Eliminating Anxiety In Using English For Business Communication Among The First Year Students Of St Theresa International College

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Abstract
The purpose of this research is to study the effectiveness of practical means that may help eliminate the first year students’ anxiety in using English for business communication at St Theresa International College. This research was a qualitative research. The sample is consisted of the first year students enrolled in Business English major, lecturers, advisors, and student affairs counselors. There were a total of 24 key informants. The study was conducted using participant observation, in-depth interview, and the results were analyzed using the content analysis technique. The results showed that 1) the possible causes of anxiety include but are not limited to the students themselves, the instructors and the learning management process; 2) the methods and actions that may help eliminate the anxiety of students in using English for business communication include building confidence among students, having a support system, developing learning management process that empowers the students, and providing an environment conducive for the use of English language for communication in the institution; 3) the support program was conducted using the techniques to eliminate the student anxiety in using English for business communication it was found that, the students who participated in this program were able to achieve good scores in the tests, and could communicate well in English for business context. The evaluation of the instructors’ point of view showed that the participating students were happy with their studies, while the evaluation of the advisors and student affairs counselors found that the students could communicate in English through social media among themselves joyfully without fear or anxiety.

Keywords Anxiety, English for communication, eliminating anxiety of students

Background
English is a universal language and an important tool for communication without limitation, both in everyday life and in a global community [2, 7]. It is a medium for dissemination, exchange of information, news and knowledge [10]. Hence it plays a very important role in
politics, education, medicine, science, business, society, economy, and culture. Educational policy in every country requires learners to have the knowledge and ability to use the English language, and Thailand also adopts the same policy to help promote Thailand 4.0 campaign [8].

Educational administration in Thailand therefore requires teaching English subjects at various levels to enable Thai students to develop English proficiency in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and to be able to communicate with an international community. However, it was found that the result of such an attempt was not yet satisfactory, especially with College students in the first year as they have anxiety when communicating in English [2].

Language anxiety is a component of personal attitudes, beliefs, feelings and behaviors associated with learning a foreign language, and occurs during the learning process [1], caused by both classroom factors such as students, lecturers, teaching practices and external factors such as social and cultural conditions [5].

Learner anxiety may arise from low self-esteem, having interpersonal relationship problems, and the beliefs of the students, for example, believing that the teacher will scold them for incorrect use of English in communication, believing that they will receive low grades in assessments, etc. [13]. This results in students having low self-esteem [11, 9], may be caused by the lecturers’ behavior such as foreign lecturers insulting the language level of students [3, 6].

Anxiety may be caused by the learning management process where students have to develop all 4 skills at the same time, namely listening, speaking, reading, writing, and the lecturers’ teaching activities may increase the anxiety of learners [4], the appropriateness of classroom activities, difficulty level of the course, course management [6], and the basis on the culture of learners, such as the learners’ quality of language use with native speakers, the atmosphere in the classroom filled with competition, difficulty in approaching lecturers, and the likelihood of embarrassment during classroom learning activities etc. [5].

Communication anxiety negatively impacts learners in at least 4 categories: academic impact such as students’ low academic performance, cognitive impact such as decreasing capacity to receive or retain new knowledge, social impact such as learners avoiding communicating in English and becoming sober, personal impacts such as learners having problems interacting with other people, experience trembling hands, heart palpitations, and are unable to control themselves [5, 12].

St Theresa International College has English for Business Communication major and faces the problem of anxiety of first year students in using English for communication, which if not solved well can lead to students quitting before graduation. In order to be able to solve such problems systematically, the researcher therefore agreed that a study should be conducted on eliminating anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students which will be beneficial to both the faculty, program committee, and university administrator. The information received can be used to improve the university preparation process for students before commencing their studies, student support process, learning management process, and other related processes. Furthermore, the information can be used for the development of course content or curriculum for the English for Business Communication major.
Research Objectives

1. To study the causes of anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College.
2. To study methods and actions to eliminate anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College.
3. To study the results of eliminating anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College.

Methodology

This research was a qualitative research, conducted using participant observation and in-depth interviews. The sample consisted of 15 first year students from the English for Business Communication major, 6 lecturers, 4 advisors and 3 student affairs counselors. There were 28 key informants in total, chosen using purposive sampling. The researcher collected data.

The researcher conducted the research in 3 stages; the first stage is an analysis of the causes of anxiety, involving students, lecturers, and advisors during March-April, which is the English preparation period before the start of the first semester. The second stage is about defining and taking action to eliminate anxiety, this stage involves student, lecturers, advisors, and student affairs counselors during May 2019 – February 2020, which is the period of English preparation before the first semester starts, the first semester and the second semester in the academic year 2020. Finally, the third stage involves studying the effectiveness of the action taken to eliminate anxiety. This involves students, lecturers, advisors, and student affairs counselors during March 2019 – May 2020, which is the end of the second semester in the academic year 2020.

Triangulated results of the participant observation and interview will be analyzed using the content analysis technique and summarized.

Results

The researcher’s study on eliminating anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students is divided into 3 parts: an analysis of the causes of anxiety, defining and taking action to eliminate anxiety, and results of the action taken. The results were as follows:

1. The causes of anxiety in using English for business communication of students

The causes of anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College include the students, lecturers, and the learning management process.

Students experience anxiety caused by difference in expectations of students and parents, shyness in communication, lack of courage when seeing foreign lecturers, lack of courage to communicate with others, fear of others not understanding what they are communicating, difficulties remembering vocabulary and using grammar, lack of courage to pronounce or lack of confidence that they have pronounced correctly.
Lecturers cause anxiety in ways such as the lecturers’ character, interactions, teaching methods that are not linked to real situations and the lecturer speaking too quickly or in long sentences, making it difficult to comprehend.

