

**LEARNERS' ANXIETY AND CULTURAL VALUES IN RELATION TO ENGLISH
LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENTS**

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ABSTRAK

Kebanyakan guru Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia menghadapi pelbagai cabaran didalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran mata pelajaran tersebut sebagai bahasa kedua samada di peringkat sekolah mahupun diperingkat pengajian tinggi. Perasaan takut, gemuruh serta risau yang sering dirasakan pelajar sebelum atau semasa berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggeris secara tidak langsung akan menjejaskan pembelajaran bahasa tersebut. Pelajar di Malaysia perlu menguasai Bahasa Inggeris yang dinaik taraf sebagai bahasa antarabangsa sebagai langkah menyiapkan diri mereka kearah masa depan yang lebih terjamin. Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengkaji tahap gemuruh pelajar terhadap pembelajaran matapelajaran Bahasa Inggeris berdasarkan kepada teori Horwitz et.al (1986) yang telah menggariskan tiga jenis perasaan gemuruh iaitu 1) Takut/Gemuruh Berkomunikasi, 2) Takut/ Gemuruh Semasa Ujian dan 3) Takut/Gemuruh akan Penilaian Negatif. Kajian juga akan mengukur tahap kepatuhan pelajar terhadap nilai nilai budaya Malaysia semasa pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Hubungkait antara perasaan gemuruh, nilai nilai budaya serta pencapaian pelajar dalam Bahasa Inggeris turut akan diuji. Kaedah kajian yang dijalankan adalah melalui kaedah soalselidik yang telah diadaptasi dari Horwitz's (1986) 'Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLACS) dan Kim et al. (1999) 'Asian Cultural Values Scale' (AVS). 'FLACS merangkumi 33 item manakala AVS terdiri daripada 25 item. Pemprosesan data adalah melalui 'Statistical Package for Social Sciences' (SPSS) versi 16.0. Segala data telah dihuraikan dalam bentuk analisis deskriptif yang merangkumi peratusan, nilai min dan frekuensi. Huraian data dalam bentuk inferensi pula merangkumi kaedah 'One way ANOVA' serta korelasi 'Pearson 'r'. Keputusan kajian telah menggambarkan bahawa pelajar Bahasa Inggeris di UTM menghadapi perasaan gemuruh pada tahap yang sederhana. Begitu juga dengan tahap kepatuhan pelajar terhadap nilai nilai budaya semasa pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris berlangsung. Tahap pencapaian Bahasa Inggeris yang berbeza telah menunjukkan perbezaan kepada tahap gemuruh. Korelasi tidak dapat dibuktikan diantara perasaan gemuruh dan nilai nilai budaya terhadap pencapaian. Namun terdapat korelasi diantara kepatuhan terhadap nilai nilai budaya dan perasaan gemuruh didalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

It is estimated that “around 300 million people speak English as their first language, another 700 million or so are using it as a second language, or in learning to do so” (Crystal 1987, p. 358). Due to the rapid socio-economic growth, English as the international language prepares its learners for the real world communication thus helping them to compete with the globalization. “We live in an educational world where orality is seen as necessary, positive personal characteristic” (Daly 1991, pp.7). In this 21st century the mastery of the English language is much encouraged at all levels of education since proficiency in English has been observed as the passport for a brighter career prospect for its practitioner. McDonough (1986, pp.78) associates second language (L2) acquisition as a ‘language skill’ which functions as ‘social skills’ as it is used for some specified circumstances. In other words, English language unites people of the world.

Malaysian history has marked the usage of English as early as the 1940’s. British not only colonized the country, they brought along English language as well as the culture with them (Rajaretnam, 1999). Ever since Malaysia gained its independence, English has gradually and now officially gained its status as the second language after the national

language Bahasa Melayu. Learning English in Malaysian schools begins as early as the preschool, then, primary school, next, secondary and later the tertiary level. English is treated as a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary school and is generally taught in mainstream public schools consisting of eleven years of education. A total of 200 minutes per-week is allocated for learners to learn English covering four main skills which are reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The Literature component was also introduced for the upper secondary level as to boost further interest within learners in learning English. English as the core paper appears in the three major examinations which are 'Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah'(UPSR), 'Penilaian Menengah Rendah' (PMR) and 'Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia' (SPM). Most learners find the English SPM 322 examination far more challenging after it was merged with the Cambridge 1119 "O" Level. In Malaysia, a good pass in English examination usually subscribes learners to a better prospect into tertiary education or even job seeking opportunities. In other words, proficiency in English reflected one's competency in general.

