

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION



This chapter presented a summary and discussion of the findings, then, pedagogical implications of the study for EFL teachers and suggestions for further studies were provided at the end of the chapter.

Summary of the Study

The present study was aimed to explore the factors contributing to speaking-in-class anxiety perceived by English majors at Naresuan University. The research questions were as follows:

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 at Naresuan University?
2. Were there any other factors contributing to speaking-in-class anxiety of English majors in the Humanities Faculty at Naresuan University? If yes, what were they?

The subjects in this study were 56 English major students in their third year at Naresuan University. In order to answer these two research questions, two research instruments were employed in this study. The first research question was answered by quantitative mean scores, using the FLCAS questionnaire developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) with a Thai version translated from English. FLCAS contains 33 items with a self-report measure scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The second research question was answered by the eight qualitative interviews which were adapted and modified from Tanveer (2007). There were 6 independent in-depth semi-structured interviews with 6 students. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in English and were recorded with an mp3 recorder with the subjects' permission. Both quantitative questionnaire and qualitative questions were distributed, collected, reviewed and assessed by a panel of experts and the thesis committee for reliability and validity. The

data were collected during the 2011 academic year. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and had ample time to review the Consent Forms. The data obtained from the subjects was computed by means of statistical computer program. On the basis of the data analysis, the result of research question one was discussed as follows:

There were two main findings from the quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews in this study. From the quantitative questionnaires, five factors categorized from FLCAS were found to contribute to the English majors' speaking-in-class anxiety at Naresuan University in this decreasing order:

Factor 4 negative self-evaluation (mean= 2.8125)

Factor 5 fear of failing the class/consequences of personal failure (mean= 2.756)

Factor 2 uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers (mean =2.6071)

Factor 3 negative attitudes towards the English classroom (mean=2.2917)

Factor 1 speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (mean= 2.2821)

From the qualitative interviews, there were five additional factors found as follows:

1. Limited vocabulary and grammar concerns during speaking
2. Insufficient preparation before speaking
3. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs
4. Speaking with unfamiliar people
5. Limitation of L1 Usage in EFL classroom

Discussion of the Findings

1. Discussion of the five factors from FLCAS

Below is the discussion of finding one from FLCAS: Among the five factors of the FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986), the students believed factor 4 regarding negative self-evaluation to have contributed the most to their speaking-in-class anxiety in the EFL classroom. Its mean score was 2.8125 out of 4. This indicated that the present subjects' speaking-in-class anxiety in EFL classroom was affected by their negative self-evaluation the most. With the same five factors in Barley (2011)'s study,

the factor contributing the most to speaking-in-class anxiety as identified by his ESL subjects was ‘speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation’ (factor 1) accounting for 20.4% of the variance. In contrast, factor 1 contributed to the present subjects’ speaking-in-class anxiety the least compared to the other four factors (mean value of 2.2821). This indicated that these Thai subjects had a less anxious or uneasy feeling when facing the speech or evaluations compared to Barley’s subjects from Hong Kong. This study revealed that factor 4 was the most important factor leading to speaking-in-class anxiety, which suggested that the present subjects’ uneasy feeling or stress was from their own negative self-evaluation. These findings also provided evidence that fear of failing the class/consequences of personal failure could contribute to their levels of EFL speaking-in-class anxiety. Uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers could affect the participants’ oral English performance. Of the five factors, factor 1, speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation with mean score of 2.2821, contributed to the speaking-in-class the least. The possible reason is that Thai teachers are more obliged to build a teacher-student relationship. English teachers are good at keeping a harmonious relationship with their peers and students (Pham, 2009). Compared to Barley (2011)’s Hong Kong students, Thai students suffer less anxiety from their academics.

2. Discussion of five factors from the interviews

Five out of six interviewees stated that limited vocabularies and grammar concerns during speaking contributed to their speaking-in-class anxiety. Limited vocabularies and grammar concerns during speaking was an important factor that caused the subjects anxiety in the present study. They responded that they started to struggle when they had to give their opinions or their ideas with limited vocabulary. The limited vocabulary not only affected their self-expression and fluency but also became a big obstacle in their understanding of their instructors and friends. This finding is same as Lockley (2011)’s study. Limited vocabulary was a factor found that contributed to Lockley (2011)’s Japanese participants’ EFL speaking anxiety the most. Interestingly, Lockley found that for most of his participants, confidence in grammar is not a major factor in speaking. In contrast, in the present study, the participants responded that grammar was the most difficult part in English speaking, and they are very concerned with grammar during their speaking. They became anxious every time they had to take a “break” to organize the word order or form the correct

grammar phrases before making a sentence. These kinds of grammar concerns during their speaking produced great anxiety in the EFL speaking class.

