Spiritual Intelligence and Foreign Language Anxiety of Students at Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah

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Abstract: One common reason to students' reluctance to participate in classroom activities has been identified as language anxiety. It is the feeling students get when having to communicate using foreign language, which is neither their mother tongue nor national language. Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) on the other hand is the internal factor to promote everyday problem solving and goal achievement. Several researches have shown that SQ is influential in controlling one's level of stress hence improving their performance. This paper therefore investigates the relationship between students' SQ and their language anxiety when communicating in a classroom and the findings of this study shall help educators to understand if SQ have any influence on students' language anxiety and use the information to enhance students' communication. This study is a quantitative study employing Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI-24) developed [1] and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed [2] to collect data for both SQ and language anxiety respectively. The instruments were administered to 104, semester one students of Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah. The aim of the study was to determine how these two constructs correlate with each other, and helps English Language lecturers to cope with their students' anxiety level in learning English by understanding the correlations.

INTRODUCTION

English language in this country is taught as second language. Children are formally exposed to this language at the age of 7 (year one primary school) until 17 (form 5 secondary school) [3] before pursuing education to tertiary level. The eleven years of exposure to the language at school seems not to be enough for some of the school children as they are not able to communicate in the language well. This problem prolongs until they finish tertiary education which results in their inability to secure themselves with good jobs [4] as they are not able to perform well in job interviews [5]. The Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry of Higher Education have put a lot of effort to enhance English proficiency among school children and graduates of local universities, including the introduction of student-centred learning at both levels of education. A student-centred learning environment is believed to be able to promote interactions among students as it involves a lot of collaborative activities. Interactions is important in language learning as language is acquired subconsciously [6]. If interactions do not occur, this will impede students' language acquisition, which is the common scenario with most of the students. One common reason to students' reluctance to participate in classroom activities has been identified as language anxiety. Since anxiety emanates from within a person, the study therefore aims to find out if an internal factor i.e. Spiritual Intelligence have any influence on students' language anxiety.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has shown that language anxiety has negative correlation with students' performance [7]. The anxieties they feel keep them from participating in classroom activities and remain silent. The opportunity provided to them to practise the language is not used, thus language acquisition does not occur, influencing their language enhancement.

Language according to Krashen [6] is developed through conscious learning and subconscious acquisition. However, he posited that the subconscious acquisition is far more important than conscious learning. Therefore a classroom where students are given opportunity to interact with each other would

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enhance language acquisition thus improve their proficiency [8]. If this opportunity is not used wisely, an effective language enhancement will not occur.

One common reason to students' reluctance to participate in classroom activities has been identified as 'language anxiety' [9]. Anxiety as defined by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope [2], is "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with the arousal of autonomic nervous system." In the matter of foreign language learning, anxiety is the feeling that a person gets when having to use the language. As English is not their mother tongue nor the National Language, this has further given them negative feelings and worries to speak the language [7].

Horwitz et al. [2] had categorised foreign language anxiety into three components; i) communication apprehension, ii) test anxiety and iii) fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people. Students with communication apprehension would have difficulty to speak in front of people, whether in group or on stage. The anxiety is not only restricted to their own speaking ability but also to listen to others speaking. In a language classroom where communication among the students as well as with the teacher is most encouraged, students who have communication apprehension would face difficulties to participate in activities given in the classroom, thus effecting their language acquisition. Anxiety impedes understanding of meaning from 2nd language messages, thus acquisition does not progress [10].

Test anxiety on the other hand refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure. According to Horwitz et al. [10], students who have test anxiety, would set a high goal for their test which sometimes is unrealistic. To them, if they do not achieve the goal they have set earlier, is a failure. Oral test which requires students to speak spontaneously would give even bigger problems to students who have both communication apprehension and test anxiety as they would have to speak in front of others as well as having the knowledge that they are being tested and need to perform well.

The third component of language anxiety i.e. fear of negative evaluation is defined by Horwitz et al. [10] as "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluation situations and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively". Although it overlaps with test anxiety, but fear of negative evaluation goes beyond test-taking situation, involving social interactions.

Spiritual Intelligence or SQ, on the other hand, is an internal factor which can be developed [11] and has influence on one's motivation, self-efficacy and tolerance. Although the name 'Spiritual' may indicate religiosity, but SQ is not, however, it is related to religion [12]. SQ functions as internal motivator [13], enhancing students' performance and achievement [14]. In an effort to help educators to understand if SQ is a factor influencing students' language anxiety, this study therefore examined if there is a correlation between SQ and language anxiety.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative study employing questionnaire as research instrument, administered to 104, semester one polytechnic students with low English proficiency. Their level of proficiency is determined through their English result in Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM). The questionnaire is divided into 2 sections. Section A containing 24 questions on SQ adopted from King's [1] Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI 24) while section B contains 32 questions on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. [2]. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS 2.0.

