



Investigating School Climate as a Factor to English Language Anxiety in Malaysia

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Abstract: This research was carried out to look into ELA among form 4 students in selected schools, and at the same time, this research is aimed to study the level of anxiety and to determine the types of anxiety in English learning. Understanding that English language learning takes place and starts at school also investigates whether school climate can be a new predictor of ELA. For this purpose, 80 students were selected in schools located in a neighborhood. The instrument was a questionnaire composed of English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (ELCAS) adapted and School Climate English Language Anxiety (SCELA), which was developed in this research. SCELA had gone through validity and reliability, and it was considered to be a reliable questionnaire. The data was computed by using Multiple Regression in SPSS Version 22.0. The result proved that the students were having a high level of anxiety, and the most influencing types of anxiety are Communication Apprehension and Fear of Test Anxiety. These two types of anxiety proved the underlying reason for the high level of anxiety experienced by the students. As for the School Climate to be considered the new predictor for ELA, the result obtained in the research had unveiled that Academic Dimensions and Social Dimensions significantly influence ELA. In brief, these outcomes suggest that English teachers should create a motivating and encouraging classroom to engage the students attention in learning English. Teachers should be able to know the remedies to fight over the anxiety that constantly aroused in the English classroom successfully as to provide the needs for students in learning the English language.

Keywords: English language, learning, fluency, learning anxiety, Malaysia

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool for communication and one of human self identity. Hence, by knowing this fact, English is reasoned as one of the crucial and prevalent language worldwide. Therefore, because of this reason, English is used as second language in certain countries which the first language is the mother tongue language. This scenario is also happening in Malaysia where English is frequently used as the important language. Thus, because of this rational motive, English has been introduced as a subject since kindergarten to primary school and later on to secondary school. Therefore, by looking at this situation, there is a kind of anxious feeling that exist when the students are learning the English subject. This kind of feeling happened because of the students have been familiar with their first language and

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because of certain situation, they are needed to be proficient in English subject. This anxious feeling is best known as anxiety and when it is coined together with English language is known as ELA. To add to this point, ELA happened in a great deal among the learners.

Anxiety and language learning are a very complex evolution that happened all the times (Hussain, Shahid, & Zaman, 2011; Sumingwa, 2018). The anxiety is defined as a psychological concept that exist in a form of apprehension, an unclear fearfulness that is subconsciously indirect associated with a situation or an physical object. Because of this situation , anxiety might happened at different level among the learners (Abdullah, Laily Ramli, & Rafek, 2017). Up to this point, the level that happened can be facilitate and debilitate the learners as it depends on how the learners perceived the anxiousness in learning English language. As to make this situation to go further, there are also three kinds of ELA that had been imposing by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). They are known as Communication Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Fear of Test Anxiety as below:

Communication Anxiety

As explained by Horwitz et al. (1986), Communication Anxiety is known as the fear of anxiety associated with the communication or speaking with another person. This could include shyness, quietness and self doubt when the involved person communicate with another person.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Horwitz et al. (1986) stated that Fear of Negative Evaluation happened because of the doubts aroused when it is about others expectation and evaluation that cause them to evaluate the involved person negatively.

Fear of Test Anxiety

In this situation, Horwitz et al. (1986) stressed on the performance anxiety that rooting from the fear of failure in examination. Students will start to experience unconsciously the feeling of anxious when they predict that they are not going to success the subject test.

As to stress on the next point, the learning of English happened in school especially in the classroom. It depends on how the school or to be specific, the classroom affecting English language learning. This situation is defined as the school climate in which it also refers to the environment of the school pertaining to the learning among the students. So, in this case, school climate is particularly important factor that might be used to understand the attitudes and beliefs of the student towards the language learning especially in English Language Learning. Hence, this will be indirectly to study how school climate affecting ELA among the learners. The school climate Loukas, Suzuki, and Horton (2006) is best suited in this study since Malaysia consists of different diversities and environments. This theory is also suitable in conceptualizing the parent-teacher relationship within the present study.