Insufficient preparation before speaking is another factor that caused the subjects' anxiety in the present study. They said that they started to panic when they were asked to speak without preparation in the speaking activities of their EFL class. This finding has strong implications for all EFL teachers and points out the influence of appropriate preparation time in reducing speaking-in-class anxiety. These participants clearly noted that they usually require a sufficient preparation time to speak up and respond to their teacher because they do not want to 'lose face' or be considered "stupid". This finding is similar to Barley's finding (2011). His participants required longer "wait time" during speaking. Tsui (2001, p. 124), when investigating EFL classroom interaction, found that 'not giving enough time for learners to process a question and formulate an answer is another reason for lack of response from students.'

Another finding obtained from the interviews was that the teachers' attitudes and beliefs contributed to the students' speaking-in-class anxiety. According to Ohata (2005), instructors' beliefs about language teaching can also become a source of creating language anxiety among L2 learners. In the present study, students were anxious when their teachers kept correcting their mistakes during speaking. When the teachers were "not friendly" or "angry", a student said that she would never have any further interaction with the teacher. This phenomenon applied to Lee's study (2004), which indicated that students tend to fail in learning English if teachers show impatience, irresponsibility, or antipathy toward teaching English. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward English teaching will have a great influence on students' beliefs in and attitudes toward English learning (Lee, 2004).

In addition, speaking with unfamiliar people was also considered as an important factor contributing to the speaking-in-class anxiety. Participant C described how she experienced nervous and uncomfortable feelings at the beginning of the course. This was something that the teacher might have never known at the beginning of the EFL course. When the unfamiliar teacher was the one whom they had to speak with, they felt very anxious. This uneasy feeling also appeared when they were visited by any outsiders in the classroom.

The last interesting observation in this study was the limitation of L1 usage during the EFL speaking class. Whether L1 should be used in the EFL class is still arguable. It is generally considered that L1 should not be used in the foreign language class. However, participant A in the present study stated her frustration and stress when she was not allowed to use L1 in the EFL classroom. The present study supports the view of Atkinson (1993), "For many learners (in particular adults and teenagers), occasional use of the L1 gives them the opportunity to show that they are intelligent, sophisticated people." L1 is very useful to those learners at a low language proficiency level (Cole, 1998). "Limited vocabularies and knowledge of grammar" stated earlier proved that Thai students generally do not have good English proficiency (Amornthip, 2006). So for Thai students, some L1 usage in the EFL class could give them a head start and save a lot of guessing.

From these results of this study, the following implications for EFL teachers can be drawn.

3. Pedagogical Implication for English Teachers

With regard to the finding of this study, there were ten factors in total that were found to contribute to the speaking-in-class anxiety. The five factors with a mean between 2.00 to 3.00 are negative self-evaluation, fear of failing the class/consequences of personal failure, uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers, negative attitudes towards the English classroom, speech anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Another five factors gathered from the in-depth interviews are as follows: limited vocabulary and grammar concerns during speaking, insufficient preparation before speaking, teachers' attitudes and beliefs, speaking with unfamiliar people, and Limitation of L1 Usage in EFL classroom in EFL classroom. Below were some recommendations for English teachers to improve Thai students' speaking and reduce speaking-in-class anxiety.

4. Promote positive attitudes among learners

According to the factors of negative self-evaluation, fear of failing the class/consequences of personal failure, negative attitudes towards the English classroom and speech anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, strategies of promoting positive attitudes among learners could be taken. Students who hold positive attitudes towards language learning are less likely to suffer from language learning anxiety and

are more likely to participate actively in learning tasks (Tsiplakides and Keramida, 2010). For example, teachers should make as many positive comments as possible after each oral task. Students' negative beliefs and attitudes will gradually change until they feel free to talk in the class. Meanwhile, teachers should try to help students to create a sense of success. According to Nguyen (2010), a sense of success can be easily achieved through easy tasks with simple and clear goals. Students are rewarded by the teachers' compliments or other ways when they achieve these goals. This way can boost students' self-confidence in EFL speaking. Please note that a long-term goal can be broken down into short-term goals or smaller goals. General goals should be broken down into smaller, short-term goals so that even when students do not achieve the final goals they still feel a sense of achievement for completing some of the sub-goals (Nguyen, 2010). This way could strengthen the students' achievement for completing each goal.

