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Self-Efficacy, Anxiety, and Performance in the English Language among Middle-School Students in English Language Program in Satri Si Suriyothai School, Bangkok

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***Abstract*—**This study investigated students' perception of self efficacy and anxiety in acquiring English language, and consequently examined the relationship existing among the independent variables, confounding variables and students' performances in the English language. The researcher tested the research hypotheses using a sample group of 318 respondents out of the population size of 400 students. The results obtained revealed that there was a significant moderate negative relationship between English language anxiety and performance in English language, but no significant relationship between self-efficacy and English language performance, among the middle-school students. There was a significant moderate negative relationship between English language anxiety and self-efficacy. It was discovered that general self-efficacy and English language anxiety represented a significantly more powerful set of predictors than the set of confounding variables. Thus, the study concluded that English language anxiety and general self-efficacy were significant predictors of English language performance among middle-school students in Satri Si Suriyothai School.

***Keywords*—**Anxiety, English Language Anxiety, Performance in English Language, Self Efficacy.

I. Introduction

THE issue of globalization has necessitated interaction among the various nations of the world. For a nation to interact with another there is the need of communication and the language they will use as a medium of communication. In the global village, English Language has become the cardinal means of international affairs and communication. The use of the English Language is extended to the different fields of life and activities. For instance, many students – non native speakers of the English Language – study mathematics, science, politics, economics, technology, entertainment, sports, and other aspects of educational training in the English Language. In order to meet up with the wave of globalization in this direction, most countries have introduced the study of languages, especially the English Language, in their education curriculum at all levels. They need to produce people who are proficient in the use of the English Language, people who can communicate internationally and actively participate in international affairs.

In the context of Thailand as one of the non-native English speaking countries, the study of the English Language has been introduced for several decades in primary, secondary, colleges, vocational and tertiary institutions. English Language learning centers are found all over the place. All these efforts gear toward enabling the learner to obtain a better white-collar job after graduating from the school, especially students at the tertiary level. Furthermore, there might be additional intention – based on the individual student – why the students are interested in learning English Language. For some, it may be to gain some personal satisfaction from being able to speak or communicate in a widely acclaimed language such as English. Some others may find it useful in pursuing other interests such as career goals.

According to [1], oral proficiency in a foreign language – especially English – can serve as an additional advantage for people seeking employment in business, industrial, governmental and educational sectors. In other words, knowledge of a foreign language might boost their chances of getting employed. This idea may have a link with the view that people, who have high ability in the English language speaking skill, equally have a better chance in working in the top international companies in Thailand. Another comment in this regard holds that though the ability to speak English is a necessary condition for workers in their workplaces, yet Thais generally do not have a high enough level of proficiency to perform well in speaking English [2].

More so, acquisition of a foreign language especially as regards speaking skill seems to be a difficult task in school or educational setting. For learners to become competent in communicating via a foreign language, both language and extra-language factors are involved. Firstly, language factors might include issues of proficiency in the use of the foreign language such as mastery of pronunciation, intonation, stressed syllables, grammatical structure, vocabulary, sentence formation, and appropriate situations to apply them. Hence, the learner ought to acquire the grammatical knowledge and also, know the appropriate situations to use it – emphases on

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the use of tenses like present, past, future, and the continuous tenses.

Secondly, extra-language factors might include motivation which is a conducio sine qua nom in determining either success or failure in communicating via a foreign language. Thus, it sounds plausible to believe that in learning a foreign language, the learner will be highly successful with the proper motivation. In other words, students who are motivated enough will perform very well in their learning process [3]. Also, the reverse is the case in the sense that learners benefit tremendously from positive attitudes while negative attitudes mar motivation and consequently lead to unsuccessful achievement or poor performance.