In 2003, the Malaysian Ministry of Education introduced bilingualism into all schools where English language had replaced Malay language as the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science. Starting from 2012, the above educational transformation will be abolished in stages where it will revert to the monolingual medium of instruction in response to the continuous demand from majority of teachers and parents due to the low proficiency of English among teachers and students.

At the tertiary education level, English consistently gained its popularity as it is announced as the primary medium of instructions especially in private universities and colleges. In public universities, English is also slowly taking over 'Bahasa Melayu' and used in the teaching and learning environment. As discussed earlier, proficiency in English serves as the passport for learners to excel and compete globally. On the other hand, such scenario nonetheless has raised several concerns. Learners who are not fluent in English find it hard to understand texts and lectures in English. During interpersonal communication, conversions with peers and lecturers even during English hours become lesser as they experienced the pressure.

Being non-native speakers of English, or English as a second language learner (ESL), learners often experienced a condition which is described as “the feeling of uneasiness, worry, nervousness and apprehension when learning or using a second or foreign language” (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). These feelings are often associated with all language skills: speaking, reading, and writing. This anxiety provoking situations may hinder the process of learning English language and eventually produce more graduates with poor communication skills in English.

Besides the feeling of anxiety, learners cultural values believed play some roles in learners’ attitude and perhaps learners’ state of anxiety in second language learning. Malaysian ESL learners’ cultural values to certain extent will determine their belief towards the new language and culture of the new language, thus effecting learners’ motivation to learn the second language. Values inhibiting a learner have the tendency of shaping the behavior including the strategies adopted by the language learners in dealing with new language concepts. The culture in which a person learns affects him/her in many ways: it determines what is learnt and influences how it is learnt. Subsequently, the cultural values of students from diverse backgrounds may determine the quality of ESL learning outcomes. In a nutshell, second/foreign language anxiety and cultural values are evident in the second/foreign language classroom learning and may be a strong indicator of English language achievement. Apparently, between FLA and cultural values, both variables may have strong influential factor against one another or towards ESL learners’ achievements. Thus, it is wise the mentioned phenomenon be explored to get empirical evidences followed by effective instructional strategies to avoid any detrimental effects on students’ confidence, self-esteem and their participation in the second/foreign language classes.

1.2 Background of the Study

Teachers of the second language (L2) often faced numerous challenges posed by ESL learners. It is common for Malaysian English teachers to encounter multiple frustrations when learners preferably choose silence over interaction in the target language. In most cases,

majority of language teachers often refer to the lack of participation in classroom activities especially in the speaking task to “having poor attitude” or “lack of motivation” rather than identifying them as anxious learners (Gresgersen, 2003, pp.30). In conjunction to being anxious, Blau (1995) illustrated that anxiety is the condition where a person will experience tension and unstable emotional state and powerless in which one perceives danger.

In the foreign or second language learning settings, anxiety may be referred to “as distinct complex self-perceptions, beliefs and behavior related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, pp. 218). This means, anxiety can be referred to such complex feelings and only learners themselves are able to understand the situation. Similarly, Leaver et al., (2005) referred to anxiety in language learning as “fear of uncertainties that arise when you think about studying a foreign language” (pp.92). In conjunction to this matter, it is reported that communicating in a foreign language, “may possibly create tensions and worries as the roles we played are intimately bound up with personality and the self” (McDonough, 1986, pp.81)’. Learners’ negative emotional reactions are reported to increase while learning the language (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989). Horwitz et al., (1986) in his study revealed that many anxious learners claimed they posit extreme condition resulting in ‘mental block’ when speaking another language. In most research, anxiety is often perceived by many language learners as negatively influencing language learning and has been found to be one of the most highly examined variables in all psychology and education research (Horwitz, 2001). It is also common to see that students who are highly anxious choose to play safe by refraining themselves from giving opinions and excluding from any classroom discussion in fear of being negatively criticized by their friends and the teacher. Boabin Zhao (2005) commented that sometimes learners make mistakes when they are speaking because they are shy and nervous. In short, communicating or having to perform in the target language often resulted to uneasiness and discomfort within ESL learners.

