

Language Anxiety and the Interaction of Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Polytechnic Students when Using Interactive Whiteboard

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Abstract

In a language learning classroom, interactions are crucial as language is learned and acquired through practice and without realizing that the person is learning. However, language anxiety has been proven to be one of the factors that have effect on students' interaction. This study explores the effect of language anxiety on students of Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin's interaction when using the interactive whiteboard for their classroom activity. The aim of this study is to find out the relationship between students' language anxiety and their interactions and if the use of an educational technology device, in this case, the interactive whiteboard, can help eliminate students' language anxiety and thus enhance their interactions. However, this study had proven that the use of the interactive whiteboard does not eliminate students' language anxiety and their level of interactions is still at low level.

Keywords: Language Anxiety, Interactions, Interactive Whiteboard

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is developed through interactions which require two or more parties to take part and can be verbal as well as non-verbal [1]. With respect to this idea, a few learning approaches such as outcome-based education is used for language learning as a platform to promote interactions among students and enable them to practice communication skills [2]. Thus learning activities nowadays have mostly shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered as it provides more opportunities for students to take part in their learning process. The employment of group work activities promotes students' interactions where they would work together to complete a task [3], following a student-centered learning approach, and collaborate with their group members [4].

However, despite this learning approach and various teaching methods, teaching tools and encouragement from the lecturers to promote interactions among the students, there are still students who remain passive and do not interact with each other [5]. This scenario occurs in an ESL (English as Second Language) classroom as students need to interact in a language which is neither their National Language nor their mother tongue, i.e. English language [6]. While it is important in any language learning classroom to get the students to interact using the targeted language (L2) i.e. English language, students are reluctant to speak up, even when they are working in a small group of friends [6]. Thus, although collaborative learning is known for its features to promote interactions and enhance communication among students but the impact may differ from one student to another due to language anxiety and amount of interactions among them.

Furthermore, in a language learning environment where there is a mixture of students proficiency level, it is difficult to get all of them to interact actively with each other due to their social and emotional aspects [7]. These two aspects have great impact on students' interactions. Therefore, although in a setting where students are grouped into small groups working together to complete the task given to them, providing a platform for them to interact with each other, interactions may not effectively happen [3]. Subject to the two aspects mentioned above (social and emotional aspects), their anxiety towards the language is one important factor that hinders them from interacting with peers[8][9]. As suggested by Krashen, students' second language learning and acquisition will be low if their language anxiety is high, and their language learning and acquisition will be high if the language anxiety is low, showing a negative relationship between language anxiety and interactions[10]. Furthermore, previous research has also found that speaking skill and listening skill are the two skills that are mostly affected by language anxiety as compared to reading and writing skills [11].

In order to enhance the effectiveness of this learning approach to promote students' learning, the Malaysia Polytechnic Education Department therefore had equipped a few Malaysia Polytechnics with teaching tools such as the Interactive White Board (IWB); a tool which supports face-to-face collaborative learning in the classroom, the technology advancement which has brought new lights into education and has made learning more interesting, challenging and engaging [12]. In fact, technology-integrated-learning which supports face-to-face learning activities allows students to be creative, critical in thinking and improve social interaction as they are able to interact with other students [13]. Apart from that, it also provides opportunities and promotes externalization of ideas among students [14]. They are also more ready to watch and respond to presentation as the information and knowledge shared are prepared and presented by their own peers [12]. Therefore the use of Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) in the classroom is hoped to enhance interactions among the students as it is real-time internet accessible, allowing them to look for information and do research during their lesson and prepare for presentation, while at the same time providing a platform for them to interact with each other.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study are students of Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Perlis, Malaysia (PTSS) majoring in Electrical Engineering (Optoelectronic). A total of 38 students from semester 3 took part in this study. The small number of

participants is due to the limitation of this study, where all participants must be students who use Interactive Whiteboard for their classroom learning activities. Only students of Optoelectronic students were chosen to participate as to have students with similar level of English language proficiency. All students had gone through an English language course (Communicative English 1) when they were in semester 1 at PTSS, and another English language course (Communicative English 2) in semester 3.

2.2 Instrument

This study is a quantitative study using a set of questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Two (2) questionnaires were adopted and used i.e. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which was developed by E.K Horwitz (1986) and Interactions Questionnaire which was developed by Kuo (2010). The items in these questionnaires are rated on a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale for the questionnaire ranges from 0 (Strongly agree) to 4 (Strongly disagree). The Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire is as shown in Table 1 below. Since the value of Chronbach's Alpha for both the questionnaires are more than 0.7 therefore the instrument used in this research is reliable.

Table 1. The Cronbach's Alpha of the Questionnaire

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Foreign Language Anxiety (FLCAS)	.860	33
Interactions	.835	6

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Using means, respondents' level of Language Anxiety and Interactions are determined where 0 – 1.3 is Low, 1.4 – 2.7 is Medium and above 2.7 is High [15]. Table 2 shows the range of level for Language Anxiety and Interactions using mean score.

Table 2. Range of Level for Language Anxiety and Interactions using Mean score

	Low	Medium	High
Language Anxiety	0 – 1.3	1.4 – 2.7	2.8 - 4
Interactions	0 – 1.3	1.4 – 2.7	2.8 - 4

Table 3 below shows the number of participants according to their language anxiety level where only 1 participant has low language anxiety, 13 participants with medium and 24 participants with high level of language anxiety.

Table 3. Number of Participants According to Language Anxiety Level

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Low	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
Valid Medium	13	34.2	34.2	36.8
Valid High	24	63.2	63.2	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 on the other hand shows the number of participants according to their level of interactions. The results show that most participants have low interactions, 4 participants with medium level of interaction and only 2 students have high level of interactions.

Table 4. Number of Participants According to Level of Interactions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Low	32	84.2	84.2	84.2
Valid Medium	4	10.5	10.5	94.7
Valid High	2	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Comparing the results shown in Table 3 and 4, it can be deduced that participants who have high and medium level of language anxiety would interact less. This is further supported by the result of this study which shows that there is a significant negative correlation between language anxiety and students' interactions. This means that students who have high language anxiety would interact less as compared to students with low level of anxiety, despite the use of the Interactive Whiteboard. The correlation is as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Correlations between Students' Language Anxiety and Interactions When Using the Interactive Whiteboard

		LA_MEANS COR E	INT_MEANS SCORE
LA_MEANS SCORE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.376*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.020
	N	38	38
INT_MEANS SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.376*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	
	N	38	38

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4. CONCLUSION

One of the objectives of this study was to explore the relationship between students' language anxiety and their interactions when using Interactive Whiteboard for their classroom learning activity. This study conforms to the earlier studies on this relationship, where it was found that there is a negative correlation between the two variables. However, this study has put forth the intervention of an educational technology, i.e. the Interactive Whiteboard, to test if the device can eliminate the fear to communicate in English language. This study has proven that it does not.

In order to get a more accurate result on this matter, future study should do comparisons between a group of students who use IWB against a group of students who do not, as control group. Furthermore the number of participants should be larger and not restricted to only one particular group of students.

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