisition. One student believed that anxiety can be both facilitative and debilitative, stating, "Sometimes anxiety helps...I feel more motivated...but sometimes it is negative... I miss a lot of chances (in answering questions)".

It is interesting to note that students who claim anxiety as facilitative were the high performers, both males and females. Whereas, the low and medium achievers believed that anxiety is detrimental to their performance in L2.

According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) anxiety is the result of cognitive interference. The high performers initially see anxiety as the interference but attempt to compensate by increased effort. In doing so, these students do extra reading, look for meaning of words in the dictionary, practise speaking, serve internet and engage in other activities that require them to use English. Perhaps they also feel that anxiety provides motivation and focus for them to improve their language proficiency. Thus, with the effort, students are able to compensate for the reduced efficiency of their cognitive processing (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994) and perform well. In contrast, medium and low performers who are highly anxious may not be able to compensate for the cognitive interference and perform badly. The poor performance in turn creates more anxiety and even worse performance (Arnold and Brown, 1999).

Even though students in the study agreed with the two roles of anxiety, the quantitative data revealed a significant negative correlation (-.417) between anxiety

and performance of the students. This finding is consistent with those of Aida (1994), Saito and Samimy (1996) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1989).

From the gender perspective, the result of FLACS generally showed no significant difference between communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation of the two genders. This finding is in contrast with Zhoa Na (2007) who claimed that male students were more anxious and Machida (2003, as cited in Tanveer, 2007) who found that Japanese female learners were more anxious than their male counterparts. The test anxiety however was higher among female students than male students, similar to the findings of Aydin's (2008). The finding also did not confirm Spielberger's (1983, as cited in Tanveer, 2007) claim that females are more emotionally stable in dealing with high anxiety situations.

In term of sources of anxiety, the students cited numerous and various sources of anxiety including the three sources of anxiety suggested by Horwitz et al. (1986). Communication apprehension is common among the students. They feel anxious whenever they have to speak in the language, to engage in impromptu tasks or to answer questions in English. This finding is similar to Kim's (1998) study in an Asian EFL context. The study revealed that students felt more anxious in classrooms which require oral communication compared to traditional reading classrooms (Horwitz, 2001). Similarly, the nature of instruction in Malaysian classrooms requires students to engage in a lot of speaking and writing activities in order to develop their communicative competence. This is in line with the Communicative

Language Teaching approach which is widely practiced in Malaysian classrooms. The students found speaking as anxiety provoking because they rarely have the opportunity to speak outside the class since majority of the community speak Bahasa Malaysia in their daily communication. As it is well documented that practice is needed for the "development of automaticity" (Lightbown & Spada,1999, p.39) in language used, the Malaysian students are lacking in this aspect. Their only opportunity to speak English is given during English lessons. However, not all students have the opportunity and willingness to speak English in class. So, they have little opportunity to transfer what DeKeyer (1998) termed as 'declarative knowledge' to 'procedural knowledge' which enables students to produce language effortlessly (ibid).

Related to speaking anxiety was the concern over making grammatical mistakes. Students are often taught language that is somewhat formal in comparison to the language used outside the classroom. For example, in speaking activities, students are required to produce complete sentences which are grammatically correct. So, in this kind of formal situations, students move from the 'vernacular style' to a more 'careful style' where they are focusing on the forms, and trying to be as correct as possible (Towell & Hawkins, 1994). Related to this situation also, students tend to use their 'monitor' in polishing their speech and producing correct language. The degree to which the monitor is used depends on several factors including the nature and focus required by the verbal task being performed and the students' personality (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982). Concerned over making grammatical mistakes,

students tend to make a great deal of self-correction and hesitation when speaking. Moreover, monitoring takes place only when students have plenty of time and this explains why students felt anxious when they were not given ample time to speak or answer impromptu questions. In line with this, one student expressed, "If teacher asks question (that is not prepared) I try to delay the time by pretending searching for a book, ask teacher to repeat the question.. when teacher repeats the question I have more time to think..."

