Students' Anxiety in Language Learning: Genders Difference

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Abstract: It has been widely admitted that most people have their own obstacles when it comes into learning a new language. In fact, it happens to students a lot. Some studies have been conducted in order to investigate further about the students' anxiety level in learning language. There are some anxiety factors that have been explored, discussed, and analyzed in order to find the solution on overcoming the anxiety problem. This research is intended to explore the influence of gender (male and female) in the anxiety issue of learning language. The participants of this research consisted of 45 male and 45 female students in one Junior High School in West Java. This research applied FLCAS questionnaire to explore students' level of anxiety. Based on the data analysis through the questionnaire, it is found that there is no difference between male and female students in terms of their anxiety in language learning. It is proven by the chi-square test that is applied to analyze the data collected.

1. Introduction

A lot of people claim to have a mental block againts learning a foreign language, although these same people may be good learners in other situations, strongly motivated, and have a sincere liking for speakers of the target language (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). This problem happens a lot to students during the process of learning foreign language. Hence, it is important, in fact, that the instructor begins exploring instructional strategies that may overcome the student's feeling of inadequacy, confusion, and failure. High levels of anxiety may compromise negatively the forthcoming attitude toward the foreign language studied. Teachers should strengthen students' self esteem in their L2 ability via reassurance, empathy and even by encouraging realistic expectations regarding the time during which fluency in the target language may be acquired. (Occhipinti, 2009).

According to Elaine Horwitz in Trang, Moni, Baldauf (2012), one of the leading researchers in the field, greater importance should be assigned to understanding the frustration and discomfort that a large number of students seem to be suffering when learning a foreign language. Gregersen (2005) states that the students with high level of anxiety tend

to avoid learning situation which makes them get anxious. In this case, the learning activities might be viewed as something not pleasurable for the students.

Some research have been conducted to find out students level of anxiety in learning foreign language, Cui (2011), Wu (2010), and Lian & Budin (2014), which also have investigated the difference on gender difference level of anxiety. Hence, this research was conducted to investigate the difference level of anxiety based on genders in one of Junior High School in West Java, in order to find out more about the difference on male and female level of anxiety.

a. Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out whether or not there is a difference level of anxiety on male and female students in one of the Junior High School in West Java.

b. Research Question

The research question of this study was, is there a difference level of anxiety on male and female students in one of the Junior High School in West Java.

c. Significance of the Study

The outcome of this research is expected to give valuable information for teachers to acknowledge the students level of anxiety in order to find out the approriate techniques in conducting an effective teaching process.

d. The Scope of the Study

This study focused on the analysis of students' level of anxiety. The level of anxiety is then further analyzed based on the gender difference, male and female to find out whether or not there is any difference on the gender difference.

2. Literature Review
a. Language Learning Anxiety

Horwitz in Humphries (2011) defines anxiety as a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. There are three related performance anxieties: 1) communication apprehension; 2) test anxiety; and 3) fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people, while test-anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure and fear of negative evaluation, defined as "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively," (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986)

Foreign language anxiety and language anxiety means the same thing: the subjective feeling of fear, tension, apprehension, uneasiness, nervousness and/or worry, associated with the perception or anticipation of threat or negative events in foreign and second language context. (Wang, 1998). Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) findings suggest that significant foreign language anxiety is experienced by many students in response to at least some aspects of foreign language learning.

Horwitz & Young, and Macintyre, in Tóth (2008) define that there have been essentially two basic approaches to the study of anxiety in the L2 domain. These are labelled (1) the anxiety transfer , and (2) the unique anxiety approach, which are reflective of different conceptualisations of L2-related anxiety. The assumption behind the first approach is that the anxiety experienced in an L2 context is simply the transfer of other forms of anxiety into the L2 domain. This means that individuals who are generally anxious or experience anxiety in certain types of situations are presumed to have a predisposition to also experience anxiety when learning or using a foreign language. In contrast, the assumption underlying the other approach is that language learning produces a unique type of anxiety. Stiil in Tóth (2008) the theoretical perspective is based on Gardner's hypothesis that "a construct of anxiety which is not general but instead is specific to the language acquisition context is related to second language achievement". In this conceptualisation, anxiety experienced in L2 contexts is seen as a situation- specific anxiety which is aroused by the experience of learning and using a second language.

b. Related studies

Cui (2011) has held research that investigated the comparison between male and female students anxiety based on their achievements. The study found that male students tend to have higher anxiety level than female students. And it is also found that anxiety is a delibilitator in language learning, especially anxiety of text and English classes.

Wu (2010) has conducted research that explore on how students perceive the relationship between their language learning strategy and anxiety in the foreign language classroom. The research found that students hold positive attitude CLT. Even though the implementation still encounter some obstacles, but CLT is an approach that is considered to be more likely to apply in EFL context.

Similar research has been conducted by Lian & Budin (2014) which investigated the relationship between English Language Anxiety and the achievement of school based oral English test among Malaysian form four students, along with the difference between genders in English language anxiety. The findings shows that most students experience moderate level of language anxiety and moderate level of correlation between students' anxiety and students' achievement. And there is also significant difference between genders in terms of language anxiety.