Another factor might be lack of practice. The researcher is of the opinion that regular practice of the English language is very important for learners, especially in the context of Thailand where the national language is widely used. Hence, learners of the English language seem to be deprived of the opportunity to practice. The students have insufficient time to practice English inside the classroom; while outside class setting, there seems to be dearth opportunities for practicing English. These issues seem to contribute toward decreased motivation in acquiring oral proficiency among the English language learners in Thailand. In addition, many Thai English Language teachers who are supposed to teach in English seem to devote lots of lesson time in grammatical analyses, vocabularies of written texts, pronunciation and reading skills while using Thai language as a medium of instruction. The result being the case that most Thai English language learner can read better than understanding and speaking the English language. Owing to the fact that the teachers do not model the use of English sufficiently, the students hardly have the opportunities to practice their English in real life situations both inside and outside the classroom.

The structure and setting of the classroom can equally deteriorate students' language learning abilities. For example, students might not be motivated to learn in a classroom environment with inadequate facilities and over-population in class – environmental and situational factors [4]. Thai educational system seems to be facing the problems of very large class sizes and the traditional classroom layout wherein students sit in long rows with barely any spaces in between their desks, while the teacher sits behind a desk at a front corner of the room reading from a text. In such a situation, the students may not understand the teacher. Consequently, they tend to whisper among themselves or read cartoons in hiding as experienced in some English language classes. This shows that the students are not motivated enough to learn. Again, the environment is neither fascinating nor conducive for learning of English as a foreign language – conversation class. Due to large class size, the teacher cannot deal with the students one-on-one to track their performances and to offer professional guide to the weaker students. It might be necessary to encourage challenging activities which will engage the students in using the English language and offer them the opportunity to speak their opinions on the topic of study.

The issue of self efficacy is under consideration in this study in the sense that individuals need to exercise control over their feelings, thoughts and actions in the various fields of life which includes acquisition of a foreign language – English. Self efficacy is said to be a belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments. Implicitly, this aspect of general self efficacy finds some kind of bearing in the students' abilities to plan, organize, carry-out and participate effectively in their English Language learning processes. Self efficacy beliefs are quite vital in deciding human activity especially in the area of one's control over one's self, actions and environment [5]. Hence, it aids the cognitive regulation of motivation. This is so due to the fact that humans tend to regulate the level and the distribution of effort spent vis-à-vis the effects expected from their actions [2]. Thus, it sounds logical that people with high level of self efficacy seem to be confident in facing challenging situations or tasks or in handling obstacles [6]. In other words, they may be capable of managing situations, creating ideas and solving problems. So if a student of the English Language acquires high level of self efficacy, s/he tends to be competent in the use of English Language.

In view of the above, the author conducted a survey of students' perception of self efficacy and anxiety in acquiring English language, and consequently examined the possible relationship existing among the independent variables, confounding variables and students' performances in the English language. In other words, the inquirer investigated how English language anxiety experienced by students adversely affected their performances in the English language. Equally, the issue of how high or low self efficacy in the English language affected students' grades was ascertained.

II. Hypotheses

The hypotheses tested in the study are stated as follows:

1. There is no significant relationship in the English language anxiety, self-efficacy, and performance in the English language among Satri Si Suriyothai middle-school students at 0.05 level.
2. There is no significant relationship between the English language anxiety and self-efficacy in Satri Si Suriyothai middle-school students at 0.05 level.
3. There is no significant relationship between the following confounding variables, namely, exposure, perceived structure and setting of class, learning experience, teacher's instructional style and English language performance, at 0.05 level.

III. Method

This was a correlation study in which regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between English language anxiety and self efficacy as they impacted on students' performances in the English language. The author selected a sample of middle-school students in the English language program at Satri Si Suriyothai School at one time. Survey questionnaires meant to assess students' self perceptions

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toward English language anxiety and self efficacy were distributed to the target population of the students.

A. Participants

The participants in the study were a sample of middle-school Thai students (12 to 14 years old) in Satri Si Suriyothai school, an all-girls' Matayom (secondary) school, having students in Thai and English language programs. The study was designed to identify the perceptions of selected middle-school students in the English language program toward feelings of anxiety experienced during learning English language (as a foreign language) as measured by the English language anxiety scale (ELCAS) and self efficacy scale (GSE). Thus, the author tested the research hypotheses using a sample group of 318 respondents out of the target population size of 400 students.

