INFLUENCE OF CHINESE LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY ON WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN CHINESE LANGUAGE. A CASE STUDY OF NORTHEAST NORMAL UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

JACOB LEOPOLD MWALONGO
The Open University of Tanzania
TANZANIA
Email: jacob.leopold@out.ac.tz

ABSTRACT

In this era of globalization, people cross national boarders for various purposes including education, business, work, tourism, or for living. In meeting such needs, people have to use language for communication. This has necessitated different countries to introduce foreign language studies in their education system at various levels. Currently students from different countries go to China to pursue advanced studies and they have to learn Chinese. The study examined the influence of Chinese language speaking anxiety on willingness to communicate in Chinese among foreign students. The study ought to explore Chinese language anxiety and the willingness to communicate in Chinese based on gender, programme taught, number of courses they have, years living in China, and number of Chinese friends they have. Additionally, the study sought to figure out the relationship between Chinese language anxiety and their willingness to communicate in Chinese. By using Pearson correlation, independent t-test and one-way ANOVA, the study found difference between Chinese language anxiety and foreign students studying in China. Ultimately, the study found a significant difference between willingness to communicate in Chinese based on language programme taught, number of Chinese courses, courses learnt, and the length of stay in China.

Keyword: Chinese Language, Speaking Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, International Students

1. Introduction

In this era of globalization, people travel across countries for various purposes. Some do so for education, business, work, tourism, or for living, international students are an example of people moving from one country to another. Upon arriving in these foreign countries, these students have to learn the language of their hosts. As a result, many countries have introduced a study of foreign languages in their education system at various levels, China is no exception. Currently many international students from different countries go to China for advanced studies, Northeast Normal University is among the popular universities in China, especially north part of China, for international students. The university has several compulsory and optional Chinese courses for international students. The main goal of these Chinese Language programmes for international students is to enable them to communicate easily with native speakers, teachers and anyone in Chinese language (Baran-Lucarz, 2014). To meet this goal, there are systematic oral communication (speaking) practice in Chinese for international students. However, Luo (2013) argues that due to the tones and the non-alphabetical writing system of the Chinese language, it becomes challenging for most international students to learn.
2. Research Objectives
This study examines the key factors, other than alphabets that influence of Chinese language speaking anxiety on willingness to communicate in Chinese among the Northeast Normal University (NENU) international students. The study specifically;

- Explores Chinese language anxiety based on gender, program taught, number of courses they have, years living in China, and number of Chinese friends they have.
- Explores willingness to communicate in Chinese based on gender, program taught, number of courses they have, years living in China, and number of Chinese friends they have.

3. Statement of the Problem
Language is a tool for human communication in all aspects of life. The use of language in any society is unavoidable thing in all levels. In this case learning a new language to new society is unavoidable thing. Chinese language is a very popular language in the world and is the national language for the People’s Republic of China. Zhou (2004). Due to the growth of Chinese economy, it has become the new destination for learners desirous of advanced studies. The universities of China have different Chinese language programs for all international students. Some programs are for communication purpose and some are for academic purpose. Due to this importance the NENU has developed the Chinese courses for all international students to learn Chinese for their daily communication. Apart from these efforts done by the university and the country as a whole still the international students completed their studies with Chinese anxiety and unwillingness to communicate in Chinese. The current study investigates if this issue relates to the anxiety and learner variables like program taught, number of Chinese courses, number of Chinese friends, duration of living in China and duration of learning Chinese

4. Literature Review
Most of the previous studies abroad and China support the view that language anxiety indirectly or directly affects language learning process (Shan, 2010). Luo (2013) attribute lack of willingness to communicate among Chinese learners to complicated alphabetic system of the language. According to him, the system put the learners off. However, Stephen Krashen (1982) claims that humans have an innate ability that guides a language learning process. Infants learn their mother tongue simply by listening attentively to spoken language that is (made) meaningful to them. Foreign languages are acquired in the same way. Krashen (1982) believes that there is no fundamental difference between the way we acquire our first language and foreign languages.

4.1 Language Anxiety
The tem anxiety is a psychological phenomenon (Casado, 2004). Maclntyre (1998) defines language learning anxiety as feelings of worry and emotional reaction that arises while learning or using foreign language. Horwitz (1986) states that learning language anxiety is a mixture of feelings, beliefs and behaviours related to uniqueness of the process of foreign language learning.