FINDINGS

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Anxiety Components

	Communication Apprehension	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Test Anxiety
Mean	18.1346	16.2500	12.5288
N	104	104	104
Std Deviation	4.24048	5.32397	3.03045

Table 1 above shows the standard deviation of the three anxiety components. It shows that students have the highest anxiety for communication apprehension with *M*=18.1346 indicating that they are the most anxious to speak in front of others or in public. This is followed by Fear of Negative Evaluation with *M*=16.2500. Students are afraid of being evaluated by others when speaking that they would prefer to remain silent or participate less. They are least anxious for tests or exams that the mean score for Test Anxiety is *M*=12.5288, the lowest of the three Anxiety components.

Table 2: Correlation between Spiritual Intelligence and Anxiety Components

		SQ	Comm. Apprehension	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Test Anxiety
SQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.491**	.468**	.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.140
	N	104	104	104	104
Comm. Apprehension	Pearson Correlation	.491**	1	.790**	.505**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	104	104	104	104
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.468**	.790**	1	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	104	104	104	104
Test Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.146	.505**	.652**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.140	.000	.000	
	N	104	104	104	104

The results show that there is a positive correlation between SQ and the four components of anxiety i.e. Communication Apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Test Anxiety. There is a strong positive correlation between SQ and Communication Apprehension where p=.491 and between SQ and Fear of Negative Evaluation where p=.468. Although there is a positive correlation between SQ and Test Anxiety, p=.146, but it is less strong than the other two components of anxiety.

DISCUSSION

It is worth considering that all of the respondents involve in this study are of low proficiency. They have high anxiety for all the three components of anxiety i.e. Communication Apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Test Anxiety.

The results show that the respondents have lowest anxiety for test which requires them to write as compared to the other two components of anxiety involving speaking and delivering messages to others. This indicates that students with low proficiency level are more anxious to speak than to do written test as they are scared of being scrutinised during their speech.

According to the results of the study, SQ was significantly positively correlated with communicative apprehension. The findings indicate that the students feel more anxious in learning English. They have low confidence in communicating using English and are shy or fear and might also have difficulty to speak in front of large audience, in English. The study also shows that SQ was significantly positively correlated with fear of negative evaluation. Students feel that they are being scrutinised while speaking in front of others and are being evaluated by them negatively when performing or communicating in English. This thinking made them feel anxious and reluctant to participate in activities.

Thus, it can be said that anxiety plays somewhat a debilitative role in language learning which has been noted in many previous studies [7,10]. As a result, students with high anxiety often get low achievement as they prevent themselves from participating and communicating with others. As language acquisition occurs subconsciously through communication, therefore these students would lag behind. Furthermore, low achievement makes them more anxious about learning.

CONCLUSION

English language has always been the most feared language by the students who regard it as second language or foreign language. The use of English Language Classroom Anxiety Scales provides data on

types of anxiety and the level of anxiety faced by students. Thus, English teacher could use the findings to reflect on his or her teaching. Cebreros [15] suggested teachers to make use of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales not only to know the level of anxiety experienced by the students, but also used to reflect on their teaching in the language classroom. By knowing the level of anxiety faced by the English language learners, teachers could identify ways and strategies to assist the students to overcome the strategies. Yuen Fook, Sidhu, Rani, & Abdul Aziz [16] proposed that teachers should identify the factors of anxiety in language classroom and find suitable ways to overcome it.

Although this study did not prove that SQ has influence on students' language anxiety to speak, but it does prove that it influences their language anxiety for written tests. SQ influences these students in their thinking, patience, creative thinking, problem solving and functions as internal motivator, as proposed by Smartt [13]. Although this study does not conform with Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford [17] that SQ promotes tolerance for all of the components in language anxiety, but it does for one of them i.e. test anxiety. It is also worth to consider that the respondents in this study were all low proficiency students, thus this factor may also influenced the result in this study. Therefore, we propose that different levels of proficiency should be considered for future research so as to find out should SQ have any influence on students' language anxiety.

Last but not least, SQ together with teachers' motivation and support for students will help them build up their confidence to speak in English and thus reduce their language anxiety. By doing so, students will believe in their ability to use the second language confidently, as suggested by Kitano [18].

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