Anxiety is reported as a complex matter to unveil as it arises from many sources perceived by individuals as threatening according to their “unique frame of references” of particular contexts or situations (Young, 1991). Japanese students for instance have reported to have fear of losing ‘face’ after being negatively evaluated in front of others (Ohata, 2005). Students in China have been reported to be silent in class due to fear of poor appraisal by

others (Jones, 2004). Besides that, as significantly mentioned in Jones (2004) studies, despite being proficient in English for some learners, they are still reluctant to voice out in class for fear of showing off. Such phenomenon are significant to impact Asian learners as they ‘tend to care more about their ‘*Mianzi*’ (face) as their public image” (Liu, 2009). Relevant to this matter, culture has become one of the aspects arousing anxiety apart from course, language skills, motivation, proficiency, teachers and tests (Bailey, 1983; Ellis and Rathbone, 1987; Young, 1990; Prince, 1991; Sparks and Ganshow, 1991; Oxford, 1992). As further agreed by Maitland (1997), learners will use their culture, first language, educational background, personal experiences and their new environment in learning a new language. Thus in this study, the researcher treats cultural values as a potential variable related to the formation of learners’ foreign language anxiety and achievement in the learning of the second language (English).

The National Center for Cultural Competence, United States defined culture as an “integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations” (Goode, Sockalingam, Brown, & Jones, 2000, pp. 1). Hall (1959, pp.1), “defined culture as the way of life of the people, the sum of their learned behavior patterns, attitudes and their materials. Culture controls behavior in a deep persisting ways, many of which are outside awareness and beyond conscious control of the individual”. Krasner (1999) suggested that learning a new language becomes extremely challenging because as learners they have to learn new sounds, new grammar, new vocabulary, new social and academic language, strategies to mend communication breakdowns and how to say things appropriately in different social contexts and many different functions of the language. These challenges may somehow contradict with the learners’ concept of ‘self’ which has been unconsciously molded by culture. Adler (1987) in his study noted that cultural norms may become a tremendous burden on one psychological well being especially when expected to conform to the social and cultural norms of the target culture.

Having said this, usually European learners may think and talk more assertively as compared to Asian learners. From a cultural point of view, Asian learners strongly uphold to distinctive traditions and values which discourage talking when teachers or elders are talking as a sign of respecting the elderly or people with higher authority. Yoyenama (1999) in her study reported that Japanese possess typical Japanese classroom norms, such as hesitating to express one's own ideas or opinion different from others and trying not to be assertive in public contrasted to their American counterparts. For Asians, a person could be labeled as rude if such values are broken.

The American Education System very much differs from Malaysians as it encourages students to be 'bold and active in class' (New Straits Times, 2011). In Malaysia, most of the time being bold is often associated with negative values as compared to being receptive. ESL learners in UTM are not excluded from such belief. Reticences are evident in the second language classes in UTM causing the teacher to wonder whether it is an act to respect the 'teacher figure' or just a sign of incompetency. To speak up in a second language class for the ESL learners create tension to certain degrees within learners since committing errors very much affecting their 'face'. Learners are too concerned of others opinion about them since Malaysians have been identified to be relational towards one another. Beyond doubt, negative thoughts will deprive learners from believing themselves as becoming successful learners as they neglect learning opportunities (Gibbons, 1991; Hass & Eisenstadt, 1991; Sarason, 1972). Accepting everything the teachers says and avoiding too many questions as an act of obedience indirectly hampers class discussion. This clash of culture significantly projects different types of concern and worries within ESL teachers and learners.

Many researchers have recognized the importance of teaching the culture of the target language in reducing anxiety. However, very few research have been carried out to study the imposition of learners' own cultural values onto learners' degree of foreign language anxiety and L2 (English) achievement. As highlighted by Stevick (1980) the success of language learning actually depends more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom. Researchers have identified the feeling of anxiety to have relationship with learners' belief and teachers' belief about learning a foreign language (Young, 1991). Learners' cultural profiles may have been one of the primary beliefs embedded within the

learners self in which language teachers need to consider in the teaching and learning of the second language. Therefore it is worth examining the characteristics of foreign language anxiety and cultural values of a learner with the view to implement classroom intervention in reducing the degree of ESL learners' anxiety. This study treats ESL learners' foreign language anxiety and cultural values as a variable believed to be influencing learners' achievements in second language learning.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Cambell and Ortiz (1991, pp.159) highlighted that language anxiety among university students is alarming and estimated that up to one half of all language students experiencing debilitating levels of language anxiety. It was also reported by the learners that despite compulsive efforts and commitment in acquiring the new language, anxiety may override their actual competence in communication (MacIntyre et al., 2003). Language anxiety among Malaysian ESL learners should be given equal attention by researchers, teachers or practioners since it is an observable phenomenon and in most cases learners are reluctant to take part in the class activities and classroom interactions. The consequent negative effects of anxiety onto L2 learning and performance have undoubtedly proven to pose a challenge to all language teachers, as it potentially hamper optimal teaching and learning from taking place in the ESL classroom. While many have attempted to identify the sources of anxiety, to date, very few studies have been carried out specifically onto learners own cultural values as a potential source of Malaysian ESL learners' anxiety in the second language classroom.

