

EFL Teacher's Anxiety in Using English in Teaching in the Language Classroom

Prayong Klanrit and Rapeeporn Sroinam

Abstract—The objectives of this research were 1) to study sources of teachers' anxiety in using English in the language classroom, 2) to analyze components of sources of anxiety of language teachers, and 3) to compare the components of sources of teachers' anxiety between 3 provinces namely, Udon Thani, Nong Khai, and Nongbualampoo. The current study is based on secondary English teachers' experiences. The sample of the study was 673 English language teachers obtained through a stratified random sampling based upon the ratio of the English teachers from three provinces. The instruments were a focus group interview and a questionnaire. Statistics employed were percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test for dependence, and factor analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The research findings were as follows: 1. Four factors that caused teachers' anxiety in using English in the language classroom were 1) teacher expectations about students' language limitations and low motivation which were at the high level, 2) students' attitudes towards studying English which was at the medium level, 3) teachers' language proficiency was at the low level, and 4) teaching and learning management was at the medium level. 2. Analysis of 65 factors using factor loading from Principle Components Analysis it was found that sources of teachers' anxiety in using English in the language classroom were in four areas. These were teacher expectations about students' language limitations and low motivation, students' attitudes towards studying English, teachers' language proficiency, and teaching and learning management. 3. From factor analysis between Udon Thani, Nong Khai, and Nongbualampoo, it was revealed that in the area of teacher expectations about students' language limitations and low motivation, the English teachers' opinions were significantly different at the .01 level.

Index Terms—Language classroom, teachers' anxiety, use of English.

I. INTRODUCTION

Use of English plays an important role in teaching the language. Theorists have long emphasized using the target language in classroom teaching. Teaching the language by using the target language in the classroom is essential. It uses authentic language for communication. Within this environment, teachers and students are enabled to use the target language as much as possible. Though there was no evidence that the target language was used in the classroom, the fact is that the more the target language is used, the more the learners gain language acquisition. Within this kind of

classroom atmosphere, teachers usually have stress using the target language in their teaching.

Anxiety is a feeling that learners usually possess when they learn a new language. They have to confront uncertainty in their abilities and they may fear failure. This feeling is a negative component of learning a language. A number of teaching methodologies have been determined that in managing the language classroom, it is essential to ease anxieties of learners. Recently there has been a research identified differences between trait anxiety and state anxiety as anxious feeling about some situations [1]. There are a number of studies related to state anxiety which indicate that anxiety in learning a foreign language affects the process of learning the language [2]-[3]. On the contrary, research indicates that it is positive and encourages it in learning a language since the task assigned for the learners might be interesting and generate enthusiasm [4]. It can be stated that participation and curiosity are beneficial and help to establish success in learning a language.

Teachers are key persons who managing learning in the classroom, particularly in teaching English as a foreign language. Thai teachers who teach English have to do so according to the curriculum. As in any school, language teachers hold tough teaching jobs like as do instructors in other fields. They are expected to be able to motivate and encourage students to participate in classroom activities, as well as doing documentation, students' evaluation, teaching preparation, participating in professional development, and producing instructional materials [5]. Recently, all teachers in the country participated in an arduous task of document preparation for school evaluation by the government. Furthermore, many studies reported that the teaching is one of the most stressful occupations [6]. Additionally, teachers are confronted by several problems in teaching English. Not only a must they teach English to non-English majors, but also they need to teach every subject. This causes teachers anxiety when using English for teaching. This leads to problems for Thai students using English for communication.

However, there is no research study in support of the use of the target language in the English classroom. This is particularly true in Thailand where English has been taught as a foreign language. Also there has been no evidence indicating that teachers use English in teaching and learning management. Certainly Thai teachers who are non-native English speakers have severe problems in teaching the language. These includes pronunciation, teaching instruction, use of classroom English, the language environment, and being a good model in using English appropriately. These may lead teachers to use Thai in their teaching rather than English. On this matter, research suggested that a non-native

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language teacher needs to employ a variety of teaching techniques as tools in managing the language classroom [7].

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study had three objectives.

- To study sources of anxiety of language teachers in using English in the language classroom,
- To analyze components of sources of anxiety of language teachers in using English in the language classroom, and,
- To investigate and compare the components of sources of anxiety of language teachers in using English in the language classroom classified by Office of Educational Service Area.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Scope of the Study

The study population consisted of secondary level English teachers in Udon Thani, Nong Khai, and Nonbualumpoo Provinces (Thailand). The group was comprised of 673 English teachers from 9 Educational Service Areas.

B. Instruments

The instruments employed in this study were an interview and a questionnaire.

Thirty-six English secondary school teachers from nine Educational Service Areas in three Thai provinces were invited for the Focus Group Interview in which probe questions were used.

The questionnaire was a five level rating scale designed to measure teachers' anxiety caused by using English language in the language classroom.

C. Data Collection

In the process of gathering data, the researchers conducted the study by sending an official letter to the directors of the Educational Service Areas requesting permission for data collection. Then 673 questionnaires were sent to the group sample by post. The researchers did follow-up processing by telephone.

D. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using an SPSS program to determine percentage, mean, standard deviation and for performing t-tests for dependence.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Factor loading using 65 factors in Principle Components Analysis was done. Four factors were found to cause teachers' anxiety in using English in the language classroom. They were 1) high teacher expectations about students' language limitations and low motivation, 2) medium level concerns about students' attitudes towards studying English, 3) low level concerns about teachers' language proficiency, and 4) medium level concerns about teaching and learning management.

