

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

ความวิตกกังวลด้านการสื่อสารและความเต็มใจที่จะสื่อสารในห้องเรียนภาษา

Apisara Sritulanon¹ and Benchasri Sriyothin²

^{1,2}The Office of General Education, Panyapiwat Institute of Management

Abstract

This article presents one type of anxieties called communication apprehension and its effect on language learners' willingness to communicate, particularly speaking abilities. In addition, the applications of relevant research will be discussed how it could be integrated with classroom activities in order to find a practical way to decrease communication apprehension and promote willingness to communicate in classroom.

Keywords: communication apprehension, willingness to communicate, language classroom activities

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้นำเสนอความวิตกกังวลประเภทหนึ่งที่เรียกว่าความวิตกกังวลด้านการสื่อสารและผลกระทบต่อความเต็มใจที่จะสื่อสารของผู้เรียนภาษาโดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งด้านความสามารถในการพูด นอกจากนี้การประยุกต์ใช้ผลของการวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องจะนำมาอภิปรายเพื่อหาวิธีที่จะสอดแทรกเข้ากับกิจกรรมในชั้นเรียน เพื่อหาแนวทางในการลดความวิตกกังวลด้านการสื่อสารและส่งเสริมความเต็มใจที่จะสื่อสารในห้องเรียน

คำสำคัญ: ความวิตกกังวลด้านการสื่อสาร ความเต็มใจที่จะสื่อสาร กิจกรรมด้านภาษาในชั้นเรียน

In Thailand when the school curriculum is basically designed, the primary purpose of second language teaching aims to help learners be able to communicate with foreigners in the target language, particularly English. Unfortunately, it has been diverted from the main intention to learner examination scores. In so doing, classroom atmosphere, teachers' behaviour and teaching methods gear up students for passing exams. Consequently, the students stress out while they are learning the language. When the brain is taken up stress, a learner does not fully concentrate on what he/she is learning. Therefore, no information goes into his/her short-term or long-term memory. Moreover, it is difficult for the learner to retrieve information what he/she has learned if he/she is under stress or anxieties (Rossman, 2010).

According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1988), affective variables namely motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image and anxieties are considered as factors to promote or suppress language learning process. He argues that a learner with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image and low-level anxiety tends to do better in language learning.

This article will focus on one type of anxieties called communication apprehension and its effect on language learners' willingness to communicate, particularly speaking abilities. In addition, the applications of relevant research will be discussed how it could be integrated with our classroom activities to decrease communication apprehension and promote willingness

to communicate in classroom.

To recognize the term of 'communication apprehension (CA)' in language learning, McCroskey (1977: 103) clarified it as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." Moreover, he also presented the three components of desired communication learning: communication competence, communication skills and positive communication affect. He pointed out the relationship of communication apprehension and communication learning components. This view also puts forward the claim that *low communication apprehension is seen as a facilitator of the development of communication competence and communication skill and as a precursor of positive communication affect.*

In the last decade the communication anxiety or apprehension has attracted much attention from many researchers. The study conducted by Park & Lee (2005) investigated the effects of L2 learners' anxiety, self-confidence and oral performance. There were 132 Korean college students enrolling the English conversation courses. The researchers found that the students who had the high anxiety got the low scores on their oral performance. In contrast, the students who had the high confidence did better in oral performance. The researchers recommended that both native and non-native teachers should care about learners' affective variables, particularly their self-confidence and anxiety in order to improve second language learners' oral communication.

The relationships between communication apprehension and learners' beliefs about language learning with EFL University students' willingness to communicate in Iran were examined by Fatemipour & Shirmohamadzadeh (2014). There were 358 participants majoring in Hotel Management, Hospitality, Cooking, and Tourism. The results showed that both communication apprehension and learners' beliefs had relationship with students' willingness to communicate. There was a positive correlation between learners' beliefs and willingness to communicate, whereas there was a negative correlation between communication apprehension and willingness to communicate. In other words, if learners' beliefs increased, their willingness to communicate also increased. By the contrast, if learners' communication apprehension increased, their willingness to communicate decreased. The researchers recommended the implication of research findings to teacher trainers in order to make more effective teacher education programs aiming to increase students' interest and reduce their communication apprehension.

Factors Contributing to Communication Apprehension among Pre-University Students in Malaysia were studied by Tom et al. (2013). The participants were 49 pre-university students. It was found that group discussion, English speaking situations, presentations in front of the opposite gender classmates were factors that increased students' communication apprehension. The researchers recommended that learners' communication apprehension and its causes should be identified at the beginner level of

English language classes. In so doing, teachers could prepare their lessons and class activities to decrease learners' communication apprehension and promote their willingness to communicate as well.

Interestingly, Al-Tamimi (2014) conducted the study of public speaking instruction as a bridge to improve English speaking competence and reducing communication apprehension. There were 60 English major students at the college of education of the university in Yemen. It was a 48-hour course. The art of public speaking of Lucas (1984) was used as a course book. The research revealed the positive effect of public speaking instruction in terms of improving students' public speech performance and decreasing their communication apprehension.