Linguists and anthropologists have long recognized that the language thought in classrooms closely reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken (Krasner, 1999). The inhabitation of the native cultures may serve as clashes against the culture of the target language within ESL learners 'self' thus creating certain amount of anxiety in learning the second language. This means during an English lesson, besides teaching the language, language teacher is also imparting the English culture onto the Malaysian learners. In this case, despite the fact that anxiety appears to exist in any classroom discourse, anxiety appears to be even more heightened when learning the second language

where new culture emerges. Logically, Kresner (1999) highlighted that learning a new language becomes extremely challenging because as learners they have to learn new sounds, grammar, vocabulary, new social and academic language, how to say things appropriately in different social contexts and many different functions of the language. In other words, learning the new language could mean learners must also adopt the elements of another culture. As for Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) ESL learners, the Malaysian cultural values learners learnt to live with may have indirectly influenced the way learners perceived, behaved and reacted towards the English language classroom. All in all, the purpose of this study is to investigate learners' level of second/foreign language anxiety and the level of adherence towards cultural values as the variables assumed to influence ESL learners' achievement in the second language (English) classroom at the tertiary level.

1.4 Research Objectives

Specifically, the objectives are as follows:

1. To investigate the level of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and the level of adherence towards cultural values among the ESL learners.
2. To identify significant difference in terms of the levels of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and the levels of adherence towards cultural values between the different groups of English language achievements among the ESL learners.
3. To identify relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and English language achievements among the ESL learners.
4. To identify the relationship between Cultural Values and English language achievements among the ESL learners.
5. To identify relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Cultural Values among the ESL learners.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to meet the following objectives;

1. What is the level of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among ESL learners?
2. What is the level of adherence towards cultural values among the ESL learners?
3. Is there significant difference in terms of the levels of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) between the different groups of English language achievements among the ESL learners?
4. Is there significant difference in terms of the levels of adherence towards cultural values between the different groups of English language achievements among the ESL learners?
5. Is there any relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and English language achievements among the ESL learners?
6. Is there any relationship between cultural values and English language achievements among ESL learners?
7. Is there any relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and cultural values among ESL learners?

1.6 Hypotheses

H₀₁

There is no significant difference in terms of the levels of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) between the different groups of English language achievements among the ESL learners.

H₀₂

There is no significant difference in terms of the levels of adherence towards cultural values between the different groups of English language achievements among the ESL learners.

H₀₃

There is no relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and English language achievement among the ESL learners.

H₀₄

There is no relationship between Cultural Values and English language achievement among the ESL learners.

H₀₅

There is no relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Cultural Values among the ESL learners.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study highlights a significant issue which embraces the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety among Malaysian English Second Language (ESL) learners. In this study, learners' foreign language anxiety is examined closely to learners' cultural values. The aforementioned aspects are later investigated in relation with learners' English language

achievement. Undoubtedly, cultural values conditioned people to become who they are, what to think and how to behave. In other words, one's values have strong potential in shaping one's self perceptions and attitudes in language learning. On the other hand, such values could also possibly become the major obstacle in second language (L2) learning and achievements.

The investigations and the findings will be considerable interests to language learners, teachers and practitioners as it will demonstrate the implications of learners' anxiety and cultural values onto English language achievements. With such awareness in mind, it is hoped that the findings will broaden our understandings of the phenomenon known as anxiety and the imposition of one's' cultural values (or vice versa) in L2 learning. Findings may provide language teachers of the same or different cultural background with more insights in creating a less anxious, relaxed, conducive and more effective language learning strategies and environment.

1.8 Theoretical framework

Numerous literature have highlighted that anxious language learners are not willing to participate in language learning activities and have lower performance compared to the non anxious learners (Hortwitz et al. (1986), MacIntyre and Gardner(1991), Aida (1994). Pioneering researchers in language anxiety like Hortwitz et al. (1986), Aida (1994), Young (1991), MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) without fail have agreed that ESL/EFL anxiety can interfere with learners' L2 language performance.

