Cambodian Secondary English Private School Students' Attitudes Toward English Public Speaking Class

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Abstract:- The paper is about the attitudes of secondary English private students toward English public speaking classes. Speaking in public is considered crucial for everyone at all times. More intensively, public speaking is even more challenging for speakers to convey the concept of words to audiences. It is even more challenging when anyone is learning English as a foreign language and delivering a speech in English in front of groups of people or a large audience, such as in English public speaking contests. The author used a quantitative descriptive method to collect data in this study. He asked permission from one of the English Private Schools in Kandal Province in the author's native country, Cambodia. The students of English in this private school usually attend English public speaking contests or debates yearly with other students from other private schools and government schools. The questionnaire consists of two main parts. The former is about student's demographic information and has three items. The latter is adopted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), comprising 20 items. The study examined the causes of language learning anxiety among 83 private English-speaking secondary school students from Cambodia. Secondary school English private students frequently experience anxiety when speaking in English, fearing failure and comparing their abilities to others.

On the other hand, some students are at ease interacting with native speakers, demonstrating readiness and fearlessness in English-speaking situations. However, the study used only a quantitative method. The study aimed to explore to what extent secondary English students' attitudes are toward English public speaking classes. Furthermore, this study digs out to see whether there is any difference in private students' attitudes toward the English public speaking class. Further study of similar titles of the study should be conducted using a mixed method with a larger sample.

Keywords:- Cambodia, Attitudes, Public, Speaking, Confidence, Attitude.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a potent tool for communication that can be learned before birth and is used to express feelings, thoughts, and desires. It is a way of thinking and communicating (Doğan & Çifci, 2021). English is an essential language for business, science, and international communication, and its widespread use has influenced how people view its significance. English has spread worldwide due to globalization, economic development, and cultural influences from the US and other English-speaking nations Heng, K. (2017). Since Cambodia joined ASEAN in 1999 and the United Nations Transitional Authority period, English has become the nation's preferred foreign language for international trade and education (Igawa, 2008, in Kruy, 2023). Even though English is not required for Cambodian Grade 12 students, high English test scores can improve overall grades and prepare students for higher education. High English test scores can boost overall grades and prepare students for higher education even if English is not required for Cambodian Grade 12 students (Seng, 2023, in Kruy, 2023).

Speaking is an effective tool for self-expression because it transmits socially agreed-upon symbols through sounds. It is acquired naturally without schooling and is critical to business, family, and social success. Children should learn to deliver speeches later in school (Doğan & Çifci, 2021). Speaking appears to be the most critical skill of the four (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) because people who know a language are usually referred to as speakers of that language (Ur, 1996, in Januariza & Hendriani, 2016). All English language instruction should aim to provide students with the ability to communicate effectively and accurately in English (Davies & Pearse, 1998; Januariza & Hendriani, 2016). Speaking requires practice, self-confidence, courage, and enjoyment, as many students are anxious and dislike learning this critical skill (Januariza & Hendriani, 2016). Cambodian university students frequently struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, L1 interference, speaking anxiety, and peer pressure in English conversation and speaking (Heng, 2017). According to Hedge (2000), a classroom setting that values interaction, student autonomy, and teachers' roles significantly improves language learning and shapes students' perspectives (Heng, 2017).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Allport defines attitude as a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience that influences an individual's response to objects and situations. Attitude comprises three main components: cognitive, affective, and conative. Research on attitudes toward reading consists of these three components (TANEMURA, 2020). According to Bruvold (1980), an attitude is a positive or negative reaction to an object or proposition, whereas Zimbardo (1998) believes attitudes are judgments through learning about appropriate actions toward specific people or issues that can be modified (Olufemi, 2012). According to Kegan, Havemann, and Segal (1994), people develop strong attitudes toward various groups, individuals, and issues throughout their lives. Political parties, national security, and other societal institutions impact these attitudes. People prefer positive attitudes and dislike negative ones (Olufemi, 2012).

Language anxiety research improves our understanding of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) processes by providing a more precise definition, allowing us to understand its impact on learners and its causes (Cutrone, 2009). Language anxiety is defined by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 5) as "the fear experienced when a situation necessitates the use of a second language in which the individual is not fully proficient." Some symptoms include nervousness, tension, apprehension, and introversion (Cutrone, 2009). Autonomic nervous system arousal causes anxiety, which is the individual's subjective experience of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry.2 Similar to how anxiety makes it difficult for some people to succeed in math or science, learning a foreign language can be highly stressful for many people, especially in a classroom setting. The study by Doğan and Çifci (2021) revealed that impromptu speech, a common type in daily conversation, often causes anxiety due to lack of prior knowledge, hindering effective communication and preventing anxiety-provoking situations from affecting conversation progression.