The learning management process causes anxiety due to learning activities not being interesting or attract students to use English for communication, and there are few extra-curricular activities, etc.

2. Methods and actions to eliminate anxiety in using English for business communication of students

2.1 The method to eliminate anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College is to focus on fixing the root cause, by fixing the issues of the students, lecturers and the learning management process.

Issues regarding students can be solved by organizing activities to build confidence for students and having a support system for students.

Issues regarding lecturers can be solved by organizing orientation activities for lecturers, especially foreign lecturers, to help them understand the context and educational administration guidelines of the institution and arranging for lecturers with teaching experience to teach first year students with weak knowledge of English.

Issues regarding the learning management process can be solved by organizing development activities for the learning management process and providing an environment conducive for the use of language for communication in the institution.

2.2 Actions to eliminate anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College, key findings are as follows.

1) Building confidence for students, examples of important activities include orientation for students before the university preparation process, providing information on the process of training over a period of 10 weeks, and having seniors share their successful experiences.

2) Having a support system, examples of important activities are assignment of advisors and counselors to meet with students every day, creating a channel for students to contact their advisors and counselors whenever, arranging for senior students to become mentors and take care of students in small groups, such as former school groups, provincial groups, and providing assistance to students as soon as they are informed by students, advisors, counselors, and student mentors.

3) Orientation activities for lecturers, examples of important activities encompass preparation of a Do & Don’t document for foreign lecturers, preparation of lecturer manuals, advisor manuals, providing knowledge of the context and educational administration guidelines of the institution.

4) Arranging for lecturers with teaching experience to teach first year students, examples of important activities are utilizing media and online/new learning resources accessible via personal communication devices, organizing interesting learning activities that attract students to use English for simple communication in the early stages, gradually increasing the difficulty over the weeks, assigning additional learning activities for faster learners, giving extra time/ engage in activities with slow learners outside of school hours.
5) For the development of the learning management process, examples of important activities include creating activity sets or module sets for additional practice outside school hours which can be accessed at any time through an online system, creating learning activities and assessments in the form of sub-tests so learners can see their progress, and having books based on interest for out-of-school hours.

6) Providing an environment conducive for the use of language for communication in the institution, examples of important activities involve creating extra-curricular activities and a Speaking Campus, organizing activities that allow everyone to participate in the use of English, organizing Speaking Contests, both formal and informal (comedy).

3. Results of eliminating anxiety in using English for business communication of students

The results of eliminating anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College, evaluating students, lecturers, advisors, and student affairs counselors.

3.1 Student evaluations were carried out in 2 ways: students’ self-evaluation and consideration of the student’s academic achievements. For the self-evaluation results of students who participated in the project, the students experienced the greatest improvement in speaking, and the least improvement in writing. Overall, they can use English to communicate well. For student achievements, at the end of the second semester, it was found that their subject grades and GPA are good.

3.2 For lecturer evaluations, carried out both in the preparation period, the first semester and the second semester, it was found that in all three stages students were happy with their studies and are able to communicate well in English.

3.3 For the evaluation of advisors and student affairs counselors, a comparative evaluation was conducted for the preparation period and the end of the second semester. It was found that, at the end of the second semester, there is a difference in the students’ ability to communicate in English from the preparation period. They can communicate with friends, lecturers, and communicate in the society, and can communicate in English on social media by themselves continually and happily, such as recording videos in English or posting on Facebook.

Conclusion
The results of the study can be summarized as follows.

1. The causes of anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College are 1) students such as expectations, courage, insecurity 2) lecturers, such as the lecturers’ character, interactions, teaching methods 3) learning management processes, such as learning activities that are not interesting, few extra-curricular activities.

2. Methods and actions to eliminate anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College.
2.1 The method to eliminate anxiety in using English for communication is to focus on fixing the root cause, by fixing the issues of the students, lecturers and the learning management process.

2.2 Actions to eliminate anxiety in using English for communication involve 6 types of activities: 1) confidence-building activities for students 2) student support system 3) lecturer orientations 4) assigning lecturers with experience in teaching first year students 5) organizing activities to develop the learning management process 6) providing an environment conducive for the use of language for communication in the institution.

3. The results of eliminating anxiety in using English for business communication of first year students at St Theresa International College, evaluating students, lecturers, advisors, and student affairs counselors. The self-evaluation of students who participated in the project showed that students achieve good grades and can use English to communicate well. For lecturer evaluations, it was found that students were happy with their studies, and the evaluation from advisors and student affairs counselors showed that students could communicate in social media by themselves continually and happily.

Recommendations

Recommendations for applying the research results
From the study, it was found that the causes of anxiety were students, lecturers, and the learning management process, therefore, program administrators should review the analysis of the causes of anxiety for each cohort of first-time students, in order to proceed to eliminate anxiety appropriate to the situation.

From the study, it was found that the results of eliminating anxiety in using English for business communication of students arose from focusing on fixing the root cause by fixing the issues of the students, lecturers, and the learning management process. The program administrators should translate the results into lessons, creating a body of knowledge to eliminate anxiety in using English for communication more completely.

Recommendations for further research:
From the study, it was found that the results of eliminating anxiety in using English for business communication of students, from the students’ evaluation, lecturers’ evaluation, and evaluation of advisors and student affairs counselor, was good. However, since this study is a qualitative study obtained from in-depth interviews, there should be a quantitative study to confirm the results of the study further for the benefit of further curriculum development.

References