1.8.1 Hortwitz et al. Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Hortwitz et al., (1986) categorized anxiety into three types of performance anxieties which have been identified as (1) communication apprehension (CA), (2) fear of negative

evaluation and (3) test anxiety. These three components seek to explain the phenomenon of language anxieties within a foreign language classroom.

(1) Communication Apprehension (CA)

Most researchers have reported that speaking skills creates the most anxiety (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). Hortwitz et al. (1986) defined communication apprehension as “a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people”. MacCroskey (1997, pp. 78) conceptualized CA as an “individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons”. In the essence of this view predicates that the reason learners who do not feel comfortable or shun away from communicating in the target language may be due to fear of exposing their language inefficiency or limited knowledge to others (Ely, 1986). Ely (1986) also mentioned that most of the time these learners preferably remain silent and withdrawn rather than participating in any language activities.

(2) Test Anxiety

Meanwhile, tests anxiety as explained by Hortwitz et al.(1986), is a type of performance anxiety due to the feeling of fear of failing and learners who undergo test anxiety perceps the oral production of the target language merely as an evaluation rather than an opportunity to improve the oral production skills.

(3) Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)

Hortwitz, Hortwitz & Cope, (1986, pp.128) mentioned that foreign language anxiety significantly consists of three categories which are “self perceptions beliefs, feelings and behaviour related to classrooms language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”. Learners are dealing much with their inner self during the process of language learning. It is the belief of what they can or cannot do. Pappamiheil (2002) reported, highly anxious learners do not consider language mistakes made as part and parcels of learning process. Instead, they take comments made by teachers and friends as too

personal. Most of them are also considering it as source of negative evaluations from peers and teachers which very much threatens their self- esteem and image. As the consequence, this over-bearing negative thought will later interfere with motivation and intention to participate in the classroom learning. Similarly, Guiora (1983) also agreed that language learning could impose a distressing experience for learners as it may threatens learners self-belief and worst, the world view. Additionally, they added that most foreign language learning may also become a threat to learners' self-efficacy and also self-perception. Figure 1 describes the theoretical framework used in this study.

