

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SECONDARY STUDENTS' ANXIETY AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This study investigates the profile of secondary students' anxiety in the English classroom and examines the correlation between their foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate. A sample of 59 students from SMP PGRI Jabung was selected. The research utilized a quantitative descriptive correlational research design. The study utilized the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Willingness to Communicate (WtC) scale to collect data. Descriptive analysis revealed that students perceived a high level of foreign language anxiety (M=3.60). Specifically, the mean scores revealed high level of communication apprehension (M=3.68), medium level of test anxiety (M=3.44), and the highest level of fear of negative evaluation (M=3.69). The overall extent of students' anxiety was found to be at a medium level (M = 3.01), with learning responsibility identified as the primary reason for their engagement. Correlation analysis, however, showed that foreign language anxiety was not significantly correlated with students' willingness to communicate in English ($p=.239$). These findings suggest that factors beyond anxiety may influence students' willingness to engage in English communication. Future research could explore how demographic variables and other factors shape the relationship between language anxiety and communication willingness. Understanding these dynamics can inform strategies to support students' English language development and communication skills.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, Secondary Students.

INTRODUCTION

In a classroom activity, primarily language learning, communication skills towards the target language are the main objective of the class. The proper aim of learning a second language is to build up students' willingness to communicate (Manipuspika, 2018). The term Willingness to Communicate (WtC) was defined as individual readiness to join into dialogue at a particular moment with a particular person using the second language they learn. Willingness to communicate was also examined as a condition in which somebody is prepared to use the target language they are learning to communicate without any force and burden (Ningsih et al., 2018). The level of students' willingness to communicate was reflecting their opportunity to apply and facilitate their authentic L2 usage (MacIntyre et al., 2001).

The research showed that the discontinuation of English instruction in the primary school curriculum in 2013 affected students' enthusiasm and engagement with the language when learning English. This led to them having poorer English vocabulary knowledge when they reached junior high school level. As a result, junior high school teachers need to work harder to motivate their students and employ more creative teaching approaches within the limited weekly instructional time they have (Nurlatifah & Mauriyat, 2020). The fact that many language learners face interpersonal complexity has been acknowledged in many second and/or foreign language learning research, and one of them is anxiety. The relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' willingness to communicate in English has been consistently acknowledged over the years, revealing that anxiety can have detrimental effects on foreign language learning activities. This relationship has sparked ongoing debate over the years, particularly as some studies have found no correlation between students' anxiety and their willingness to communicate (Alemi, Daftarifard, & Pashmforoosh, 2011; Alghali, 2016; Ghelichli, 2022).

Building on the background of previous studies conducted at the university level and the ongoing debate surrounding their results, the researcher seeks to address the gap in understanding the relationship between foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate. As Mahmud (2020) noted, the secondary level is a critical stage for social-emotional development that influences students' willingness to communicate. Therefore, it is essential to investigate this topic within a new demographic. Therefore, this study analyzed: 1) the profile of students' anxiety to communicate English as a foreign language, 2) the extent of students' willingness to communicate English as a foreign language, and 3) the correlation between students' foreign language anxiety and their willingness to communicate.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive correlational quantitative approach considered as the most suitable approach due to its objectivity on exploring the profile of students' anxiety, the extent of students' willingness to communicate, and the statistical data of correlation perceived by the students. The numerical results with statistical measures are presented in a narrative form and illustrated in a describing word. This investigation comprises the total student enrollment at SMP PGRI Jabung, which consists of 59 students across three grade levels. Specifically, the population includes 14 students in 7th grade, 22 students in 8th grade, and 23 students in 9th grade, for a total of 59 students. A saturated

sampling was chosen as the population is in a small-scale. By examining the full student population across the three grade levels, the researchers can ensure a comprehensive, representative, and objective analysis of the anxiety profile within this educational context. This holistic, quantitative methodology enables the researcher to generate a detailed, systematic documentation of the characteristics and features of student anxiety, which can then inform the development of tailored intervention strategies.

