

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explained the information about the subjects, the construction of the research instruments, the collection of the data, and the analysis of the data in order to find out the factors contributing to the speaking-in-class anxiety of the English majors at Nareusan University. This study was conducted according to the research design and methods in the following sequences:

1. Subjects
2. Research Instruments and Instrumentation
3. Validity and Reliability
4. Distribution and Collection of Data
5. Analysis of Data

Subjects

The subjects of this study consisted of a class of 56 third-year English major students at the Humanities Faculty of Nareusan University, whose mother-tongue was Thai. The subjects were studying English as a foreign language. They were chosen to be the subjects in this study because they had three years of EFL speaking study experience at the university level. Participants had experienced the EFL anxiety more than the first and second year students since they had studied conversation, and they tended to have more opportunities to do presentations in class than others, while fourth year students had passed those courses and were preparing for their internship. The third year students also carried a more responsible attitude for thesis data collection as they were at a more mature age compared with first and second year students. All of the subjects were requested to complete the questionnaire in class.

In the interview section, 6 out of the top 10 volunteer students in the Conversation and Discussion Course participated in this research. The present study chose the participants for the interview because of the students' willingness to share

studying anxiety experiences and ideas which led to realistic and in-depth informative results.

Research Instrument and Instrumentation

1. Quantitative questionnaire FLCAS

FLCAS was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). It is considered to be an efficient instrument to measure the EFL learning and speaking anxiety in the classroom. FLCAS was adapted and applied to the development of instruments of this present study because the researcher aimed to investigate the extent of the five factors from FLCAS that contribute to the speaking-in-class anxiety of English majors in the Humanities Faculty at Naresuan University.

To suit the current study which focused on speaking-in-class and the foreign language learning situation in Thailand, several modifications were made to FLCAS developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The words “language” and “foreign language” used in the original FLCAS was consistently replaced with “English” or “English speaking.” For example, the original FLCAS item “It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in a foreign language” was adapted to be “It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in English.” The item “I feel more tense and nervous in my foreign language class than in my other classes.” was adapted to be “I feel more tense and nervous in my English speaking class than in my other classes.”

FLCAS has thirty-three items scored on a five-point Likert scale. In this study, a four-point scale was adapted in order to force respondents to commit themselves to either agree or disagree with the statements and to avoid the subjects ticking the midpoint too often. In Barley (2011)’s study, a 4-point Likert scale was adapted since his pilot study received most responses at the midpoint. Therefore, the students were asked to select each alternative for each item: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), D (Disagree), and SD (strongly disagree). See appendix I.

The scale reflecting the opinions of the respondents was related and interpreted according to the following criteria:

Scale points for positive items.

Strongly agree = 4 points

Agree = 3 points

Disagree = 2 points

Strongly disagree = 1 point

Scale points for negative items.

Strongly agree = 1 point

Agree = 2 points

Disagree = 3 points

Strongly disagree = 4 points



FLCAS included mostly positive, as well as some negative (reverse-scored) items. Items 2, 5, 11, 14, 22, 28, and 32 were considered as negative (reverse-scored) items. Psychometricians have generally favored the use of both positive and negative items... in applied research instruments so as to control for response biases” (Eisenbach and Schriesheim, 1995). For instance, item number 2 which was a negative item, states “I don’t worry about making mistakes speaking English in class”. If the subjects choose “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” it indicated that the subjects felt a high anxiety of worrying about mistakes. The subjects would then get 3 points or 4 points respectively. Similarly, item number 3 which was a positive item stated “I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on to speak English in class.” If the subjects choose “Agree or “Strongly Agree”, it indicated that the subjects felt a high anxiety of speaking English in front of the class. The subjects would then get 3 points or 4 points, respectively. Based on the answers in the anxiety measurement questionnaire, every student was given a numeric grade of anxiety level between 33 and 132 (see Appendix I).

In order to make sure every question was understood by every student, the Thai version was submitted to the students at the same time.

2. Qualitative interview questions

This study used a qualitative semi-structured interview format to investigate whether there were any other factors contributing to speaking-in-class anxiety perceived by the English majors at Naresuan University, and what these factors were. There were 6 independent semi-structured interviews with 6 participants.

An in-depth semi-structured interview technique was used as it is essential to ensure that the researcher would be “in a position of being able to access the degree of the interviewee’s interest and involvement” (Robson, 2000). It was also appropriate because of “its flexibility balanced by structure and the quality of the data so obtained” (Gillham, 2005). Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. The interviews started with 3 basic warm-up questions to relax the participants. After the warm-up, 8 questions followed. The 8 questions focused on speaking-in-class anxiety related with the English subject, students, teachers, and other possible factors. For example: Q 3: What kinds of situations cause stress or anxiety for you? The researcher prepared the prompts of this question, such as oral presentations with PowerPoint talking about the topic you are not interested in, etc. Q 4: What do you think are the reasons for this stress or anxiety? The prompts were: difficulties in remembering vocabulary, personalities, etc. (See Appendix II)

Validity and Reliability

FLCAS was designed by Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 129-130). This scale has been used in many studies of anxiety in foreign language learning and speaking. It has been found to be a highly reliable measure (Von Worde, 2003; Aida, 1994; Ganschow and Sparks, 1996; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989; Price, 1988; Schlesinger, 1995). FLCAS was used by Barley (2011) and Liu (2007) in investigating the university students’ speaking-in-class anxiety. The Thai version of the FLCAS in this study was translated by Miss Jantakarn Punyapan and Mr. Anawat Meekleub. They are both native Thai speakers with Masters’ Degree in English, who were willing to be the co-editors together with the researcher in this study.