5. Introduce English speaking opportunities for students outside the class

According to the factor of uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers and anxiety when speaking with unfamiliar people, teachers should introduce more oral English opportunities for students not only inside of the class but also outside of the class (Nguyen, 2010). For example, teachers should promote the benefits and tactics to students of the English clubs inside and outside the class. Link the classroom oral activities to these clubs. For example, students can present or report their participation of these clubs in English classroom and they can be credited. More opportunities for speaking with the native speakers could be introduced. For example, students can be grouped for some oral English projects, such as interviewing the foreign teachers in their faculties or at a tourist attraction. More opportunities of communicating with unfamiliar people or native speakers could improve their speaking fluency, building more confidence and reducing their anxiety.

6. Introduce multi- ways of input

Most students reported that the limited vocabularies and over emphasis on grammar during speaking contributed to anxiety when speaking. This is because the students' EFL input is neither very constructive nor sufficient. In this case, teachers can introduce multi-ways of input to the students. Reading more constructive books

with the target of vocabulary building is a method. For example, the books of the Penguin Series are a very popular and efficient way. It suits the readers with the varied levels of vocabulary from 100 to 5000. Also, the readers can imitate the books' grammatical sentences. Both grammar and vocabulary can be inputted to the students at the same time. Some media input can also be introduced to the students, such as movies, cartoons, jokes, etc. Teachers can even ask the students to talk about their feelings after a movie or cartoon is finished. By doing this, students could have a chance to process the new vocabularies and grammar knowledge perceived from the input to output.

7. Give more time to prepare

According to the anxiety perceived from insufficient preparation before speaking, this can be lessened by giving them more time to prepare. In other words, allow them to perform oral tasks without time pressure (Ellis, 2005). When the classroom time is limited, the oral tasks could be finished by the students at home and presented at the following lesson. Alternatively, the task could be broken down into smaller parts to allow the students to have enough time to complete them.

8. Build a non-threatening and supportive learning classroom

This strategy is targeted on the anxiety caused by teachers' attitudes and beliefs. The classroom should not be a place where students feel stress, anxiety, or afraid of making mistakes. The classroom should be an environment where students are not scared of making communicative mistakes and being ambiguous in communicating (Nguyen 2010). Situations that make students anxious include correcting mistakes on the spot and calling on students at random (Young, 1991). Teachers should try not to call on a student to speak because he/she is not paying attention in the class. This could lead the student to a very threatening feeling and will leave negative attitudes on the students.

9. Allow some L1 usage in EFL class

Teachers should have a positive attitude to L1 usage in the EFL class. According to Nation (1997), using L1 can help learning in many cases, especially when some students' English proficiency level is not good enough. According to Nguyen (2010), at a low English communicative level, students are not able to convey their every thought; therefore, teachers should be tolerant of some L1 use. In some

specific situations, teachers also should use L1 to help the students to understand some English. For example, the explanations of “What’s the matter?” could be directly translated into L1 instead of explaining by long paragraphs, which saves lots of time and guessing. Please note that teachers should not over depend on L1 in EFL teaching. When L1 use is not necessary, English should be used immediately. When L1 use is not necessary, the teachers should tactically lead students back to using English (Nguyen, 2010).

Recommendation for Further Studies

The findings from the investigation of the factors contributing to speaking-in-class anxiety perceived by English majors at Naresuan University will be beneficial for further studies. Thus, recommendations for further studies are as follows:

According to the above discussion, further studies should be carried out on other populations e.g. adults learners, high school students, primary school students or non-English major EFL students. As mentioned in the methodology, this study had 56 subjects for the FLCAS questionnaire and 6 independent interviews. In further studies, there could be a larger numbers of participants. Furthermore, this study employed quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews for gathering the data. Further studies could be conducted using telephone surveys for wider ranges of responses or observations in the classrooms in order to obtain more data on the factors contributing to the EFL speaking-in-class anxiety. Telephone surveys can reach further and more remote locations to achieve a higher level of statistical accuracy by implementing a larger number of test subjects.