Another relevant issue regarding speaking anxiety is the treatment of students' errors which is a very "complicated and thorny problem" (Xie and Jiang, 2007). The issue of what to correct, when to correct and how to correct errors is controversial and very much dependent upon teachers' discretion. Many teachers take the notion of the Behaviorists, that errors are the result of negative transfer and should be avoided. With this view, teachers tend to correct all the errors made by students without realizing that the feedback may contribute to higher level of anxiety among them. Another problem related to error correction is how errors should be best corrected. Students expressed their embarrassment of being commented or corrected openly. They would appreciate if teachers can talk about their errors individually, without blaming them for making the errors.

Besides speaking, writing activities are also anxiety-provoking to the students. The present form four syllabus (for the students around 16 years old, which is equal to grade 10) requires students to engage actively in writing activities. They are to

produce two essays in their examination. One is the directed writing where students are given points and they have to produce an essay using the points given. The other essay is the continuous writing where students are only given the topic on what to write. Both types of writing carry a significant weight in the examination. Due to this, essay writing is essential in English lessons in Malaysia.

The interview revealed that in the process of writing, students faced two major problems namely poor command of language and poor task fulfillment. Students complained that they feel anxious because they could not translate the sentences in the Malay language into English when writing an essay. Other linguistic problems faced by students are lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar competence. Due to the poor command of the language, students could not express themselves well in writing even when the students have good ideas on the essay. One of the students informed that, "I have the idea but cannot write in English. When I cannot write, I change my idea, I make it simpler...".

Besides linguistic problems, students are also anxious when they do not have ideas to write on the given topics. One of the students claimed that, "I am anxious when I have to write...because I have to think of the ideas.... Sometimes I don't have any ideas. I took a lot of time to write an essay . I am very slow in getting ideas...". In brief, different students face different problems in writing which may lead to anxiety, so, that is why one student suggested that during the writing lesson, teacher should go round the class and help students individually.

From the above discussion, students are anxious when dealing with both the productive skills, writing and speaking. However, students feel less anxious in reading and no student mentions listening anxiety in the interview. There are a few possible reasons for this. One plausible reason is because listening is not tested separately in the examination. So, having listening test anxiety is out of the question. Also due to the exclusion, perhaps teachers do not teach listening separately and therefore students do not see this skill as anxiety provoking.

Test anxiety is also common among the students. This is perhaps due to the nature of the schooling system in Malaysia which is perceived as exam-oriented by many students. Students are constantly being assessed on their progress and their achievement is translated into grades. So, most of the time, students are aiming to get "A" for their English paper. Setting a very high goal, being a perfectionist or always failing the examinations are some of the factors that contribute to test anxiety. One of the students claimed that during the examination, she cannot even remember the simple words. Others claimed that they could not think of ideas to write essays in the examinations.

Another source of anxiety is fear of negative evaluation. Students thought that they may be laughed for making mistakes and even worse they may provoke teacher's anger towards them. One student expressed, "Making mistakes... absolutely my friend will laugh. But that is not the reason why I don't participate... I am scared if

teacher is angry with me when I make mistakes". The fear of making teachers angry is not a common factor in other studies. This is related to the cultural values hold by the Malay students regarding the authority of teachers which is very similar to the Confucians' perceptions discussed earlier. Apart from that, students at the age of sixteen are experiencing what Erikson (1963) termed as role confusion (Biehler & Snowman, 1990). The goal at this stage is the development of ego identity. In developing self identity, students are very concern with how people perceive them. So, making mistakes in front of the friends is indeed stressful especially in formal classroom environment.

The inability to comprehend what was being said also provoked considerable anxiety. Worde (2003) reported that many learners complained that teachers spoke too fast, or refused to use any L1 at all which resulted in an inability to keep up during class. Similarly, the same comment was put forth by the students in this study. One of them commented, "Teacher always speaks English, so (I) cannot understand fully". The "all English" or "monolingual approach" where only L2 is used in ESL classroom is a common scenario in some Malaysian secondary schools. Many teachers believe that the use of L1 in the L2 classroom is regarded as a hindrance to L2 acquisition. Yet, for the students who need a sense of security, the idea of abandoning the native tongue is too stressful.