Qualitative interview questions (See appendix II) of this study were adapted and modified from Tanveer (2007). The interview was conducted in English because six out of the top ten third year students in a conversation and discussion course had high enough English proficiency to communicate during the interview. Another reason was that the researcher aimed to find out how students describe their anxiety in English and an English language conducted interview prevented a loss in translation. Thus, the subjects’ original English words were precisely quoted in this thesis written in English. The fact that the interviewer was not an English native speaker could help

reduce the unnecessary anxiety caused by speaking to a native speaker because the interviewer and the interviewees shared the non- native status. In this case, the students could speak in their own way to offer more information to the researcher.

IOC Approach to the Questionnaires

To prove the content validity of the FLCAS questionnaire and interview questions, the IOC (Index of Item – Objective Congruence) approach was used (See Appendix III). The questionnaire was given to two adult native speakers of English: Mr. Joshua James Portz and Dr. Mary Sarawit, and three Thai native speakers at Naresuan University, who specialized in English teaching: Dr. Sudsuang Yutdhana, Dr. Apichai Rungruang, and Dr. Narat Kanpracha. The five specialists were requested to give a score to each question by using three numbers: -1, 0, and +1 which refer to “not consistent” with the speaking-in-class anxiety, “not sure”, and “consistent” with the speaking-in-class anxiety. Later, the average score was calculated and employed to decide whether to use a particular question. The average score for accepting a question must be a minimum of 0.5. If the average score for a question was less than 0.5, the question must be changed and re-validated (Saiyote and Saiyote, 1995). The suggestions from these specialists were taken into consideration for appropriate revision.

After the five English specialists considered the content validity of each test item, the results were as follows. In the FLCAS questionnaire, it was found that the content validity of test items 6, 12, 14, 19, and 30 was 0.80 and the content validity of the other items was 1.00. The content validity of the FLCAS items was 0.96. Those items obtained a higher score than the minimum rate of the content validity, 0.7, that was considered acceptable for conducting the test. In the interview questions part, it was found that the content validity of test items 4 and 7 was 0.7, and the content validity of the other items was 1.00. The content validity of the whole test was 0.93. Those items also obtained a higher score than the minimum rate of the content validity, 0.7, that was considered acceptable for conducting the test. The worksheet of validity agreement for the current study was presented in Appendix III.

Pilot Study

To check the reliability and evaluate the suitability of the content of the questionnaires and interviews, a pilot study was conducted with 13 second year students majoring in English Business for Communication in the International College at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, who studied in the full time program. Three of these subjects were chosen for interviews. The reasons of choosing this group of students were their similarity with the target study subjects, based on the researcher's observation and interviews with the students in both groups. First, the pilot group of students studied in their second year at International College Naresuan University in the major of English Business for Communication, and they were at a similar English proficiency level. Second, the pilot group students' ages were close to the target subjects'. Third, the pilot study group shared similar educational and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the pilot study group completed the same questionnaire and interview process. This pilot group offered the most similar study result for the present study, and it showed the reliability of the questionnaire.

Distribution and Collection of Data

After the FLCAS questionnaire and interview questions were checked for content validity and approved by the thesis committee, they were employed with the target group. The data collection was done in the following steps. In the first step, the researcher asked for permission to collect the data from the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Naresuan University. Then the questionnaire was administered to 56 subjects in the "Conversation and Discussion" class by the researcher with the instructor's permission and assistance. The purpose was explained to the subjects before they started doing the questionnaires, and the students were allowed to ask questions with regard to the study of the quantitative question.

In the interview data collection, 6 out of the top ten volunteer students were selected with the assistance of their conversation instructor. The instructor is a native speaker of English with more than 20 years of teaching experience. The interviews were carried out in a private room. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Students were informed that participation was voluntary, and they had ample time to review the Consent Forms (See Appendix IV). They were also informed about the

purpose of the study, and that those responses would be used in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts. All the interviews were conducted in English and were recorded with an mp3 recorder with the subjects' permission. (See interview questions in Appendix II)

Analysis of Data

1. Quantitative Data Analysis

After completing the 33 questionnaires of FLCAS according to the five categories of factors developed by Barley (2011), the mean score of all subjects' responses according to the five categories of factors were reported. As mentioned in Chapter 2 the five categories of factors are: Factor 1 - speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation; Factor 2 - uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers; Factor 3 - negative attitudes towards the English classroom; Factor 4 - negative self-evaluation; and Factor 5 - fear of failing the class/consequences of personal failure items. The researcher analyzed the mean score of each factor with the aid of a computerized statistic program. In addition, the research results showed mean values obtained from the FLCAS questionnaire which was arranged in the frequency order. These results were a response to research question 1: To what extent did the five categories of factors from FLCAS contribute to the speaking-in-class anxiety of English majors in the Humanities Faculty Naresuan University?

2. Qualitative Data Analysis

The answers to the interview questions regarding studying anxiety from the recording were analyzed. Factors which were not listed in FLCAS in the quantitative questionnaire were named by the researcher with the thesis committee's approval. They were used as the response to question 2: Were there any other factors contributing to speaking-in-class anxiety of English majors in the Humanities Faculty, Naresuan University? If yes, what were they?

This chapter discussed the design of the study, the information about subjects, research instruments and instrumentation, validity and reliability, and explained how the data collection and analysis would be constructed. To satisfy this study's reliability and gather participants' in-depth information both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. Quantitative research focused on the results

findings from the 33 FLCAS questionnaire and qualitative research focused on the results findings from the six in-depth semi-structured interviews. Both research methods contain the factors which contributed to the students' speaking-in-class anxiety. These factors are listed in chapter four.