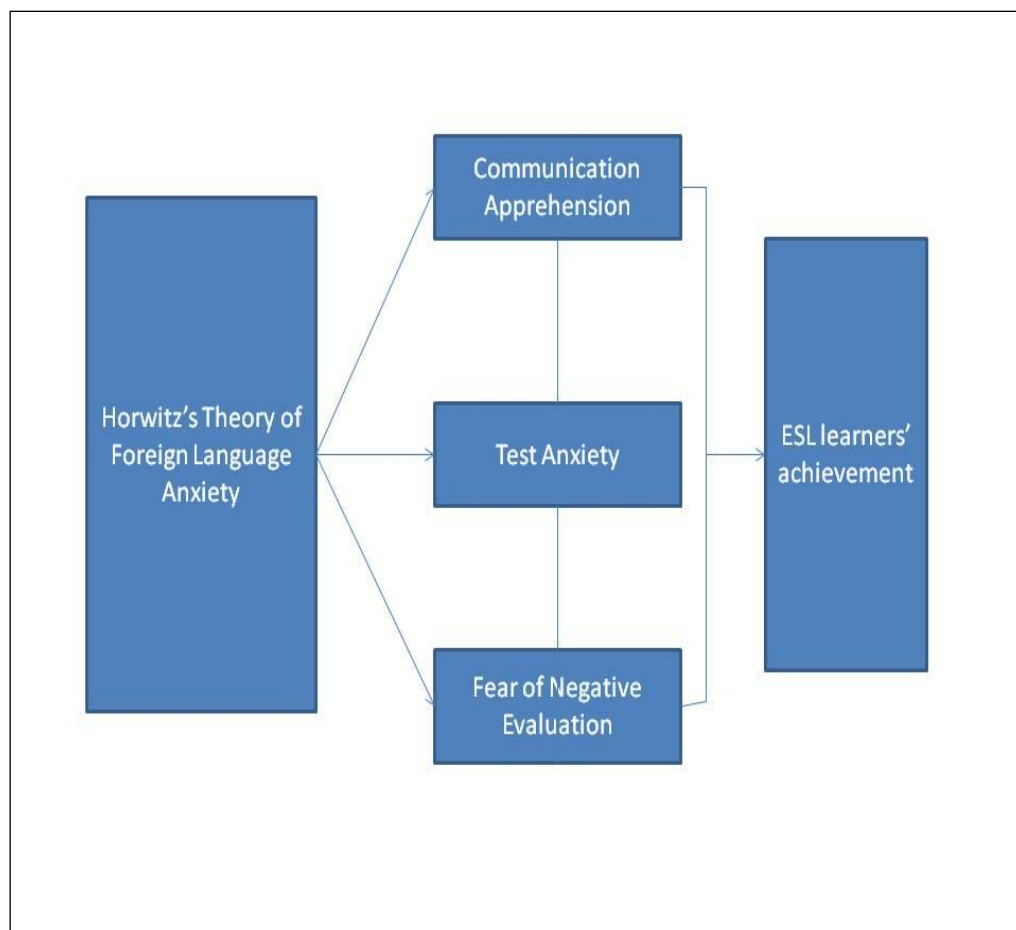


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

1.9 Conceptual Framework

This research seeks to examine ESL learners' language anxiety and cultural values as the variables which have the tendency to influence English language achievement. The conceptual framework (refer to Figure 2) in this study subscribes to Horwitz's Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) theory which stress on 3 sub-factors contributing to anxiety which are 1) Test anxiety, 2) Communication Apprehension and 3) Fear of Negative Evaluation as the variables for learners' sources of anxiety. As noted earlier that numerous studies have identified anxiety to bring negative implications towards second or foreign language learning achievement. In the context of this study, the researcher also intends to identify learners' cultural values as one of the possible contributing factor towards learners' state of language anxiety. The researcher's perception onto this matter falls back to the findings suggested by Gardner (1985) which highlighted 'social dimension' as a major determinant of success in second language learning. Gardner's 'social dimension' elements in L2 learning has been embedded through his 'Socio-Educational Model' introduced in 1985 which is designed specifically for foreign language learning.

This model (Appendix B) suggested that learners' social environment and social values affects learners' language skills, individual differences in intelligence, motivation and scenes of anxiety in language learning. Relevant to this study, the primary variable set in this model by Gardner is 'social milieu' which refers to learners' particular cultural context which later determines learners' belief towards the foreign language learnt and the culture of the target language. Apart from that, Gardner believed that cultural values inhibited by learners effected the development of attitude and motivational level towards learning the second/foreign language. To some learners, learning another language may means adopting the elements of another culture. Thus, Gardner viewed that learners' willingness to accept other cultural values become important considerations in the process. For example, Gardner mentioned that if learners believe that learning the foreign language is difficult, the possibility of low achievement is high and vice versa. He further concluded that the success of learning a second language "will be influenced to a certain extent by the individual's attitude towards the other communities" (1985, pp.146).

Learners' attitude may be formed as to what Wolfgang stated, (1979, pp. 162) "culture governs behavior at a subconscious level. It is an organized body of rules, allowing for individual differences, concerning the ways individuals bound together by such things as common boundaries, customs, institutions, values, languages, non-verbal behavior, arts, should behave towards one another, and towards objects in their surroundings". Thus the researcher subscribes to the aforementioned theory and the 'Socio Education Model' as they appear to certain extent element of truth. Teachers in Malaysia often find learners 'play safe' by not talking or questioning too much perhaps in fear being negatively judged by others as Malaysian norms regard it as 'ill mannered'. Learners' composition of values derives from the culture they lived in which governs the way they behave and respond in the language classroom.

Recognizing this matter, learners' state of anxiety might be subconsciously governed by the surrounding elements within cultural values. As a matter of fact, learners' degree of anxiety may also rise due to the imposition of the culture they lived in and the culture they are about to learn in the target language. The existence of two sets of distinctive cultures may posit a higher degree of anxiety within the language learners. In conclusion, the researcher supports Horwitz's theory of foreign language anxiety and is convinced with Gardner's Socio Educational Model which identifies 'social milieu' or cultural belief as a source of determinant of foreign language achievement. The researcher strongly suggests a need to examine the role of learners' cultural values in generating anxiety in the second language learning. The two variables are later reported to have influence on to learners' English achievement. Figure 2 below presents the conceptual framework.