School Climate

Loukas et al. (2006) also gave her consent to use her theory while she reiterated that there are three dimensions of school climate as well as the explanation as per following:

Physical dimensions:

- The appearance of the classrooms and schools.
- School size and the number of the students and teachers per class. v The seating arrangement of students in classroom.
- The accessibility of learning materials and resources.
- Safety of students and comfortableness in school.

Social dimensions:

- Quality of social relationships between students and teachers.
- Equitable and fair treatments by teachers towards the students.
- The harmonious of competition and social equivalence between students.
- The opportunity in which the students and teachers contribute and make decision towards school.

Academic dimensions:

- Choices of instruction in teaching approaches.
- Teacher expectations for students achievements.

- Observation of students progress and reportage of results to students and parents

Hence, even though there are a number of factors that are affecting ELA that have been focused on such as gender, streams at school, the motivation, age, years of learning English language, the levels and dominant types of anxiety, there should be new variables that affecting ELA as time changes and modernity has evolved in education system. Because of this situation, by knowing that English subject start out at school, there should be a new variable that needed to be ventured in the environment of the classroom and school and this is known as school climate. To add to this point, only few numbers of researches had be done on school climate even though school is where the most of the learning processes take place rather than tertiary education. In the same vein, tertiary education has usually been the main focal point in common researches when it comes to study about English language learning. Thus, in seeking to fill the gap, this present research will begin on a journey to fill the disparity and to complete the purpose as follows:

1. To investigate the level of ELA faced by form 4 students in selected schools in Shah Alam.
2. To determine the most affluence type of ELA among the respondents.
3. To study the relationship between the scopes of School Climate which are known as Physical Dimensions, Social Dimensions, Academic Dimensions in affecting ELA.

As to embark on the same journey in achieving the research objectives of this present study, a conceptual framework had been created to guide this research as shown in Figure 1.

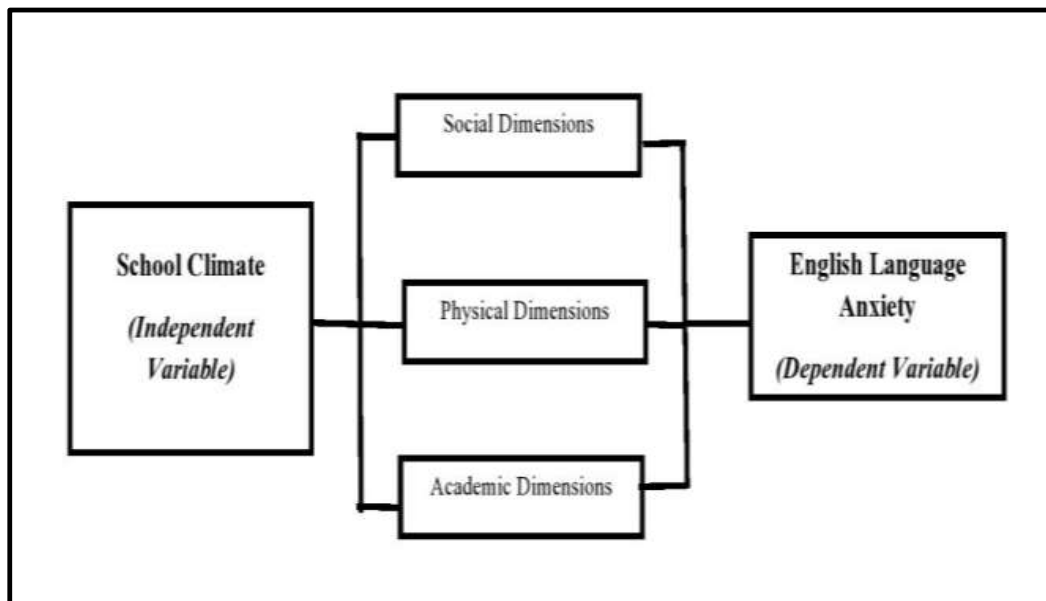


Figure 1 *Conceptual Framework*

The dependent variable in this case is known as school climate is actually needed to be studied in this research in order to find out the present level of anxiety in English language learning. On the other hand, the next piece of work would be identifying the most influencing type of anxiety in English Language Learning. As neighbour to the previous sentence, The independent variable which is known as school climate consists of Social Dimensions, Physical Dimensions and Academic Dimensions will be investigated as well in this research. This is because, school climate was needed in this research as to confirm whether it has significance relationship with ELA or not since it could be introduced as the new predictor in affecting the anxiety.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants and Setting