One of the most interesting findings of research related to willingness to communicate showed that teachers' effect on learners' willingness to communication in L2 conducted by Kuutila (2014). The research revealed that there is a positive effect on language learning when teachers used a variety of teaching methods which suits their students. In addition, it was found a positive effect on students' willingness to use English as a means of communication in the classroom. Moreover, teachers' supportive and enthusiastic behaviour could increase learners' willingness to communicate. It is important to note that teachers should not focus on learners' mistakes.

In the last few years there has been a growing interest in investigating communication

apprehension and willingness to communicate of language learners in Thai context. Kopkitthanarot (2011) examined communication apprehension in public speaking among Class 12 English for Careers students at Thammasat University. There were 55 questionnaire respondents. There was strong negative correlation between communication apprehension in public speaking and speech performances. It was said that a powerful strategy to reduce communication apprehension in public speaking was through rehearsal. The results obtained by Kasemkosin & Rimkeeratikul (2012) in Communication Apprehension of Student Officers at the Royal Thai Air Force Language Center disclosed that students' different background had an effect on language learning and teaching in the classroom. In addition, the researchers suggested that the results could be used as guidelines for teachers in designing teaching materials and classroom activities to improve learners' English speaking skills. In Willingness to Communicate and Communication Apprehension in English among Thai Employees it was shown that year of work experiences and the perceived English language competence affect employees' communication apprehension and willingness to communicate. The results also revealed that age had positive correlation with employees' willingness to communicate, whereas it did not influence their communication apprehension (Boonsongsup & Rimkeeratikul, 2012). In a recent paper by Rimkeeratikul (2015), 90 engineering students responded to the PRCA-24 survey to investigate their communication apprehension in L1 and

L2. Interestingly, the results showed that students' communication apprehension in L1 was greater comparing to in L2 when they imagined that they had to communicate in a meeting. Rimkeeratikul et al. (2016) studied communication apprehension in L1 and L2 among first-year students of a graduate program for executives and found that the students' communication apprehension in the dimension of interpersonal conversation in L1 was higher than that in L2. The researchers suggested that English language teachers apply the results to develop their course or syllabus design.

In light of the evidence from the several aforementioned studies, we have a better understanding of the effect of communication apprehension towards willingness to communicate in second language. According to MacIntyre et al. (1988), the construct of willingness to communicate is seen as a final step before actual second language use. It is also claimed that the more high levels of willingness of communicate are, the most effectiveness on second language learning and acquisition is (Ellis, 2004).

On the basis of the evidence currently available, it seems fair to suggest that learners' communication apprehension be surveyed at the beginner level of English courses. The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) of McCroskey (1977) shown in Appendix A is generally used in investigating communication apprehension. The PRCA-24 is divided into four communication contexts: group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conversation

and public speaking.

As the Affective Filter Hypothesis, it is implied that learners themselves control their learning process which is expected to occur when their communication apprehension is low. Therefore, the results of the survey has an intrinsic worth, as well as helping language teachers both native and non-native to plan for their teaching methods and language classroom activities in order to reduce learners' communication apprehension. Moreover, it is important to remember that teachers' behaviour also affects the learners' communication apprehension and willingness to communicate. According to Kuutila (2014), teachers should ignore some grammatical mistakes in order to promote learners' willingness to communicate. Teachers should inform their students that they can make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. Moreover, constructive feedback should be used to create positive learning atmosphere.

In conclusion, willingness to communicate in terms of oral communication must be promoted in accordance with the prime objectives of language learning and teaching. Communication apprehension is considered as one of the important factors impacting on the willingness to communicate. The authors encourage English language teachers to investigate their learners' communication apprehension at the beginning of the course in order to develop or select appropriate supplementary teaching materials and design meaningful classroom activities. In so doing, the positive atmosphere possibly occurs leading to suppress or decrease learners' communication apprehension. According to the theoretical basis of language learning, learners are likely to focus on what they are learning when there is low stress or apprehension. The information that they have learnt would be transferred to long-term memory storage leading to learners' language acquisition as expected.

References

- Al-Tamimi, N. O. M. (2014). Public Speaking Instruction: Abridge to Improve English Speaking Competence and Reducing Communication Apprehension. *International Journal*, 2(4), 45-68.
- Boonsongsup, N. & Rimkeeratikul, S. (2012). *Willingness to Communicate and Communication Apprehension in English among Thai Employees*. Master's Thesis, Language Institute, Thammasat University.
- Chotipaktanasook, N. (2014). *Enhancing Learners' Willingness to Communicate in English with Social Media*. Retrieved July 4, 2017, from <http://www.dpu.ac.th/dpurc/assets/uploads/public/jemq7fsotjk80s48ck.pdf>
- Ellis, R. (2004). Individual differences in second language learning. In A. Davies & C. Elder (Eds.). *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. (pp. 525-551). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