In brief, the sources of anxiety can be classified as personal factors and classroom factors as suggested by Song (2008) and these factors are intricately intertwined.

Another aspect of anxiety that was investigated was the manifestation of anxiety among students. The physical and psychological symptoms showed by students were similar to other studies (Horwitz, 1986; Onwuegbuzie et al. ,1999; Tanveer, 2007). The common symptoms of anxiety are stutter, palpitation, shaky, tremble, short of breath, restless and look up and down. There were also highly anxious students who resort to keeping quite or talking to their friends. The worse symptoms which are less documented were feeling of numbness and feeling of body flushing.

It is rather easy to identify anxious students from their physical manifestation. However, it is difficult for teachers to notice the psychological manifestation of anxiety which is more detrimental. Some of the symptoms are avoid volunteering, lazy and demotivated to complete the given tasks. The highly anxious students also are easily giving up during difficult tasks and resort to resignation. This is supported by Crookall and Oxford (1991) that serious language anxiety may cause other related problems with "self-esteem, self-confidence, and risk-talking ability" (Worde, 2003, p.1).

In response to anxiety–provoking situations, a large majority of the students indicated that they made effort to cope with their anxiety. This is in contrast to the studies conducted by Bailey et al (1999) and Pappamihiel (2002) who maintain that resignation or avoidance is one of the common strategies used by anxious students. The students claimed that they actively seek for solutions whenever they experience

anxiety in language lessons. The strategies were similar to Kondo and Ling's (2004), namely preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking and resignation. Preparation strategy is usually employed by the high achievers who managed to turn anxiety into challenge or motivation to improve L2. This is where anxiety plays the facilitative role in L2 acquisition. The feeling of anxiety seems to urge students to make preparation before attending English class or put extra effort in improving their level of proficiency. This is evident when learners took strategies such as studying on their own, attending tuition classes, doing extra reading, looking for meaning of words in the dictionary, speaking English outside classroom and so on. With high determination to improve their English proficiency, students expended their effort and they have greater likelihood of success (MacIntyre et al., 1997).

The second strategy employed by the students was the 'relaxation' strategy. They expressed their strategies, saying: " (I) try to calm down, take a deep breath, try to understand what teacher wants even though it takes longer time" , " (I) pace up and down, sometimes speak to myself' and "I stop and drink some water, relax before I proceed". A lot of other students also mentioned that drinking some water helps them in alleviating their anxiety. This finding is rather interesting as it is rarely mentioned in other literature.

Another strategy which students thought helpful was the 'peer seeking strategy'. One student claimed "when I make a speech, I always look at my close friends, when they smile at me or laugh, I will get the idea because by then we are not stressful".

Another student expressed, "If I am very stressful and do not have any idea to do (the exercise), I ask my friends for their opinion…" The responses also revealed that by just holding their friend' hands, students were able to reduce their anxiety in L2 learning. It is obvious that friends' support is powerful enough to create a non-threatening situation to students. As young adolescent who are developing the adolescent egocentrism, students are concerned with the reactions of others towards them. They believe "their thoughts and actions are as central to others as to themselves" (Biehler & Snowman, 1990, p.71). So, it is obvious that teachers should manipulate peer support to create a more conducive, non-threatening classroom.

Students' positive thinking is also crucial in alleviating anxiety. MacIntyre et al., (1997) maintained that "emotional tension, or anxiety, results from low self efficacy evaluations"(p. 269). In completing a difficult task, anxious language learners tend to focus on their perceived inadequacies rather than on the task itself. Their little faith in their own ability to control the environment interferes with the ability to "take in, process, and produce an L2" (ibid). From FLACS, two popular statement were "I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do" and " I worry about the consequences of failing m English class". These statements show that students underestimate their abilities, lack of confidence and have negative perceptions towards L2 learning. This strategy was not very popular in the present study. So, it is important for teachers to inculcate positive attitude towards L2 learning as to change to avoid biases in self –rating among students.