As far as psychological perspectives is concerned. There are two types of anxiety: Trait and state anxiety. Trait anxiety is a tendency of a person to be nervous irrespective of the situation he/she exposed to. Traits anxiety automatically affects language learning process. State anxiety is not permanent. It occurs only when a learner is exposed to a particular situation/event. For instance, if a teacher asks him/her to answer questions in the classroom. (Pappaniliel, 2002)

Young (1991) discussed six important sources of language anxiety, personal and interpersonal anxiety, learners’ beliefs about language learning, and instructor beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learners interaction, classroom procedures and language testing. In the context of foreign language learning,
Pappamihiel (2002) argues that learners may feel anxious due to the difficulty in understanding teachers’ instructions, fear of correction and making mistakes, fear of failing in the class and general anxiety. The existences of language anxiety among learners have impact on the whole process of learning foreign language. (Riasati, 2011).

4.2 Willingness to Communicate

McCroskey and Richmond (1987) describes willingness to communicate (WTC) as the extrovert and introvert personality orientation towards talking. People differ in the amount of talk in which they will choose to engage in. Situations variables may impact personal willingness to communicate within a given context. For instance, how a person feels for a given day, background of communication with other person, what that person looks like, what might be gained or lost in communicating may have a major temporary impact on willingness.

Maclntyre, P. D. & Dornyei, Z. & Clemen, R. & Noels, K. A. (1998) developed a pyramid model to account for individual differences in the decision to initiate foreign language (L2) communication. At the top of the pyramid is the intention to communicate with specific purposes at specific time. This regards final step before starting to initiate communication with influence tied to a specific situation.

![Pyramid Model](image)


Figure 1 Heuristic model of variables influencing WTC (Maclntyre et al., 1998). The model refers to situations in which there is a specific person with whom to communicate and both the desire and self-
confidence to speak to him or her. This desire to communicate comes from affiliation or control motives, or both. Affiliation motives are directed towards persons who are attractive in some way or frequently encountered, such as one’s friends. Control motives refer broadly to any situation in which people seek to influence each other’s behavior. The other major immediate influence, self-confidence, is composed of perceived competence and a lack of anxiety (Maclntyre et al, 1998). In this conceptualization of WTC the influence of self-confidence is composed to competence and lack of anxiety (Clement, 1986).

4.3 Language Learning Process
Speaking is a linguistic activity which consists of pronunciation (sound), morphology and lexis (words and their parts; grammar and syntax (structure), semantic, discourse (conversation and utterances) pragmatics (use of language and associated rules), and fluency (ease of speech, confidence, coherence and speed) (Carter & Nunan, 2001). Speaking is all about verbal responses. According to Kurniasih (2011), there are several activities for learning language speaking skills. These include songs, chants and poems, games, peer work activity, oral report, and discussion on books in which learner has finished reading. Kurniasih (2011) intimates that the learning of a new a language follows a particular order: learning to listen first by followed by speaking after which one learns to read with learning to write as the final stage.

Source: adapted from https://www.englishclub.com/learn-english/language-skills.htm: four language skills

As the above sketch shows, a successful language learning process, language input involves listening and reading and language output involves speaking skills and writing skills therefore the present study dealt with the speaking skills as language output in Chinese language.
5. The Methods of the Study

The research was done at Northeast Normal University in Jilin province in China among international students. It used quantitative research design. The study further used random sampling to choose a sample of 119 respondents, 51 being males and 68 females, among them 65 were from Chinese programmes while 54 were from English taught programmes. The study adapted questionnaire from Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLAS), developed by Horwitz (1986). The study also adapted Willingness to Communicate in Foreign Language Scale (WTC-FLS), developed by Baghaei (2011). The data were analyzed using Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation test, independent t-Test, and one-way ANOVA.

6. Findings Analysis and discussion

This part is organized into three sections. Section 1 (Table1) is about the factors influencing Chinese speaking anxiety among Northeast Normal University (NENU) international students. Section 2 (Table 2) is about findings on the influence on willingness to communicate in Chinese among NENU International students. Finally, Table 3 is about a correlation between Chinese speaking language anxiety and willingness to communicate.

Table 1 Factors influencing Chinese language anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
<th>VARIABLE CATEGORIES</th>
<th>MEAN SQUARE</th>
<th>P VALUE</th>
<th>TEST USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No significant difference between male and female on Chinese language anxiety</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36.078</td>
<td>0.397</td>
<td>Independent T-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37.353</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Language Program taught</td>
<td>No significant difference between students taught in Chinese language programme and those taught in English language programme</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>35.692</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>Independent T-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>38.148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of Chinese courses learnt</td>
<td>No significant difference between the number of Chinese courses the students they learnt</td>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>102.051</td>
<td>0.211</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64.659</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of Chinese friends</td>
<td>No significant difference between the number of Chinese friends the student have</td>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>101.514</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64.668</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Time living in china</td>
<td>There is a significant difference between the time living in china</td>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>203.040</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62.918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Time of learning Chinese</td>
<td>No significant differences between the time of learnt Chinese</td>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>188.696</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63.165</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study found out that, gender, program taught, number of Chinese courses, duration of learning Chinese and number of Chinese friends had no influence on the students’ anxiety to speak Chinese among NENU International students. On the other hand the result showed that the time of living in china had influence on...
students to speak Chinese. Students who had stayed in china for less than one year were less willing to speak Chinese than those who had stayed in china for more than three years.