B. Measures

Three-part survey questionnaire both in English and Thai languages were administered to the respondents. The first part investigated student's experiences of the four confounding variables identified in the study. The second part was the English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (ELCAS) which contained a 33-item paper-and-pencil questionnaire geared towards measuring levels of anxiety experienced by students learning English as a foreign language [7]. The third part was the General Self Efficacy Scale [8].

C. Procedures

The author conducted a pilot study using the Thai version of the survey questionnaire, prior to the actual study, on 60 students who were recruited via convenience sampling. The pretest exercise addressed the difficulties the respondents encountered with regard to the questionnaire directions and item statements as well as obtaining the reliability value of the instrument. After the successful pretest, permission and informed consent of the respondents were sought and obtained before conducting the actual study. Those who willingly and freely agreed to participate in the study were recruited and given the questionnaires to mark their responses. Responding to the questionnaires lasted between 15 – 20 minutes, and the collection of data lasted about 2 weeks.

After collection of all the completed questionnaires, the author individually inspected the questionnaires to make sure that the ones with error(s) in completion were excluded from the study. Due to the fact that the author administered questionnaires to more participants than required for the study, there was no need to re-administer the questionnaires involving some errors in completion. Therefore, only the completed questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis in this study.

IV. Results

Descriptive statistical analyses of student performance in the English language, the English language anxiety and self-efficacy showed mean scores of 69%, 103.74 and 28.34 respectively.

TABLE I
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE (%) IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY

		Performance (%)	Total Score of Items on English Language Anxiety Scale	Total Score of Items on General Self-efficacy Scale
N	Valid	318	318	318
	Missing	7	7	7
Mean		69.04	103.74	28.34
Std. Deviation		9.20	16.25	4.00
Minimum		50	54	10
Maximum		89	146	40
Percentiles	25	61.00	94.00	26.00
	50	68.00	104.00	29.00
	75	76.25	114.00	31.00

TABLE II
CORRELATIONS OF SELF EFFICACY, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND PERFORMANCE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

		Performance (%)	Total Score of Items on English Language Anxiety Scale	Total Score of Items on General Self-efficacy Scale
Performance (%)	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-.283	-.085
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.132
	N	318	318	318
Total Score of Items on English Language Anxiety Scale	Pearson Correlation	-.283	1.000	-.284
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
	N	318	318	318
Total Score of Items on General Self-efficacy Scale	Pearson Correlation	-.085	-.284	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.132	.000	.
	N	318	318	318

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Null hypothesis tested: There is no significant relationship between English language anxiety, self-efficacy, and performance in English language among Satri Si Suriyothai middle-school students, at 0.05 level.

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TABLE III
MODEL SUMMARY OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE CONFOUNDING VARIABLES, SELF EFFICACY, AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY

Model	R.	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.107a	.012	-.001	9.21	.012	.913	4	313	.457
2	.341b	.116	.099	8.74	.105	18.387	2	311	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived teaching style of the English language teacher, Setting and structure of English Language Class, Perception of learning experience in the English Language Class, Use of English Language

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived teaching style of the English language teacher, Setting and structure of English Language Class, Perception of learning experience in the English Language Class, Use of English Language, Total Score of items on the Self-efficacy Scale, Total Score of items on English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Null hypothesis tested: There is no significant relationship between the following confounding variables, namely, exposure to the use of English language outside of class, perceived structure and setting of English language class, learning experience of students in English language class, and English language teacher's instructional style and English language performance, at 0.05 level.