From factor analysis between the three provinces, it was

found that in the area of teacher expectations about students' language limitations and low motivation, the teachers' opinions were significantly different at the .01 level. In the area of students' attitudes towards studying English, the teachers' opinions were significantly different between the provinces at the .01 level. This was measured using the probe item "Students sighed while studying English." For teachers' language proficiency, only the two items were different between the three provinces were found significantly different at the .01 level. These were "Teacher is not good at teaching grammar and cannot explain correctly and fluently" and "After completion of the study, they do not have any opportunities in training, seminar in English teaching and learning". For teaching and learning management, it was found that there were no significant differences between these items.

V. DISCUSSION

From the data analysis, it was found that four factors caused teacher's anxiety in using English in the language classroom. These are discussed as follows.

A. Teacher Expectations

For teacher expectations about students' language limitations and low motivation, it was found that these exist to a high level. This is consistent with many studies on using the target language in the classroom in that teachers often lack realization of when and how to use English in the classroom [8]-[11]. This notion is consistent with Dickson's study [11] in that despite the teachers' language proficiency reflecting their use of English in teaching, there may be other expectations such as teachers' perceptions in developing classroom conditions. They may perceive disorganized behavior of the low ability students and have a large number of the students in their classroom. Moreover, the teachers have doubts in using bilingual teaching resulting from their concerns about their pronunciation and fluency in speaking English. In addition, teachers would like to collect information about the students related to their motivation in learning the language, proficiency in learning the language both using the native language and English, and their reluctance to use English while studying in the classroom.

B. Students' Attitudes towards Studying English

This component was ranked as the second most important. Overall there were medium level concerns about the students' attitudes towards studying English. This is consistent with [3]. This study found that a language learner is always anxious about error correction in the classroom. As a teacher instructing in a non-native language, teaching causes anxiety. There is also stress since they have difficulty using the language. However, they need to speak to the whole class. If the instructor makes some, it can be quite embarrassing. This causes a loss of confidence [12]. This can be equivalent to public scolding.

C. Teachers' Language Proficiency

It was found that teachers have low levels of concern about their language proficiency. It was ranked as the third. This might be due to the teachers' realization that they are Thai

and speak Thai as do the learners. However, they need to speak English but are reluctant to do so. Additionally, teachers carefully follow their course syllabus. This leads them to use Thai in teaching English. McColl [13] provided valuable suggestions regarding the advantages of using the target language in the classroom. First, students can have many more opportunities to use the language in the classroom. Students are exposed to authentic communication, particularly in the EFL context. Second, they acquire the ability to learn language. Krashen [14] used the term "Comprehensible Input" to describe the condition where students learn more when the target language is used. This leads to increased language complexity. The students not only learn the language, but also learn through using classroom English and common expressions in daily life. Finally, using the target language in teaching benefits the students in gaining proper language and good attitudes towards learning languages. Moreover, non-native English teachers should be good role models for their students [15]. A language teacher can provide a good example in using a second language effectively. He or she can impart linguistic and cultural knowledge. This can solve other learning problems for students as well.

D. Teaching and learning Management

The teaching and learning management component was ranked as the fourth most important. As a whole it was found that this component caused medium levels of anxiety for teachers. It could be that Thai teachers believed that students might not be able to understand them when the target language is used. The problem is aggravated by other factors. Students' English proficiency levels are quite different, and the number of students in the classroom is large (50-60 students). This is supported by several studies [11], [16]. In teaching grammar, non-native language teachers often choose to use their native language for explanation.

E. Recommendations for Developing Language Teaching in an EFL Context

English should be used as a means of teaching. It should be a policy that English teachers instruct in English. Being able to communicate in English can enhance the learners' skills. These skills can be applied outside of the classroom.

Teachers should guard against incorrect pronunciation. This can be solved by preparation prior to class. For example, for vocabulary that appears in the textbook, teachers should check the meaning from the dictionary. They should know the use of stress, meanings of words in various contexts, and word usage. From this teachers can learn about the functions and types of vocabulary, and do note-taking to increase vocabulary knowledge. This saves time if the same textbook will be used in subsequent years. Furthermore, teachers may ask for assistance from native English speakers in their area.

Teachers should serve as models of self-development. The teachers' self-development in the English language can lead to increased opportunities for students to imitate and use the language. Additionally, the teachers' ability to efficiently use the language increases. Speaking can improve the students' language acquisition. Other profitable activities might include interviews to learn of occupations in society, and

storytelling. Support from parents can be valuable in learning.

Teachers should provide other implication from using English expressions Training in the use of English expressions in other contexts within school, such as greetings when meeting unexpectedly, warnings, and prohibitions, is needed. Practicing using the language in this manner can help increase confidence in using the language outside of the classroom.

Teachers should attend further studies, seminars and training Teachers should continually develop themselves in seminars, trainings, and further studies in order to broaden their perspectives and in develop new and innovative ideas for use as professionals in their teaching career.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, in order to achieve the objective in teaching English in EFL context such as Thailand, the characteristics of an effective English efficient teacher are that they are proficient in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Those who graduated with a Bachelor's degree majoring in English can certainly do this. Effective language teachers also need to have knowledge in learning psychology and innovative teaching techniques. This should include teaching aids to contribute to enjoyment helping to achieve the objectives of the lesson.

The research findings have provided factual information about teachers' anxiety in using English taught in the language classroom in Thailand. This can contribute to the knowledge of using the target language in EFL context. Schools and Educational Institutions have acknowledged this and are finding ways of enhancing English teaching.

The limitation of this study is it had been conducted within the limited areas only for the three adjacent Thai provinces. This should be extended to different parts of the country.

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