3. Research Method

a. Participants

The participants of this research is the 8th grade students in one of Junior High School in West Java, consisted of 45 male students and 45 female students.

b. Instruments

The instrument of this research is the FLCAS questionnaire taken from Horwitz in

Wang (1998). The questionnaire consists of 33 question items to explore students level of anxiety. Still in Wang (1998), Horwitz reveals that the FLCAS contains 33 items, each of which is answered on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1) "strongly disagree" to 3) "neither agree nor disagree,",to 5) "strongly agree." Items 1,3,4,6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19,20,21,23,24,25,26,27,29, 30,31, and 33 represent high anxiety, and are scored from 1 point (strongly disagree) to 5 points (strongly agree). Items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18,22,28, and 32 represent lack of anxiety, and are scored from 5 points (strongly disagree) to 1 point (strongly agree). Therefore, the total scores of the scale range from 33 to 165, with high scores indicating high levels of foreign language anxiety.

c. Data Collection

The reseacher set the schedule which can accommodate the questionnaire distribution. The schedule was also set to give plenty of time for the students to fill out the questionnaire without rushing them to finish it.

d. Data Analysis

After collecting the data through questionnaires, the data then calculated, tabulated, and analyzed by manual calculation. The data analysis applied chi-square test in order to find out whether or not there is a difference on male and female students' level of anxiety in language learning.

e. Hypothesis

This research aimed to prove some hypotheses:

H0 =   There is no difference between male and female students' level of anxiety in language learning.

H1 =   There is difference between male and female students' level of anxiety n language learning.

4. Findings

Based on Horwitz in Wang (1998), the total scores of the scale range from 33 to 165, with high scores indicating high levels of foreign language anxiety. Hence, the range of classification when the students' score are classified into three levels, which are High, Moderate, and Low, is presented below;

Levels	Range	Male	Female
High	121-165	1	3
Moderate	77-120	44	42
Low	33-76	0	0

To find out exactly whether or not there is a difference of male and female level of anxiety, the chi-square test is applied as presented below:

	Male	Female	Total
High	1	3	4 = n_1
Moderate	44	42	86 = n_2
Low	0	0	0 = n_3
	45	45	90 = N
	n	n_2	

$$E_{\text{cell 1-1}} = \frac{n1n1}{N} = \frac{(45)(4)}{90} = 2$$

$$E_{\text{cell 1-2}} = \frac{n2n1}{N} = \frac{(45)(4)}{90} = 2$$

$$E_{\text{cell 2-1}} = \frac{n1n2}{N} = \frac{(45)(86)}{90} = 43$$

$$E_{\text{cell 2-1}} = \frac{n2n2}{N} = \frac{(45)(86)}{90} = 43$$

$$E_{\text{cell 3-1}} = \frac{n1n3}{N} = \frac{(45)(0)}{90} = 0$$

$$E_{\text{cell 3-1}} = \frac{n2n3}{N} = \frac{(45)(0)}{90} = 0$$

Row	Column	O	E	O-E	(O-E)²	(O-E)²/ E
1	1	1	2	-1	1	0.5
1	2	3	2	1	1	0.5
2	1	44	43	1	1	0.023
2	2	42	43	-1	1	0.023
3	1	0	0	0	0	0
3	2	0	0	0	0	0
				$X^2 = \sum(O-E)^2/E = 1.046$		

(2-1) (3-1) = 2 df = 5.991

1.046 < 5.991

Looking on the chi-square calculation above with the final score is 1.046, which is lower than the critical value, 5.991, it can be said that there is no difference of anxiety level based on the students gender, or there is no difference between male and female students' level of anxiety.

5. Discussion

Even though there has been some research conducted on the same area which investigated the difference of male and female students in terms of level of anxiety, Cui (2011), Wu (2010), and Lian & Budin (2014), and have found that there is difference between male and female students' level of anxiety, this research shows the vice versa. The difference on this research findings compared to the previous ones may lays on some factors that have already existed among the students. For examples the approach of teaching that is applied by the language teacher. This is related to Horwitz & Young, and Macintyre, in Tóth (2008) define that there have been essentially two basic approaches to the study of anxiety in the L2 domain. These are labelled (1) the anxiety transfer , and (2) the unique anxiety approach, which are reflective of different conceptualisations of L2-related anxiety. During the particular teaching approach, both genders, male and female, may have been trained to learn language in similar ways. Hence, they finally come into the similar level of

anxiety since they have the same form of perception and comprehension about language learning.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that there is no difference on male and female students' level of anxiety. This finding may have been influenced by some particular factors that have been experienced by the students. Therefore, they finally feel the same level of anxiety in language learning.

7. Recommendation

Since this research has appeared to enrich the sources for teachers in comprehending the students' anxiety in language learning and it comes with different findings compared to the most previous research, it is expected that teachers can be more thoughtful in creating material for the students, particularly when it concerns on the gender difference and issue. Also, for the future researcher, it is expected to conduct research in the same area to investigate deeper on individual factors that influence students' level of anxiety.

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