TABLE IV
COEFFICIENT OF THE CONFOUNDING VARIABLES, SELF EFFICACY, AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY COLLINEARITY DIAGNOSTICS

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions						
				(Constant)	Use of English Language	Setting and structure of English Language Class	Perception of learning experience in the English Language Class	Perceived teaching style of the English language teacher	Total Score of items on English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale	Total Score of items on the Self-efficacy Scale
1	1	4.297	1.000	.00	.02	.01	.00	.00		
	2	.520	2.875	.00	.91	.00	.00	.01		
	3	.102	6.500	.00	.07	.81	.05	.12		
	4	5.769E-02	8.631	.00	.00	.02	.57	.57		
	5	2.330E-02	13.582	.99	.00	.17	.38	.29		
2	1	6.203	1.000	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.553	3.349	.00	.89	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	3	.103	7.756	.00	.08	.87	.03	.08	.00	.00
	4	5.910E-02	10.245	.00	.00	.04	.24	.81	.01	.01
	5	4.997E-02	11.142	.01	.02	.05	.68	.06	.08	.04
	6	2.763E-02	14.982	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.38	.33
	7	4.453E-03	37.324	.99	.01	.03	.04	.05	.53	.61

a. Dependent Variable: Performance (%)

In examining Beta weights (standardized regression coefficients), it is discovered that both English language anxiety (β = -0.328, t = -5.859, $p < .01$) and general self-efficacy (β = - 0.178, t = -3.187, $p < .01$) are significant predictors of English language performance among students ($p < .01$), whereas all the four confounding variables are not significant predictors of English language performance (negligible β).

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the research hypotheses tested, the first hypothesis proves that students who experience lower level of English language anxiety perform better in their English language tests and/or exams. This finding agrees with the results of some studies [9, 10, 11] which ascertained that high level of anxiety adversely affects progress, acquisition, and proficiency in learning as well as quality of performance in English Language (especially as a foreign language).

Consequently, it shades more light on the fact that students' performance in the English language was 3rd Class Upper Division with 69% as the average score. This score is short of 1% in order to be graded as 2nd Class Lower Division according to the school's grading system. Thus, the 1% variance may be attributed to possible error in the test scoring processes and/or Mathematical figure approximation. Equally, students' obtaining 3rd Class Upper Division – 69%, a score very close to 2nd Class Lower Division, reveals their experience of moderate level of English language anxiety and moderate level of self efficacy. By implication, students'

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performance in the English language can be regarded as average – not high and not low – since they demonstrate moderate level of both English language anxiety and self efficacy. Therefore, if students have experienced high level of English language anxiety, their performance in the English language will be poor. Conversely, if students have experienced low level of English language anxiety, their performance in the English language will be better than 3rd Class Upper Division or higher than 69%. Thus, English language anxiety is a major factor which negatively affects students' performance in English language.

Furthermore, a negligible relationship is ascertained between self-efficacy and performance in English language which signifies that self efficacy per se does not directly impact on middle-school students' performance in the English language at Satri Si Suriyothai School. In other words, students' perceived self-efficacy level is not related to their performance in English language. This result seems to be contrary to the assertion that if students demonstrated high level of self-efficacy, they would likely perform well in different tasks [12, 13, 14, 15]. However, it is discovered that self efficacy directly impacts on English language anxiety which invariably affects students' performance in the English language negatively.

The second hypothesis establishes a significant moderate negative relationship between English language anxiety and self-efficacy among Satri Si Suriyothai middle-school students. This indicates that students who perceive high level of self-efficacy in themselves experience lower level of English language anxiety. This finding supports the result of a study conducted by [16] which showed a strong negative correlation between a foreign language anxiety and self efficacy in acquiring the foreign language.

Consequently, it seems plausible to state that Satri Si Suriyothai middle-school students who demonstrate lower level of self efficacy tend to have higher level of a foreign language anxiety than those with relatively high level of self efficacy. Thus, it holds that students who feel very shy, nervous and afraid to speak English language in the class invariably decrease their level of self efficacy. In essence, this affects their overall performance in the English language class.