The current research is exploring on a new scope that probably influence ELA, precisely on school climate among form 4 students. The form 4 students are selected as respondents because the external factor of cultural shock in secondary schools among them has likely been eliminated. The external factors such as the shifting of learning environment and adaptation of school from primary school to secondary school will definitely affect the essence of obtained result in this research. Because of this reason, since form 1 and form 2 students are having these kind of situations, this prove that they are not suitable candidates for this research. This is because, they need some space and time to get used to the secondary school environment. As for Form 3 and Form 5 students, they are preparing for national examinations namely PT3 and SPM. Examination anxiety may be an external factor that may impact the result of this research. English teachers are chose based on the classes that involved in this study.

The study took place in the schools that are located in a neighbourhood where the community is solid built on daily basis. The community is necessary as it can be one of the external factors that affecting school climate in English learning process. That is why it is necessary to find a school that is located in a neighbourhood to support the evidence in this research.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed by the researcher and was collected on the same day. Before it was conducted among the respondents, a brief explanation was given to the respondents as to help them in answering the questionnaire truthfully and without any doubts. When it comes to the data collection, the respondents were explained about the study and thus, their consents were obtained.

Instruments

The instruments that had been used in this study was the questionnaire and it was fully quantitative data. This procedure also included research design and thus, survey design had been applied in this research. This is because, as according to [Creswell \(2014\)](#), survey design was the most common method used in quantitative research in which the researcher distributes a survey to a sample or to the entire population. The Cronbach Alpha generally for the whole questionnaire was 0.907 and it was considered as reliable ([Taber, 2017](#)). Not only that, four Likert Scales was employed in this study. They were known as SA (Strongly Agree), A(Agree), D(Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree). The reason for using four Likert scales because of they was easy to fill up since only four points were needed to view and choose in this questionnaire. Also, these scales will indirectly eradicate any doubts about the items when there was no neutral scale to be viewed in this questionnaire. Hence, the questionnaire proposed for the present paper are introduced as follows:

ELCAS: ELCAS was adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) . [Horwitz et al. \(1986\)](#) is the pioneer who develop this FLCAS questionnaire and it had been used widely in researches related anxiety. In this research, the questionnaire was renamed as ELCAS since it is used to investigate ELA and some amends had been done on the questions as to fit in the suitability of research objectives. [Hasenan and Abdulghani \(2017\)](#), [Miskam and Saidalvi \(2019\)](#) and [Zulkifli \(2007\)](#) also had employed the same questionnaire in their studies respectively based on their research objectives. The result that had been obtained from this questionnaire had been used to determine a degree of anxiety among the respondents and to examine the most dominating type of anxiety between Communication Apprehension, Test-Anxiety or Fear of Negative Evaluation. The Cronbach Alpha for this part of questionnaire was 0.690 and according to [Taber \(2017\)](#), it was considered reasonable. This was supported by DiOrion who stated that even though the value was less than 0.70, the items are affected by shorter scales in which 4 Likert scale was engaged in this questionnaire.

SCELA: School climate as the variant affecting English language learning was studied in this research as well. The questionnaire known as SCELA scale was designed by the present researcher with monitoring by two English teachers whom their teaching experience exceed 20 years. Thus, this questionnaire also had gone through the content validity by five panel experts to establish a reliable questionnaire. Hence, the validity and reliability test of the questionnaire had been proved before a pilot study was conducted. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was evaluated by 5 panellist who worked as English teachers for more than 20 years. The result had reported that all the 45 items produced a value of 0.8 and a value of 1 for all the items. As stated by [Sangoseni, Hellman, and Hill \(2013\)](#) stated that a low CVI of less than