Although the results showed that no gender difference existed in Chinese Speaking Anxiety. This result was not consistent with the study of Elald (2016) in which foreign language anxiety among males was higher than females. But this results supported the finding of Aida (1994) in which there was no gender difference in foreign language anxiety and also the finding of Wang (2010) which found no gender difference in speaking anxiety.

Table 2 Factors that influencing willingness to communicate in Chinese language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
<th>VARIABLES CATEGORIES</th>
<th>MEAN SQUARE</th>
<th>P VALUE</th>
<th>TEST USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No significant difference between male and female on willingness to communicate in Chinese</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62.784</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>Independent T-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59.235</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Language Program taught</td>
<td>There is a significant difference in willingness to communicate in Chinese between students taught in Chinese language programme and those taught in English language programme</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>65.354</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Independent T-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>55.222</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of Chinese courses learnt</td>
<td>There is a significant difference in willingness to communicate in Chinese due to the number of Chinese courses the students they learnt</td>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>861.526</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>114.335</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of Chinese friends</td>
<td>There is a significant difference in willingness to communicate due to the number of Chinese friends the student have</td>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>735.225</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>116.513</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Time living in china</td>
<td>No significant difference in willingness to communicate due to the time living in china</td>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>324.079</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>123.602</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a significant difference in willingness to communicate due to the time of learning Chinese. The study found that there is no gender difference in WTC in Chinese, this finding was not consistent with that of MacIntyre et. al (2002) in which women were more willing to communicate than men in the Canadian context. But it was similar with the result of Alemi et al. (2013) and Moazzam (2014) that found no gender difference in willingness to communicate.

Further the study found that, willingness to communicate in Chinese was influenced by program taught, number of Chinese courses, number of Chinese friends and the duration of learning Chinese. Generally the more the students are anxious the less they are willing to communicate in Chinese. The results are coinciding with the study of MacIntyre et al (1998) in which students who felt more anxious in second language (L2) demonstrated less willingness to communicate in L2.

However, students taught in Chinese programme had higher WTC in Chinese than those students who were in English program. Thus, students who had to use the Chinese language during their study tended to speak Chinese more, as their Chinese language competence was high.

This result indirectly supported the findings of Alemi, M., Tajeddin, Z., &Mesbah, Z. (2013) which found advanced students are more willing to initiate communication in second language than the intermediate ones. They said the result appeared because the less proficient learner’s value their interpersonal interaction and speech communication less than the more proficient learners do.

More over the study found that the number of Chinese friends students had did not influence their willingness to speak Chinese. But, students who had more than 20 Chinese friends were more willing to communicate in Chinese than those students who had less than 10 Chinese friends. So, the number of Chinese friends the students influenced their willingness to speak Chinese. In the study Alemi et al. (2013), those learners who had communicated with foreigners manifested a higher degree of willingness to communicate than those who had never had the chance to communicate with English speaking people.

The study found also that the more anxious the students felt in speaking Chinese, the less they were willing to communicate in Chinese. This result supported the findings of Wang (2010) in which speaking anxiety had positive relationship with unwillingness to communicate. It was also consistent with the previous findings of MacIntyre et al. (1998) as well as Shahraki and Seyedrezaei (2015) in which students who felt more anxious in second language (L2) demonstrated less willingness to communicate in L2.
7. Conclusion
The below explanation of conclusion base on two objectives explained above namely; factors influencing Chinese language anxiety and factors that influencing willingness to communicate in Chinese language.

Gender, program taught, number of Chinese courses, duration of learning Chinese and number of Chinese friends did not affect students’ anxiety in speaking Chinese. The only one variable that influenced on Chinese speaking anxiety was duration of living in China. Willingness to communicate in Chinese was influenced by program taught, number of Chinese courses, number of Chinese friends and the duration of learning Chinese. But gender and duration of living in China had no effect on willingness to communicate in Chinese. If the students’ anxiety in speaking Chinese was high, their willingness to communicate in Chinese would be low. The study faced problems of the small sample study area which cannot represent international students in whole China. Time constraints also forced the study to focus on only one language skills among four language skills.

8. Recommendation for Future Research
Further researches can investigate a relationship between personal traits, motivation and language proficiency and willingness to communicate. Further researchers needs to use larger sample in other universities and in other areas of China.

9. References