The most undesirable strategy that students resorted to in coping with anxiety was the resignation strategy. Students refused to take part in the lessons, avoided volunteering, did nothing to alleviate anxiety. This is surely detrimental to L2 learning.

5.2 Conclusion

As a conclusion, despite its limitation, this research has raised some important findings relevant the feeling of anxiety among the secondary students in Malaysia. The study showed that the students, to some extent, did experience anxiety in their language class. The level of anxiety is correlated negatively with the level of students' performance. However, there was no difference in the level of anxiety of male and female students. Students agreed with the sources of anxiety suggested by Horwitz (1986) namely communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. They also claimed that writing activities and impromptu activities were anxiety-provoking. The study also identified some physical and psychological symptoms of highly anxious students. In terms of coping with anxiety, students employed five main strategies namely preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking and resignation.

5.3 Suggestions and Recommendations

As mentioned earlier, the sources of anxiety can be viewed from two general perspectives: students' factors and classroom factors. So, in helping students coping with their anxiety, teachers' role is seen crucial.

First and foremost, teachers should acknowledge the existence of the feeling of anxiety in learning English language. Teachers should read more literature on the affective aspects of the students particularly anxiety as to be well informed. With the sound theoretical knowledge on anxiety, teachers are able to make wise pedagogical decisions as to help reduce the level of anxiety among students. Apart from that, teachers' willingness to help learners reduce their anxiety level is also crucial. There are a few suggestions that may help teachers in their effort to provide a more comfortable and anxiety-free environment to students.

First, build a friendly, supportive and relaxed learning environment. Creating a relaxed environment is very much dependent on teachers' personality, pedagogical knowledge and attitude towards learners and language. Some of the ways suggested by the students are to have jokes in class, to provide fun activities like singing, group presentation, story telling, poem reading and movie viewing. Worde (2003) suggested that a sense of communality in the classroom whereby students feel safe among their friends, contribute greatly to a relaxed atmosphere.

Second, identify individual with signs of anxiety and encourage them to talk about their anxiety. Having individual student-teacher meetings is a constructive measure. Such meetings may provide teachers with the opportunity to have one-to-one relaxed conversation with the students, trying to figure out what make students anxious and how teachers can help them in alleviating their anxiety. This is strongly suggested by the students. One of the students expressed, "It is good that you (the researcher) ask

these questions (related to anxiety) because I don't know to whom I should talk about this". At this point, it is clear that students want to talk about their feelings but they are not given the opportunity to express them. So, teachers should be reminded that no matter how busy they are in finishing the syllabus, they have to take some time to listen to their students.

Third, establish the idea that mistakes are a normal part of the learning process. In doing so, teachers themselves should have the right perceptions towards errors before they can convince the students that mistakes are not a sign of failure, but rather a normal aspect of language learning process. Related to this issue, teachers should know when to correct error and how to correct them. Giving feedback, as suggested by the students should not be made openly but rather to consult individual learners. Besides individual consultation, recast is also one of the effective ways to correct students.

Fourth, students strongly feel that group activities are less fearful and individual activities. Supporting this view, Worde (2003) advised teachers to make sensible use of purposeful group work or collaborative activities.

Fifth, students also expressed that they are highly anxious when teachers speak English all the time and they could not understand them fully. In this situation, perhaps teachers should consider code-switching whenever necessary. Skinner (1985, as cited in Onwuebuzie et al. , 1999) argued that a lesson conducted entirely

in L2 is detrimental to the process of concept development and sometimes may impede the connection of thoughts and ideas already developed in L1 (Macaro, 2001). Teachers also should speak more slowly or consider what Long (1983) termed as "modified interaction". He proposed that modified interaction does not only involve linguistic simplification but also other features such as comprehension checks, clarification requests and self-repetition or paraphrase.

Based on the research findings, discussion and recommendations, it is hope that teachers gain some invaluable insights on anxiety in English classrooms. It is also hoped that this study is able to help teachers to make better pedagogical decisions in reducing anxiety among students.

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