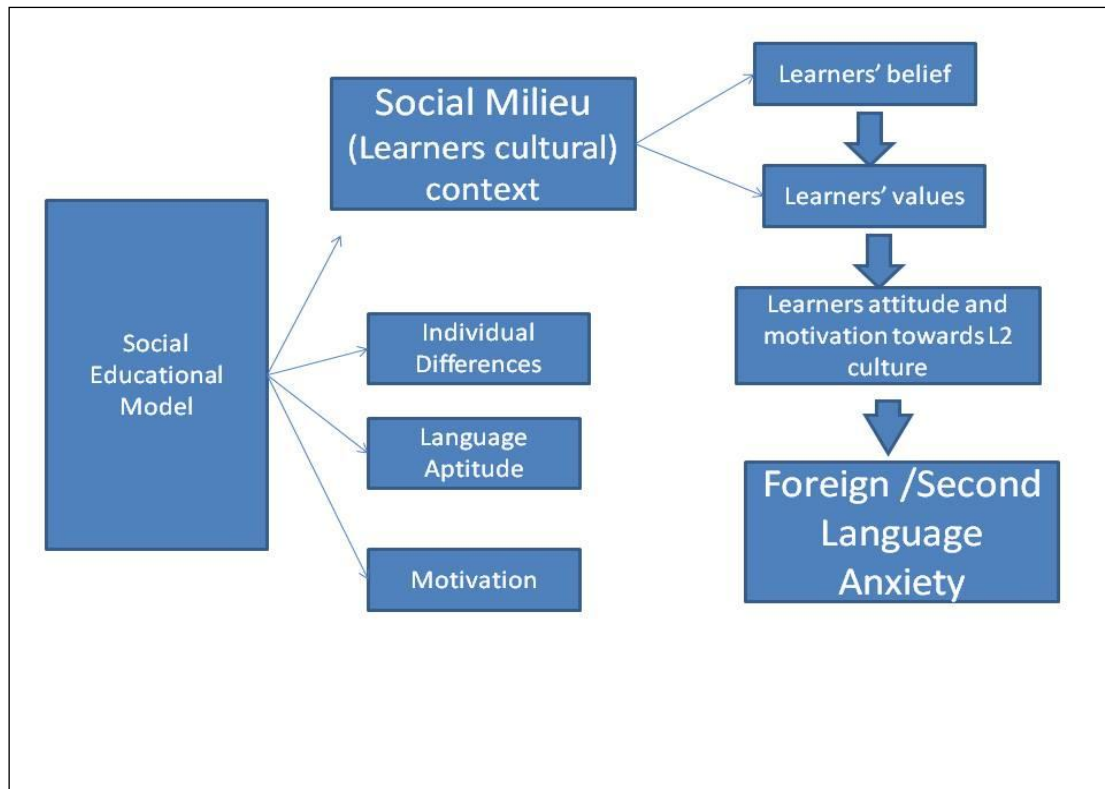


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

1.10 Operational terminologies

1.10.1 Foreign Language

Foreign language is defined in Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt, & Paltt, 1992) as “a language that is not a native language in a country. A foreign language is usually studied either for communication with foreigners who speaks the language, or for reading printed materials in the language” (pp.142).

‘Bahasa Melayu’ (Malay Language) is considered as the national language in Malaysia. Therefore other languages used in Malaysia are considered as foreign languages. These languages may consist of English language, Japanese Language, Mandarin, Tamil, Korean, French and others. In the context of this study, a few Foreign language classes which have been offered by the Language Academy, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia are

namely English, Japanese, Mandarin and French. English subjects such as English for Academic Purposes and Advance English for Academic Purposes are core subjects to be taken by students in UTM. English subjects such as ‘Effective Oral Communication’, ‘Career Search’ and ‘Work Place Communication are considered as elective classes to be registered normally during the final year of their study. Japanese, Mandarin and French classes may be registered by those who are interested in obtaining additional competencies other foreign languages.

English language is chosen as the foreign language also recognized as the second language for Malaysians which will be studied in this context. Thus this concludes that the scope of the research will not include other foreign languages offered by the university. However, learners’ perceptions from the English classes may be used to significantly envisage learners state of anxieties in other foreign language classes offered by the university.

1.10.2 Second Language (L2)

Second language is defined in Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching And Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992, pp.143) used in Britain as “ [a] language that is not a native language in the country but which is widely used as the medium of communication (e.g. in education and in government) and which is usually used alongside another language or languages. English is described as a second language in Fiji, Singapore and Nigeria”. English is also considered as the second language in Malaysia (Gill, 2002) and in line with the education policy; English is taught as a second language.

1.10.3 Foreign Language Anxiety and Second Language Anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986, pp. 128-129) defines Foreign Language Anxiety “distinct complex of self perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language

learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (pp.128). This also includes “freezing” in class, “going blank” before exams and psychological reactions such as shaking and sweating.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994a) define language anxiety (Second language) as “the feelings of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (pp. 284). In this study I will regard language anxiety as synonymous of both definitions, ‘foreign language anxiety and second language anxiety’.