This study adopted the Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) from Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) as cited in Manipuspika, (2018) that constructed of 33 items answered on the five-point of Likert scale. The adopted questionnaire of FLCAS consists of three main types of language anxiety in its questions. There are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Furthermore, this research has also adopted a Willingness to Communicate (WtC) questionnaire from Mulyaningsih & Murtafi'ah (2022) consists of six categories within 24 items focus on the components of WtC factors. The questionnaires further distributed online through Google Form.

The first analytical approach was descriptive analysis, which aimed to profile students' foreign language anxiety and the extent of students' willingness to communicate. The mean score for each component was calculated by dividing the total score by the number of items and interpreted as in the following table:

Table 1. Interpretation Scale of Anxiety Level

N o	Mean score	Interpretation
1	Low	1.00 – 2.44
2	Medium	2.45 – 3.44
3	High	3.45 – 5.00

(Source: Oxford, 1990 (as cited in Hidayanti, Zuhairi, & Kurniasih, 2021))

The second analysis was correlational. Given the normal distribution of the data, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was selected as the appropriate statistical technique to analyze the relationships between the three anxiety components. The correlation coefficient value indicates both the direction (positive or negative) and the magnitude or strength of the correlation between two variables, providing insight into the nature and strength of the relationship between them. The significance value (p-value), on the other hand, determines whether the observed correlation is statistically significant, with $p < 0.05$ indicating a significant correlation that is unlikely to have occurred by chance, and $p > 0.05$ suggesting no statistically significant correlation between the variables.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The descriptive analysis focused on calculating the mean scores for each anxiety component to provide a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon. This approach allowed the researchers to determine the relative salience of the different facets of foreign language anxiety among the participants. The results of the data processing are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2. The Profile of Students' Anxiety to Communicate English as A Foreign Language

The Component	Mean score	Interpretation
Communication Apprehension	3.68	High
Test Anxiety	3.44	Medium
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.69	High
Overall mean score	3.60	High

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

The mean score of 3.68 on the communication apprehension measure indicates that the participants are experiencing a high level of anxiety or nervousness when it comes to communication. This suggests the participants often feel anxious and uncomfortable in communication situations, rather than just sometimes or rarely. Then, the 3.44 mean score of test anxiety, indicates that the students experience a medium level of anxiety suggesting that the students sometimes feel tense, apprehensive, or uneasy when faced with tests or other evaluative scenarios, but these feelings may not be constant or severe. Last, the moderately elevated mean score of 3.69 indicates the high level of fear of negative evaluation anxiety perceived by the students. It implies that the participants often feel very self-conscious, worried, and uncomfortable about the possibility being negatively judged or evaluated by others. The overall mean score across the three key components of foreign language anxiety found to be 3.60, which indicates the students experienced a high level of foreign language anxiety in the classroom. It suggests the students frequently felt substantial nervousness, unease, and self-consciousness when required to communicate, take tests, or face potential judgment from their peers and instructors.

The second aim of the present study is to measure the extent of students' willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language. An adopted instrument consisting of 24 questions across six constructs of willingness to communicate was distributed to 59 secondary students. The mean score was calculated using SPSS 23 to provide a

comprehensive overview of the phenomenon. The results of the data analysis are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3. The Extent of Students Willingness to Communicate English as A Foreign Language

The Component	Mean score	Interpretation
Communication self-confident	3.01	Medium
Situational context of L2 use	2.37	Low
Integrative orientation	3.17	Medium
Topical enticement	3.25	Medium
Learning responsibility	3.72	High
Off-instruction communication	2.54	Medium
Overall mean score	3.01	Medium

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

The mean score of 3.01 for communication self-confidence indicates that participants have a medium level of confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English. This suggests that students generally feel capable of producing and understanding messages in the target language. However, a mean score of 2.37 shows low willingness to communicate in situational contexts, indicating that motivation to engage in conversation is often hindered by factors like the setting, teacher, or conversation partner. In contrast, a mean score of 3.17 for integrative orientation reflects a medium willingness to connect with English-speaking culture, suggesting that while students recognize the value of learning English, their desire to fully engage with native speakers may be limited.