Public speech, which is frequently mistaken for being formal, can vary greatly depending on the speaker's objectives, audience size, setting, and historical context. Speaker, message, channel, listener, feedback, interference, and situation are the other six components of the process (Docan-Morgan & Nelson, 2015). Speaking abilities are crucial for expressing opinions in various situations, including interactive, partially interactive, and non-interactive. English Language Learners (ELLs) face a challenge in acquiring good speaking skills, which requires consistent practice both inside and outside the classroom (Rao, 2019)

English public speaking can help students improve their critical thinking, communication awareness, and self-assurance. The process is accomplished by lowering the affective filter, creating a relaxing environment, and encouraging strong learning motivation. The project, which involves 150 students from five Dalian University of Technology classes, focuses on software engineering and includes 90 men and 22 women (Li et al., 2016). To promote the English-speaking environment in classes in Japan, foreign EFL teachers should learn about Japanese society, create friendly classrooms, and move away from evaluation paradigms (Cutrone, 2009). According to Docan-Morgan and Nelson (2015), there are various benefits to learning public speaking, including the capacity to become a skilled public speaker. This list is not complete, but it is among the most persuasive. They are designed to help students succeed in college and get hired. Advance in careers, strengthen critical thinking skills, reduce speaking anxiety and boost self-confidence, deliver messages as effectively as possible, provide more helpful feedback to others, excite and engage people, and, most importantly, empower speakers to be a leader. Anandari (2015) encouraged people to attend public speaking because of some critical benefits bravely. Self-reflections helped students identify their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to conduct individual problem-solving. These students, who were not given structured self-reflections in speaking classes, benefited from this process, focusing on their weaknesses and finding solutions (Anandari, 2015). When talking about critical thinking, Li et al. (2016) show that by clarifying information and using questions, EFL teachers can assist students in developing critical thinking skills in public speaking classes.

According to Swain (1985, 1995), successful language learners need both understandable input and efficient output, underlining the need for both elements in a thorough learning process (Li et al., 2016). That is why the effectiveness of language input is ensured by reducing the affective filter, providing a relaxing environment, and promoting clear learning motivation. The project's class mode allows students to choose topics of their choice (Krashen, 1985; Li et al., 2016). Moreover, the reflective practice of Public Speaking students allowed them to reconnect with their past experiences, connect knowledge with current emotions, and evaluate the learning process. This process led to new understandings and appreciation, allowing them to appreciate their capabilities and incapacity, ultimately enhancing their overall performance (Anandari, 2015).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➢ *Research Design*
The quantitative method is a descriptive study that frequently employs the survey technique, which enables researchers to gather quantitative data and analyze that data statistically using descriptive and inferential statistics (Al-Ababneh, 2020). According to Nassaji (2015), descriptive research entails describing a phenomenon using instruments for observation and surveys while gathering quantitative data to identify correlations (Kruy, 2023). Additionally, quantitative methods include evaluating the accuracy of human-machine task performance, the reaction time necessary, the willingness to deviate, the capacity to identify errors, and even the physiological responses of experiment participants (Zhou et al., 2021). Quantitative research

focuses on quantifying variables in the social realm, employing deductive reasoning to investigate regularities in human lives via statistical techniques and systematic measurement (Rahman, 2020). According to the reasons revealed in the above studies, the author of this paper used a quantitative method to collect the data. Quantitative research is a data collecting and analysis technique that stresses quantification, attempting to study responses based on how many, how much, and to what extent proposed by (Rahman, 2020).

➤ *Data Collection*

The sample was groups of English private students in the secondary level from one popular private school located in Takmao Town, Kandal Province, Cambodia. The author used a questionnaire with 20 items adopted from the study conducted by (Horwitz et al.'s ,1986, in Imron & Hantari, 2019). The questionnaire in this paper employed the survey approach to analyze students' attitudes toward English public speaking class because it is believed that the study can insight into beliefs, opinions, characteristics, and behavior, making it an effective tool for understanding phenomena. According to Tuan (2012) as cited in Kruy (2023), Quantitative research utilized questionnaires as a tool for analyzing questions and collecting data, providing respondents with a range of possible responses to a sequence of statements or questions. Moreover, the data collection method, interpretation, and research questions were analyzed using SPSS version 22. Results were evaluated using frequency and percentages, descriptive statistics on the Likert scale, and correlation, correlation coefficient, and P-value to detect the significant variation. Base on Schrum et al. (2020, March), Rensis Likert developed the Likert scale in 1932 to evaluate attitude by providing statements ranging from one to five (strongly disagree to strongly agree). According to Pimentel & Pimentel (2019), his paper proved five-point Likert scale as follows:

Table 1. Five point Likert scale

Likert Scale Interval	Interval	Difference	Description
1	1.00-1.79	0.79	Strongly Disagree
2	1.80-2.59	0.79	Disagree
3	2.60-3.39	0.79	Neutral
4	3.40-4.19	0.79	Agree
5	4.20-5.00	0.80	Strongly Agree