1.10.4 Culture and Values

Louise Damen(1987) defines culture as “ learned and shared human patterns or models for living; day- to-day living patterns. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind’s primary adaptive mechanism" (pp. 367).

Damen (1987) defines values bring effective force to belief and centers on ideas of ‘good, proper and positive, or the opposite” (pp.191). In the context of this study, the Malaysia ESL learners’ cultural values are referred to the Asian cultural values introduced in the work of Kim, Atkinson and Yang (1999). The selected values consist of 7 sub-elements which are ‘*collectivism*’, ‘*conformity to norms*’, ‘*emotional self-control*’, ‘*filial piety*’, ‘*family recognition through achievement*’ and ‘*humility*’.

1.10.5 Socio Educational Model (SEM)

Gardner introduces the *Socio Educational Model* in 1985 which stresses on social dimension of language learning. He stresses on the idea that languages, “unlike other subjects, involved development of knowledge and skills which are part of the heritage of the learners’ cultural community”. Besides that Gardner also sees the success of learning another

language depends on the learners' cultural belief in the community of the targeted language (Gardner, 1985 cited in Chambers, 1999, pp.20).

1.10.6 Language Proficiency

Language proficiency is a person's skill in using a language for specific purpose refer[ring] to the degree of skill with which a person can use a language, such as how well a person can read, write, speak or understand language" (Richards et al., 1992, pp. 204).

1.10.7 Language Achievement

Language Achievement is "learners' proficiency as the result of what has been taught or learned after a period of instruction" (Richards et al., 1992, pp. 197). In the context of this study, learners' achievements are based on their previous English achievement in the previous semester. The achievement score were based on the accumulation of term-based assessments scores.

1.10.8 Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) ESL learners

UTM's ESL learners consist from various faculties. The learners will enroll themselves in 3 English subjects which 2 are compulsory subjects (UHB 1412- English for Academic Communication and UHB 2422-Advance English Communication). One elective English subject will be registered at year three and the subjects comprised of;

- i) UHB 3012-English for Career Search
- ii) UHB 3022-English for Workplace Communication
- iii) UHB 3052-English for Oral Communication
- iv) UHB 3032-Reading
- v) UHB 3042-Report Writing

1.11 Scope and limitation of the study

This study intends to investigate ESL learner anxiety in the second/foreign language learning (English). Among many other factors, only language anxiety and learners' cultural values are investigated to have relationship between each variable and second language achievements. Besides that, the study only includes 310 year ESL learners in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Johor Bahru Campus as sample within this period of time the study is conducted. Thus, it will not be reliable to generalize the results for this group of learners with other learners of different universities. Learners from other locations may also hold much distinctive perceptions and backgrounds towards the subject matter studied.

ESL Learners' achievements were also obtained via learners self report of the most recent English results. No achievement measuring scales were used to obtain such results from the ESL learners. Apart from that, since respondents' level of achievements were measured based on learners' past English achievements which may not be related to learners experiencing any form of anxiety at the duration English was being measured. In most tertiary education system, evaluations of achievements were based on assessment based on a standardized multiple tasks. Some of the methods used in assessing ESL learners in UTM were via presentations, written assignments, role plays, group discussions and quizzes to be accomplished either individually or in groups. Existence of anxiety may be minimal or even null if it was done with much preparation or in groups. Besides that, the accuracy of the findings is limited to the information obtained from the self reported surveys that have been distributed to the respondents.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter first introduced the standing position of English functioning as the Second Language (ESL) in the Malaysian in general and specifically in the Malaysian

education system. By highlighting its function as the language of survival in today's competitive world, it further emphasis towards the needs of crucial attention especially by English language teachers or practitioners. The background of English as the Second Language in relevant literatures was described in detail. The aspects of anxiety, culture and achievement were illustrated in relevance to second language learning. The statement of the problems further illustrated the implications of foreign language anxiety and adherence towards cultural values onto ESL learners' achievements. The significance of how this study would benefit the empirical and practical field was explained. In the theoretical framework, this chapter cited theories from Hortwitz et. al,(1986) as it is the cornerstone in explaining the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety. To the conceptual framework of this study, this chapter further emphasis onto learners 'state of language anxiety' in relation to learners' cultural environment (social milieu suggested by Gardner, 1985) by focusing onto learners' cultural values as the variable believed to be influencing ESL learners' English language achievements.

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