A mean score of 3.25 for topical enticement indicates that students are occasionally willing to communicate when the topic is engaging, highlighting the importance of incorporating interesting subjects into lessons to enhance participation. Additionally, a high score of 3.72 in learning responsibility shows that students frequently demonstrate a proactive approach to communication, aiming to improve their language skills. Conversely, a mean score of 2.54 for off-instruction communication suggests a medium willingness to engage in conversations outside formal educational settings. Overall, the medium mean score of 3.01 indicates that students are sometimes willing to communicate in English, reflecting potential for increased engagement if appropriately encouraged.

The second analysis was the correlation, between students' foreign language anxiety and their willingness to communicate, analyzed using Pearson Product Moment. The result is presented in the following table.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis

Correlations		FLA	WTC
FLA	Pearson Correlation	1	.250
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.239
	N	33	24
WTC	Pearson Correlation	.250	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.239	
	N	24	24

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

The correlation coefficient was found to be .250 and significant at 0.239. As the significant value was found to be more than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between secondary students' foreign language anxiety and their willingness to communicate.

Discussion

The Profile of Students' Anxiety in The Classroom

The descriptive analysis demonstrated that the SMP PGRI Jabung students often experienced and perceived high level across the full range of measured foreign language anxiety constructs. Specifically, the mean scores revealed high level of communication apprehension ($M = 3.68$), medium level of test anxiety ($M = 3.44$), and the highest level fear of negative evaluation ($M = 3.69$), indicating the students collectively registered a notable presence of these anxiety types on a constant or overwhelming basis. The positive mean scores across all three anxiety indicators suggest the participants were aware of and impacted by the overall foreign language anxiety components in the classroom settings. The findings align with the results reported in a previous study by Manipuspika (2018), which similarly found the participating students perceived the entirety of the foreign language anxiety constructs under examination. In detail, students often experience communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation in foreign language classroom settings. Although, anxiety towards tests or evaluation settings only appears occasionally.

Notably, fear of negative evaluation exhibited the highest mean score at 3.69, indicating that this anxiety facet was the most prominently experienced by the participants. This hierarchical pattern aligns with the findings reported in a prior investigation conducted by Manipuspika (2018). The overall mean scores across the three key components of foreign language anxiety were found to be 3.60, indicating the high level of anxiety. It means students often experience language-related anxiety in the classroom. Foreign language anxiety was not just an occasional problem, but rather a persistent, dominant issue they

grappled with on a regular basis in the classroom. The students often felt substantial nervousness, unease, and self-consciousness when it came to classroom situation. These language-related anxieties were a common, pervasive experience for the students, rather than sporadic concerns. It found to be a comprehensive problem that manifested in multiple ways - inhibiting their willingness to participate, causing significant test-taking distress, and provoking fears about how they would be evaluated by their peers and instructors.

The Extent of Students Willingness to Communicate English as A Foreign Language

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis in Table 4.2 show that students exhibit a medium level of willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language. This indicates that secondary students are sometimes open to engaging in English conversations. Specifically, among the six constructs influencing their willingness, Communication Self-Confidence was at a medium level ($M = 3.01$), Situational Context of L2 Use was low ($M = 2.37$), Integrative Orientation was medium ($M = 3.17$), Topical Enticement was medium ($M = 3.25$), Learning Responsibility was high ($M = 3.72$), and Off-Instruction Communication was medium ($M = 2.54$).

Thus, it can be concluded that the primary factor contributing to students' willingness to communicate is Learning Responsibility. These findings align with the research by Mulyaningsih and Murtafi'ah (2022), which also identified Learning Responsibility as a key driver of student engagement in communication. Conversely, situational factors such as the conversation partner, setting, timing, and purpose of communication contribute to students' reluctance to communicate in English.