➤ *Data Analysis*

The author used a survey to collect data from private English language learners from Cambodia enrolled in Takmhao Town, Kandal Province, a famous school. To get the students' perceptions regarding English public speaking classes, the author used a quantitative data using SPSS 22. The study focused on the attitude dimensions, and its goal was to calculate each item's mean and standard deviation. Additionally, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of .83, the questionnaire with 20 items employed in this research is highly reliable. It is typical to see the reliability of instruments used in published scientific education research using a statistic known as Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951, in Taber, 2018). The alpha value is influenced by test item number, inter-relatedness, and dimensionality, with acceptable values ranging from 0.70 to 0.95, with low values due to insufficient questions or heterogeneous conceptions.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

➤ *Findings*

English private students' demographic information

Table 2. Gender

Demographic	Value	N	Frequency %
Gender	Male	31	37.30%
	Female	52	62.70%
Total		83	100%

Table 3. Age

Demographic	Value	N	Frequency %
Age	below 15	39	47.00%
	15 - 16	28	33.70%
	17 - 18	13	15.70%
	19 - and over	3	3.60%
Total		83	100%

There were 83 students in the sample size in this study. Of the students, 31(37.30%) were male, and the other 52 (62.70%) were female. Therefore, according to Table 1, the number of female students is higher than the number of male ones, which is equal to 21 (25.40%). Table 2 describes the age groups of the English private students learning at the school selected for the study. At the secondary English level, the age groups of students are divided into four smaller groups. The number of students below 15 years old is 39, which is 47.00%. 28 (33.70%) students are between 15-16 years old. Only three students, about 3.60% of the total, are 19 and over. Lastly, 13 students, about 15.70% of the students collected as the sample through the questionnaire, are between 17-18 years of age.

Table 4. Result of Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS)

No.	FLCAS	M	SD	Min	Max
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English in speaking class.	2.92	.88	1.00	5.00
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in speaking English in speaking class.	3.02	.98	1.00	5.00
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on to speak in English.	3.06	.93	1.00	5.00
4	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	3.49	1.00	1.00	5.00
5	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in speaking class.	3.18	.91	1.00	5.00
6	I worry about the consequences of failing my speaking class.	3.51	.93	1.00	5.00
7	In speaking class, I can get so nervous and I forget things I know.	3.00	.91	1.00	5.00

8	I would not be nervous speaking in English with native speakers	3.44	.91	1.00	5.00
9	Even if I am well prepared for speaking class, I feel anxious about it.	3.49	.82	1.00	5.00
10	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in speaking class.	3.15	.91	1.00	5.00
11	I don't feel pressured to prepare very well for speaking class.	3.16	.84	1.00	5.00
12	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	3.12	1.10	1.00	5.00
13	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in speaking class.	2.84	.88	1.00	5.00
14	When I am on my way to English class, I feel sure and relaxed.	3.13	.98	1.00	5.00
15	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the lecturer says.	3.10	.93	1.00	5.00
16	I get nervous when the lecturer asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	3.27	1.00	1.00	5.00
17	I get nervous when I do not read the note that I made before the impromptu speech.	3.30	.91	1.00	5.00
18	I get nervous when I do not understand about the topic given by my teacher when doing impromptu speech.	3.36	.93	1.00	5.00
19	I get nervous about the time given in impromptu speech.	3.28	.91	1.00	5.00
20	I feel diffidence to become the first person who speech impromptu speech in front of the audience.	3.30	.91	1.00	5.00

As demonstrated by Table 4, most English secondary level students selected item 6 with (M=3.52, D= .93). Those students agreed they are worried about the consequences of failing the speaking class. Next, item 9 (M=3.49, D= .82) explained that students often prepared for public speaking in their class. However, even if they are well prepared for it, they still feel anxious about the English speaking. Similar to item 9, item 4 (M=3.49, D=1.00) reports that those English private students often keep thinking that the other students are better at English than they are. Comparing each student's ability to another can produce negative results or impact the English-speaking class.

Nevertheless, in item 8 (M= 3.44, D= .91), the findings positively reveal that those students would not be nervous at speaking English with native speakers. They are brave to see and communicate with foreigners. For English private students at the secondary level, speaking in English worries them. They are often afraid of the potential consequences of failing their speaking class. Remarkably, despite being well-prepared and confident in their abilities, they often feel anxious about the potential negative impact. Similarly, they frequently worry about their talent compared with the others". On the other hand, some pupils are comfortable interacting with native speakers, exhibiting their preparation and fearlessness in English-speaking situations.