The third hypothesis shows that there is no significant relationship between the following confounding variables, namely, exposure to the use of English language outside of class, perceived structure and setting of English language class, learning experience of students in English language class, and English language teacher's instructional style and English language performance, at 0.05 level. Thus, the results obtained after regression analysis reveal that the four confounding variables account for only 1.2% of the variance in students' performance in the English language. More so, the correlation coefficient value (.107) is not significant at 0.05 level which is indicated by the Change in F test. In other words, the confounding variables have little or no effect on students' performance in the English language.

Similarly, the results obtained after regression analysis affirm that general self-efficacy and English language anxiety (main independent variables) accounted for 11.6% variance in students' performance in the English language. Thus, the entry of the two main independent variables increases the explained variance in students' performance in the English language. This result suggests that general self-efficacy and English language anxiety represent a significantly more powerful set of predictors than the set of confounding variables. This finding is consistent with research evidence that in classroom, students exhibited some signs of apprehension, nervousness, tension, fear, or shyness toward learning English as a foreign language [7]. In addition, students' age (12 to 14 years of age) and their cultural background (collectivist society) may have enabled self efficacy to indirectly impact on their performance in the English language. This is possible in that the students are still young and collectivist society does not seem to encourage children to think and make decisions on their own. This is invariably translated in the participants' level of self efficacy.

The finding above is further supported in the examination of Beta weights (standardized regression coefficients) which reveals that both English language anxiety and general self-efficacy are significant predictors of English language performance among middle-school students in Satri Si Suriyothai school.

Lastly, the study concludes that self efficacy interacts with English language anxiety in order to negatively impact on the performance of students. The two independent variables negatively correlate, and further exert either positive or negative effect on the students' English language performance. For instance, when students experience high level of self efficacy, their experience of English language anxiety level is low which results to students' high performance in the English language [positive effect]; whereas when students' level of self efficacy is low, their anxiety level in the English language is high which yields poor performance in the English language [negative effect]. Thus, the conclusion that self efficacy and English language anxiety, not the confounding variables, play strong role and as such are significant predictors of English language performance among middle-school students in Satri Si Suriyothai School.

Suggestions for practical purposes

i) Since it is concluded that students who experience lower level of English language anxiety perform better in their English language tests and/or exams, it becomes necessary for the teachers to enable students in reducing and handling situations that might heighten students' perception of English language anxiety. The situations implied here include those of speaking anxiety and general anxiety towards the English language class, apprehension in learning English as a foreign language, feeling of shy and embarrassed to speak up in the English language class, fear of making mistakes, and consequently lose of face. Hence, the study recommends that

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teachers, especially English language teachers, be trained to employ innovative approaches in minimizing English language anxiety in order to maximize students' performance in the English language.

ii) The study recommends that teachers, especially foreigners teaching English language to Thai students, ought to acquire basic knowledge of Thai culture and Thai notion of 'lose of face'. Hence, on no occasion should the teacher embarrass or make a Thai student lose face in class or make a caricature of students' mistakes in classroom.

iii) In view of the above point, the study further suggests that teachers should adopt both student-centered and learning-centered approaches to learning; make use of pair or group exercises to reduce students' exposure to the psychological pressure emanating from having to face the whole class. Cooperative or collaborative learning method reduces students' English language anxiety and makes them feel less threatened when they work in groups.

iv) Since English language anxiety is inevitable for learners of English as a foreign language, it becomes fruitful for students to acknowledge, recognize and identify their own feelings of English language anxiety and be able to share their individuals' experiences with fellow students. This will curb students' high level of English language anxiety when they become aware that it is normal to feel some kind of anxiety in learning a foreign language, and that other learners feel the same. It can encourage students to work hard and be well-prepared for English language class. Hence, the need for school professional guiding and counseling.

v) Owing to the fact that students who demonstrate low level of self efficacy have high level of English language anxiety than those with relatively high level of self efficacy, the study recommends that teachers should help students to build healthy and strong self efficacy. This can be done by expressing high opinions and expectations of students, encouraging them, praising their good works and rewarding their little positive efforts (positive reinforcement). This will boost students' level of self confidence, self esteem, and self efficacy which will in turn maximize their performances in learning English as a foreign language.

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