The Correlation between Students' Foreign Language Anxiety and Their Willingness to Communicate

The test results reveal a two-tailed significance value of 0.239, which exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that no statistically significant correlation was found between students' foreign language anxiety and their willingness to communicate. Even though, the positive correlation coefficient of 0.250 indicates that as foreign language anxiety increases, willingness to communicate tends to increase as well. The p-value of 0.239 suggests the observed correlation could have occurred by chance and is not a true, consistent effect. The implication is that we cannot confidently conclude that foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate are meaningfully related in the population. The moderate

positive correlation of 0.250 may be present in this particular sample, but it does not represent a statistically significant, generalizable finding.

These results diverge from the majority of prior research, which has reported significant negative relationships between foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate. As Fuji (2021); Kalsoom, Soomro, and Pathan, (2020); Rastegar and Karami (2015); and Zhou, Xi, and Lochman, (2023) argued that there was a significant negative relationship between language anxiety and willingness to communicate. Moreover, the works of Manipuspika (2018) had previously documented a positive correlation between these two variables. Nevertheless, the result of this study supports the work of Alemi, Daftarifard, and Pashmforoosh (2011) who discovered a null interaction between foreign language anxiety and the willingness to communicate. This null relationship is further corroborated by the studies of Alghali (2016) and Ghelichli (2022), which also reported a non-significant relationship between these constructs in the classroom context.

The lack of a significant correlation between students' foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate may be attributable to several aspects. The limited sample size of the current investigation may not be sufficiently representative to capture the actual relationship between the variables (Alemi, Daftarifard, & Pashmforoosh, 2011). Additionally, Peng and Woodrow (2010) have suggested that individual differences, such as personality traits, self-confidence, motivational factors, and perceived communicative competence, can influence a student's willingness to engage in conversation, irrespective of their level of foreign language anxiety. Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn and use the target language may be more willing to participate in communicative activities, even if they experience some degree of anxiety. In summary, students' willingness to communicate in a foreign language classroom is likely shaped by a complex interplay of factors. It is not solely determined by language anxiety.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The findings from the previous chapter indicate that the students experienced foreign language anxiety at a high level on average. This suggests they often encountered difficulties and anxiety within the foreign language classroom setting to a debilitating degree. Of the three key components of foreign language anxiety examined - communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation - the students reported the highest levels of fear of negative evaluation, implying this was the most

prominent source of their anxiety in the foreign language context. Additionally, students' willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language is at a medium level, suggesting that they are occasionally open to engaging in conversation. Specifically, their learning responsibility is the primary factor influencing this willingness, as seen in their initiative to ask questions, participate in discussions, and perform in class. Conversely, situational factors such as time, setting, speech environment, and the purpose of communication contribute to their reluctance to engage. Interestingly, the statistical analysis revealed no significant correlation between the students' foreign language anxiety indicators and their willingness to communicate in English.

Thus, regarding to the result of this study, it is important for the students to encouraged to adopt coping strategies that help manage their anxiety, such as practicing self-compassion, engaging in relaxation techniques, and reframing negative self-talk. Additionally, regarding instructional implications, the lack of a direct correlation between anxiety and willingness to communicate underscores the need for teachers to adopt a multifaceted approach to supporting students' language learning. Educators should strive to create a low-threat, high-support classroom atmosphere, constructive feedback, peer-to-peer support, and implementing gradual exposure to communicative tasks. The finding that these variables are not directly correlated calls for further investigation into the complex interplay of additional variables, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and cultural influences, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics. Longitudinal studies and mixed-method approaches may also provide valuable insights into how foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate evolve over time and in different learning contexts. Additionally, the proportional representation of participants within the sample could be further analyzed to ensure the generalizability of the findings and uncover potential differences in willingness to communicate across demographic variables.

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