Neutrally, the secondary levels students are sometimes nervous, especially when the teachers ask them to do impromptu speech on a topic they don'tdon't understand (item 18, M=3.30, D=.93). Items 17 and 20 show similar findings of (M=3.00 and D= .91). This give us clues that students sometimes get nervous when they do not read the note they have made before the prompt speech or when they are the first person selected to do it. Item 16 (M=3.27, D=1.00) and item 19 (M=3.28, D= .91) are almost the same.

Students are sometimes nervous with both times to speak and questions asked by their English teachers. In brief, Secondary level students experience nervousness when asked to do impromptu speeches on topics they need help understanding, including not reading notes or being the first person selected.

What is more, students accepted that they sometimes start to panic in the speaking class, especially when they have to speak without preparation (M=3.18, D=.91). In speaking class, students feel nervous (item7, M=3.00, D=.91) and (item 2, M=3.20, D=.93) but confident (item11, M=3.16, D=.84), knowing they will be called on. They feel self-conscious about understanding the teacher's words (item 15, M=3.10, D=.93) and tremble when called on (item 3, M=3.06, D=.93). However, they do not worry about making mistakes, as they know they will be speaking in front of others (item10, M=3.13, D=.98). This shows that speaking class students, despite fear and self-consciousness, are confident in their ability to deliver lectures and answer questions, despite the potential for mistakes.

Lastly, students valued item and item 1 (M=2.92, D=.98). In speaking class, I often feel nervous and confused, unsure of my confidence in English (item 13, M=2.84, D=.88) (item 1, M=2.84, D=.88).

Table 5. Differences of Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) between male and female using Independent Samples Test

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	31	3.29	.51973	.09335
Female	52	3.16	.43784	.06072

Table 6. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances of difference between male and female

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
1.65	.20	1.24	81	.21	.10	-.07915	.34509
		1.19	54.96	.23	.11	-.09019	.35614

Table 5 shows that the mean anxiety scale (FLCAS) of the male students (M=3.29, D= .51) slightly overweighted the mean anxiety scale of the girls (M=3.16, D=.43). This can be concluded that the level of the anxiety scale of the English private students at the secondary level is almost the same. According to Table 6, the F values (F= 1.65) and P value (P=.20), which is (P> .05) from calculating method of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, the results show there is no difference in genders between male private students and female private students, attitudes on English speaking class. However, the girls seem to feel more confident than the boys in attitudes toward it.

➢ *Discussion*

Comparing students' abilities in speaking English can lead to worry and anxiety, especially among secondary-level students in a private school in Takhmao. Comparably, Imron's study in 2019 learned that students fear giving speeches in class, including unsuccessful presentations, audience rejection, memory issues, shame, and embarrassment, leading to discomfort and discomfort in performing the speech (Imron, 2019). Besides, despite being prepared, some students still feel anxious about speaking English, highlighting the need for adequate preparation and avoiding comparisons to others. They are, however, comfortable communicating with foreigners. This study's findings are compatible with the study by Januariza and Hendriani (2016), who shared that many students experience anxiety and lack of enjoyment in speaking classes as a result of lecturers' collapse to understand their personalities, which leads to lost ideas or refusal to speak. He additionally showed the following factors contribute to students' anxiety: shyness, disliking the speaking topic, lack of ability, lack of preparation, lack of practice, lack of vocabulary, lack of self-confidence, lack of conviction, lack of motivation, fear of making a mistake, fear of being laughed at or mocked, and the teacher's attitude and behavior.

Similarly, Anandari's 2015 study of Indonesian English Language Education students discovered that the root causes of language phobia are fear, shyness, and discomfort. According to the study, self-reflection can help students overcome these issues (Anandari, 2015). Another author expressed that students faced difficulties in English conversations and speaking skills, primarily focusing on vocabulary and pronunciation. Other constraints included L1 interference, speaking anxiety, inability to think fast, and discouragement from friends and others (Heng, 2017).

The findings from this study also show that secondary students are nervous when asked to give impromptu speeches on topics they do not understand, such as not reading notes or being the first person chosen. This nervousness is comparable to other English language learning situations, such as speaking times and teacher questions. Using in-depth interviews and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire, the study by Imron (2019) investigates students' perspectives on public speaking classes and potential causes of impromptu speech anxiety. Equally to the finding

expressed by the English secondary level students, he mentions that his study students show positive attitudes towards public speaking classes. However, anxiety may arise due to unfamiliar English, lack of confidence, and vocabulary. Students in English public-speaking classes are nervous but still self-motivated to understand through speaking communication and giving English speeches. Respectfully, they value their English-speaking class for qualified achievement.

V. CONCLUSION

Foreign language students frequently need help speaking English, completing practices, and memorizing materials rapidly. Teachers' failure to understand can result in lost ideas or refusal. In the meantime, anxiety is primarily caused by concerns about unclear communication due to a lack of grammar knowledge, pronunciation, and speech organization. Although self-worth influences perspective and nervousness, many people need more confidence in their public speaking abilities, which causes difficulties.

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