0.8 proved that the items did not address the objectives of the questionnaire. Also, this questionnaire had gone through face validity and follows the characteristics that were proposed by Oluwatayo (2012). In the same vein, to establish more reliable instrument, an inter rater and Cronbach Alpha was calculated based on the result obtained in this study. For the inter-rater, the percentage of inter-rater agreement produced the result 78% (Kappa value = .78, $p = 0.000 < 0.005$). This was supported by Blakstad (2008) stated that it was considered as satisfactory. McHugh (2012) also stated that the kappa value between the range .60 - .79 was considered moderate. Mean while, the Cronbach Alpha for this questionnaire 0.897 and it was considered reliable (Taber, 2017). The data derived from this second questionnaire will be used to establish the relationship between school climate and ELA through multiple linear regression by using SPSS Statistical Package Version 22.

RESULTS

The results of this study were to three folds: First, identifying the level of ELA experienced by form 4 students in selected schools in Shah Alam. Second, determining the the most influencing type of ELA and lastly, to examine the most significant relationship in relation to school climate (Physical Dimensions, Social Dimensions, Academic Dimensions) that affects ELA.

The Level of ELA Faced by Form 4 Students in Selected Schools in Shah Alam

This section seeks to find the answer to the research objective that is to find the level of ELA among the students. Thus, in order to find the answer, the mean and standard deviation was calculated to determine the current level of anxiety among the students. Hence, the students level of anxiety was divided into three levels precisely known as High, Moderate and Low. This level was calculated based on number of students involved in this research and the average mean as well. The anxiety levels and the range value of means are shown in Table 1 as below:

Table 1 Mean Value for the Level of Anxiety

Anxiety Level	Mean Value
High	From 1.00 to 2.50
Moderate	From 2.51 to 3.50
Low	From 3.51 to 4.00

This range value was adapted from Miskam and Saidalvi (2019) and was calculated based on 4 Likert Scale. The data obtained was calculated by using SPSS version 22.0 and was presented in Table 2 as below:

Table 2 Level of Anxiety in English Learning

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Overall	80	1.73	2.93	2.28	.7543	High

As presented in Table 3, the mean score for overall ELA was ($M = 2.28, SD = 7543$). This finding proved that the learners have high level of anxiety. This also proved that this result actually contradicted with Chin, Ling, and Yih (2016) that stated their respondents had moderate level of anxiety in English Learning in Malaysia. However, this result was similar with Gopang, Bughio, and Pathan (2018) who found high level of anxiety among their respondents in English language learning in Pakistan.

To Determine the Most Affluence Type of ELA Among the Respondents

For this part, through the computation of means and standard deviation for each kind of anxiety, the result was presented in the table to intensify a clear understanding about the most influencing type of anxiety in English language learning.

In this case, the highest average mean for the types of anxiety are Communication Anxiety ($N = 80, Mean 2.31$) and Fear of test anxiety($N = 80, Mean 2.31$). Even though the standard deviation for Fear of Negative Evaluation ($N = 80, SD = .765$) is highest among the three types of anxiety though its mean is the lowest ($N = 80, Mean = 2.19$) compare to the others, it means that the distribution of data is anomaly to be investigated in this study as well. This prove that the students also having fear of negative evaluation even though it doesn't affect their anxiety significantly in this research.

Table 3 General Mean for the Types of Anxiety in English Language Learning

Anxiety Variables	Mean	SD
Communication Anxiety	2.31	.741
Fear of Negative Evaluation	2.19	.765
Fear of Test Anxiety	2.31	.759

To Study the Relationship Between the Scopes of School Climate Which Are Known as Physical Dimensions, Social Dimensions, Academic Dimensions in Affecting ELA

The result obtained in this research will explain further about the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable and hence, Multi-linear Regression was calculated in SPSS Version 23. The result was exhibited in the table to facilitate the understanding about relationship between school climate (Independent variable) and ELA (Dependent variable).