- Fatemipour, H. & Shirmohamadzadeh, V. (2014). The Relationship between Communication Apprehension and Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning with EFL University Students' willingness to Communicate. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, 7(4), 112-122.
- Kasemkosin, B. & Rimkeeratikul, S. (2012). *Communication Apprehension of Student Officers at the Royal Thai Air Force Language Center*. Language Institute, Thammasat University.
- Kopkitthanarot, P. (2011). *Communication Apprehension in Public Speaking Among Class 12 English for Careers Students, Thammasat University*. Master's Thesis, Thammasat University.
- Krashen, S. (1988). *Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition*. Retrieved April 17, 2017, from <http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html>
- Kuutila, N. (2014). *Teachers' effect on learners' willingness to communicate in L2*. Bachelor's thesis, Department of Languages English, University of Jyväskylä.
- Lucas, J. (1984). Communication apprehension in the ESL classroom: Getting our students to talk. In Melvin, A. & Kenneth, W. *Sophia Junior College Faculty Journal*, 29, 1-24.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Dörnyei, Z., Clément, R. & Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(4), 545-562.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1977). Oral communication apprehension: A summary of recent theory and research. In Rimkeeratikul, S. (2015). Communication apprehension in L1 and L2 of Engineering students in a unique program in Thailand. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 8(1), 43-52.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1983). The communication apprehension perspective. *Communication*, 12(1), 1-25.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1997). *Willingness to Communicate, Communication Apprehension, and Self-Perceived Communication Competence: Conceptualizations and Perspectives*. Retrieved July 4, 2017, from http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/publications/bookchapters/020_1997_C3.pdf
- Park, H. & Lee, A. R. (2005). L2 learners' anxiety, self-confidence and oral performance. In *10th Conference of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics, Edinburgh University, conference proceedings* (pp. 197-208).
- Rimkeeratikul, S. (2015). Communication apprehension in L1 and L2 of Engineering students in a unique program in Thailand. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 8(1), 43-52.
- Rimkeeratikul, S. (2016). Communication Apprehension in L2 among MA Students Majoring in English in Bangkok, Thailand. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 9(2), 14-21.

- Rimkeeratikul, S., Zentz, M., Yuangsri, N., Uttamayodhin, P., Pongpermpuek, S. & Smith, S. (2016). Communication Apprehension in L1 and L2 among First-Year Students of a Graduate Program for Executives in a Public University. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 9(1), 1-10.
- Rossmann, M. (2010). *The Effects of Stress on Short-Term and Long-Term Memory*. Retrieved April 17, 2017, from https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2389&context=utk_chanhonoproj
- Tom, A. A., Johari, A., Rozaimi, A. & Huzaimah, S. (2013). Factors Contributing to Communication Apprehension among Pre-University Students. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(8), 665.



APPENDIX A

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)

DIRECTIONS: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you strongly agree (1-SA), agree (2-A), undecided (3-U), disagree (4-D), or strongly disagree (5-SD).

Work quickly; record your first impression.

Question	Response				
1. I dislike participating in group discussions.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
4. I like to get involved in group discussions.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
19. I have no fear of giving a speech.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD
24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.	1 - SA	2 - A	3 - U	4 - D	5 - SD

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Scoring

SCORING: Compute subscores for four communication contexts—group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking— and an overall communication apprehension (CA) score. Strongly agree=1 point, agree=2 points, undecided=3 points, etc.

Sub scores	Scoring Formula
Group discussion	18+scores for items 2, 4, and 6; – scores for items 1, 3, and 5
Meetings	18+scores for items 8, 9, and 12; – scores for items 7, 10, and 11
Interpersonal conversations	18+scores for items 14, 16, and 17; – scores for items 13, 15, and 18
Public speaking	18+scores for items 19, 21, and 23; – scores for items 20, 22, and 24

Scores on the four contexts (groups, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking) can range from a low of 6 to a high of 30. Any score above 18 indicates some degree of apprehension.

PANYAPIWAT

To determine your overall CA score, add together all four sub scores.

Your score should range between 24 and 120. If your score is below 24 or above 120, you have made a mistake in computing the score.

Scores between 83 and 120 indicate a high level of communication apprehension.

Scores between 55 and 83 indicate a moderate level of communication apprehension.

Scores between 24 and 55 indicate a low level of communication apprehension.



Name and Surname: Apisara Sritulanon

Highest Education: M.A. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Thammasat University

University or Agency: Panyapiwat Institute of Management

Field of Expertise: Second Language Acquisition, English for Specific Purposes

Address: 85/1 Moo 2, Chaengwattana Rd., Bang Talad, Pakkred, Nonthaburi 11120



Name and Surname: Benchasri Sriyothin

Highest Education: M.A. English for Career, Thammasat University

University or Agency: Panyapiwat Institute of Management

Field of Expertise: Second Language Acquisition, English for Specific Purposes

Address: 85/1 Moo 2, Chaengwattana Rd., Bang Talad, Pakkred, Nonthaburi 11120