

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Speaking anxiety can manifest in various ways, including physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, increased heart rate, dry mouth, and mental symptoms such as fear of making mistakes, negative self-talk, self-consciousness, and difficulty organizing thoughts (Khreisat, 2022). It can significantly impact an individual's ability to effectively communicate and may hinder language learning progress or professional development.

McCroskey (1988) argue that Speaking anxiety, also known as communication apprehension or stage fright, refers to the fear, nervousness, or discomfort experienced by individuals when speaking in public or using a foreign or second language. It is a common phenomenon that can affect people of all ages and proficiency levels in language learning or public speaking situations.

The causes of speaking anxiety can be multifaceted and vary from person to person. Addressing speaking anxiety is crucial for individuals to overcome their fear and improve their speaking skills. Strategies to manage and reduce speaking anxiety include regular practice and exposure, deep breathing and relaxation techniques, positive self-talk and reframing, seeking support, and setting achievable goals.

Research on elementary school speaking anxiety has been conducted in various countries. One of these studies aimed to determine the anxiety of an elementary student in second grade in Turkey. This study was written (Yaman & Demirtaş, 2014) This is based on interest, motivation, attitude, personality, value judgment and ego. The reason is that the research conducted is not only focused on examining speaking anxiety using English in elementary school children, but in the turkey language. So, to find whether there are differences in anxiety levels when speaking using English as their foreign language.

Another study conducted by (Palupi, 2021) it is argued that speaking anxiety can inhibit students from speaking which will be detrimental to their oral skills. they should have the motivation to speak more and for students to be active in speaking in class, then teachers should give more oral task instructions. Teachers should also use more creative and innovative learning media and methods in learning so that students do not think that speaking in front of others is scary.

Purandina (2022) found that early school students in Marga sub-district tend to feel anxious when participating in English language learning in class. The researcher also mentioned that this happens because of several factors such as the lack of time allocation for English lessons that they get, they also get more theory in class than direct practice, and the rare use of English in everyday life. The specific factors that influence English speaking anxiety are also mentioned in this study. Such as lack of confidence, fear of judgment, and fear of being compared with other friends.

Both male and female students are possible to use their emotions when learning a foreign language. As (Wardhaugh, 2006) says "gender is becoming one of the big "growth areas"". In this case, gender plays a very important role in foreign language speaking anxiety in this study. Gender (male and female) is considered as a variable in life just like social class, ethnic age and so on. On the other hand, (Tianjian, 2010) states that gender has no relationship with foreign language speaking anxiety, but depends on the level of a group. Based on (Bernat & Lloyd, 2007) stated that in language learning, female students are more likely to speak more than one language they use in communication, on the other hand, males rarely speak during language classes, however, males enjoy more when they practice directly with native speakers than females. It can be concluded that males are better in terms of society and females are better in terms of school learning.

Thailand, like other countries, attaches great importance to English education in the primary school curriculum. The few studies from Thai researchers have only examined the level of speaking anxiety within the scope of Thai schools (Akkakoson, 2016; Kalra & Siribud, 2020) and (Shamsuri et al., 2021) that focused on

Speaking Anxiety and Strategies Used by internationals. Understanding the level of anxiety that primary school students experience in speaking English and identifying potential variations by gender can provide valuable insights for teachers, policy makers and curriculum developers in creating effective strategies to reduce speaking anxiety and improve the language learning experience.

The background of foreign language learning, especially English in Ban Nonsawan elementary school, is faced with various challenges. Many factors make English learning unsuccessful, such as complicated sentence structures, difficult pronunciation, learning motivation, students' attitudes towards the way teachers deliver English lessons and even students' attitudes towards teachers in teaching. Therefore, teachers try to attract attention and make students motivated to learn English in a fun way. Not only the teacher explains the material, students listen. However, the teacher facilitates so that students can be active but they do not realize that they are learning while playing.

Even so, the teacher's actions to motivate students are not good because there is no definite learning target, the teacher only provides motivation for students to like English lessons, not with English learning achievement targets for elementary schools. And from the researcher's observation, students still have anxiety when faced directly with strangers to have a light conversation. They are used to having conversations in their mother tongue and only use a few English words when learning English.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher examined the level of speaking anxiety in elementary school students with a focus on the relationship between anxiety levels and gender. the researcher hopes that with this study, English teachers can find out that the level of anxiety in speaking a foreign language in students is very different. and teachers will also know what factors are the reasons that students have anxiety when speaking, especially when speaking English and that way, English teachers will find out how to reduce the anxiety experienced by their students. therefore, the researcher titled this study *"Investigating the Level of*

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in Thai Elementary Schools: Gender Differences"

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the explanation above, the research problem is formulated as follows:

1. What is the level of foreign language speaking anxiety of elementary school students in Loei province, Thailand?
2. Is there a correlation between speaking anxiety level and gender (male & female)?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the purpose of this study is to find out the level of foreign language speaking anxiety in 6 grade at Ban Nonsawan elementary school and to find out whether there is a correlation between speaking anxiety and gender.

1.4 Hypothesis

Based on the previous explanation, the researcher has an assumption that:

- a. Ho: There is no significant difference between gender and speaking anxiety in Ban Nonsawan elementary school, Loei province, Thailand.
- b. H1: There is no significant difference between gender and speaking anxiety in Ban Nonsawan elementary school, Loei province, Thailand..

1.5 Significance of the Study

The researcher hopes that this study gives theoretical and practical significance such as

- a. Theoretical significance

Hopefully, this study provides motivation and knowledge to find out that students have anxiety when speaking a foreign language.

- b. Practical significance

- 1) Teacher

The researcher hopes that this study can provide new information for teachers in learning English as a foreign language. They can find out the level of speaking anxiety of students in the classroom. so that teachers can make interesting learning strategies.

2) Learners

The researcher hopes that through this study, learners will be encouraged to speak in front of others without feeling nervous and anxious.

3) Further researcher

Other researchers can use this research as a literature review and conduct research on the same topic but using a different focus.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

In this study, the researcher focuses on analyzing the level of foreign language speaking anxiety between male and female students. Then, the limitation of this study just focused on the level of speaking anxiety of elementary school students in Thailand and correlation between speaking anxiety and gender.

1.7 Definition of key terms

In this study, it is important to know the definition of related terms in order to understand this research more clearly. the definition of related terms in this study is formulated as follows:

1) Speaking

Speaking is a person's ability to express or express ideas, thoughts, feelings to others using spoken language in daily life.

2) Anxiety

communication apprehension or stage fright, refers to the fear, nervousness, or discomfort experienced by individuals when speaking in public or using a foreign or second language McCroskey (1988). Anxiety in this study related to the English anxiety experienced by primary school of Bannonsawan School.

3) Foreign Language Anxiety

Effective factors that are discussed in foreign language learning along with individual differences from other learners (Gardner and macIntre 1993) Foreign Language in this study is English.

4) Gender

Gender refers to biological and physiological characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs. Gender in this study refers to male and female.