Table 4 The Relationship Between School Climate and ELA

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.
		<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.300	.152		15.173	.000
	SD	.342	.089	.510	3.849	.000
	AD	-.293	.084	-.460	-3.475	.001
	PD	.150	.075	.224	2.017	.047

The coefficient for Social Dimensions is .342. Hence, for every unit increase in Social Dimensions score was expected to increase in ELA. This had allowed the scores for other variables that is Academic Dimensions and Physical Dimensions fixed in this study. Hence, this prove that this is statistically significant (Sig. = .000 < 0.05). Mean while, the coefficient for Academic Dimensions is -.293. Hence, for every unit increase in Academic Dimensions score was expected to increase in ELA. This had allowed the scores for other variables that is Social Dimensions and Physical Dimensions fixed in this study. Hence, this prove that this is statistically significant (Sig. = .001 < 0.05). However, the coefficient for Physical Dimensions is .152. Hence, for every unit increase in Physical Dimensions score was expected a decreasing unit in ELA. This had allowed the scores for other variables that is Academic Dimensions and Social Dimensions fixed in this study. Hence, this prove that this data is not statistically significant (Sig. = .047 > 0.05).

DISCUSSION

The Level of Anxiety

Based on the findings and result, it was discovered that the students were having high level of anxiety in English language learning. It is because, the data collection was conducted one week after their mid term examination. This could affect their choices in answering the questionnaire. Also, even though the school that was selected is in a neighbourhood with establish society system, the school is still be considered as in outskirts of main city, Kajang though it is not in rural area. This could be the external factor as the students are not really exposed to the importance of English subject. These had turned out to be the underlying reasons on high level of anxiety in English learning.

The Most Influencing Types of Anxiety

From the other point of view, the most influencing type of anxiety that was found in this research are two types of anxiety which is known as Communication Anxiety (Mean = 2.31) and Fear of Test Anxiety (Mean = 2.31). This is another reason why the students are having high level of anxiety when the data collection was conducted in the school. This result is supported by the result obtained in a research done by [Miskam and Saidalvi \(2019\)](#) which stated that communication apprehension will hinder the performance of learners in speaking the target language. [Suleimenova \(2013\)](#) stated that anxiety could hinder the speaking performance when the students were needed to focus on speak the target language even though they had the ideas to speak in the classroom. As for the Fear of Test Anxiety, the students

was just completed their midterm examination one week before the data collection was conducted. This could be considered as the factors in affecting their emotion in answering the questionnaire. Not only that, as stated by [Khaidzir \(2015\)](#), the learners in Malaysia are by and large concerns about failing examinations due to the fact that examination is the indicator of their success in learning.

The Relationship Between School Climate and ELA

As to find the correlation between the school climate and ELA, it is revealed that Social Dimensions and Academic Dimensions were the predictors in affecting ELA. For Social Dimensions, the main plethora was focused on the society build in the school environment itself. The quality of interpersonal relationships between the students and teachers, the fair treatments received by the students, the healthy competition and comparison between the students and in what ways the teachers and students could contribute to the decision making in school.

Academic Dimensions are basically consist of quality of instruction by the teachers, the teacher expectations for students achievements and in what ways the teachers observe the students progress and reporting results to students and parents. The result proves that the students were actually well aware on how their English teachers teach them English subject in classroom and how the teachers establish the relationship with their parents. This is precisely the reason why the study is needed to conduct in a school where a neighbourhood was socially established in this situation.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the level of anxiety is high and the most influencing types of anxiety were the Communication Apprehension and Fear of Test Anxiety. This had explained why the level of anxiety is high among the students. Also, this proved that school climate can be considered as new predictor in affecting ELA. The School Dimensions and Academic Dimensions are the predictors that affect ELA. Therefore, to overcome high level of anxiety as well as test anxiety and speaking apprehension, educators or English teachers should find interesting and suitable methodology to cater the needs of the students and also at the same time to suit the level of proficiency among the students in English learning. Thus, in order to engage the students attention in learning English, fun and creative ways of instruction should be applied in the classroom such as games and by using realia. From the other point of view, school climate can be considered as new predictor and through this revelation, it is hope that there will more researches on school climate affecting ELA. In brief, by understanding anxiety and its effect on the students, educators should act as facilitator to assist the students in combating the anxiety in English learning.

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