



The correlation between foreign language anxiety and career preparedness among final year students of the hospitality management study program

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Abstract:

Foreign language anxiety is one of the psychological factors that students often experience in their learning and using the English language, especially in their professional life in the hospitality field, where the use of English as a medium of communication is crucial. The students in this field may experience foreign language anxiety, which can affect their career preparedness to enter the workforce. The objective of this research was to examine the relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Career Preparedness among final-year students in the Hospitality Management Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. The research design used in this study was a quantitative research design with a correlational research design. The participants in this research consisted of 37 final-year students in the Hospitality Management Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang using purposive sampling. Two questionnaires on foreign language anxiety and career preparedness were used as research instruments in this study. The data analysis method used in this research was Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. Descriptive statistics revealed that students experienced a moderate level of foreign language anxiety ($M = 47.08$, $SD = 14.91$) and a moderate level of career preparedness ($M = 56.16$, $SD = 10.92$). The results show that there is a significant moderate negative correlation between the variables ($r = -0.436$, $p = 0.007$), which means that students who experience high levels of foreign language anxiety tend to have low levels of career preparedness.

Keywords:

Foreign language anxiety, career preparedness, hospitality students.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The job market is becoming more competitive, so final-year students need to prepare for a smooth transition from the university environment to the job market. Career preparedness is one component of preparing for such a transition that involves students' ability to deal with the challenges of their careers through communication, confidence, and skills. According to Savickas (2005), career preparedness refers to the preparedness of an individual to cope with the demands of their career responsibilities and job environments. In the current global world, English has become an essential medium of communication in professional environments.

According to Crystal (2003), English acts a global language in international communication, commerce, and learning. It is essential for most firms to have employees who possess the ability to communicate in English, particularly during the interview process, professional communications, and international cooperation.

From the preliminary interviews conducted with some of the final-year students of the Hospitality Management Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP), the majority of the students admitted that they felt nervous when they had to use English in a professional context. This happens during a job interview, writing a letter of application to a prospective employer, or any activity that requires good English proficiency. This fear and lack of confidence among the students indicate that the problem is not only about their limited English proficiency, but it also involves an emotional factor, which is called foreign language anxiety. The students feel afraid and lack confidence. From the preliminary interviews, it seems that the problem is not only about the limited English knowledge of the students, but it also involves the fear of using the English language. This fear of using the English language is called foreign language anxiety. The final-year students of the Hospitality Management Study Program experience this fear, which makes it difficult for them to use the English language in a professional context.

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) refers to a feeling of fear or apprehension associated with an individual's use of a foreign language when required to communicate or perform (E. K., H. M. B., C. J. Horwitz, 1986). FLA entails a feeling of self-doubt, nervousness, and stress, which can make an individual's performance worse when communicating in a foreign language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). FLA was also identified to occur in both classroom and real-life situations. For instance, Liu & Jackson (2008a) established that Chinese FLA learners avoid using English when in class. Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) also established that FLA occurs when an individual is required to participate in real-life situations, such as a job interview. Liu & Jackson (2008b) also established that FLA learners avoid using English when in class, while Subekti & Adaninggar Septi (2018) established that FLA learners' speaking anxiety affects their participation.

Foreign Language Anxiety can be a serious issue for final-year students. It makes them feel nervous about their language abilities and lowers their confidence when speaking English. As a result, they may be less likely to engage in activities that can help them secure employment. Foreign Language Anxiety can even prevent them from applying for employment that requires English language skills. Due to foreign language anxiety, students may miss out on precious opportunities and may not perform well in a professional setting as they could have. However, most studies have only explored anxiety in a learning environment or general career decision-making. For instance, Yang et al. (2024) concluded that students who experience high levels of anxiety demonstrate negative impacts on their learning and participation behaviours. Likewise, Kharisma Dewi (2023) stated that higher levels of anxiety lower students' motivation to engage in job-related activities and training. Foreign language anxiety has been widely studied as a psychological factor that affect learners' confidence in using a foreign language (Horwitz, 2001). Research has demonstrated the impact of anxiety on the willingness of learners to communicate, which may influence the academic and professional growth of the learners in the context of learning the English language (MacIntyre, 2017; Zhang & Tsung, 2021).

Career preparedness is seen as being closely aligned with employability skills, self-efficacy, and preparedness to respond to the demands of the workplace (Yorke, 2006; Tymon, 2013). In the context of hospitality education, for instance, English communication skills have been identified as a critical skill set for hospitality graduates entering the workplace (Ristimäki et al., 2020; Sung et al., 2013). Career preparedness is also impacted by developmental issues

associated with the transition from education to the workplace, a phase which final-year students in universities typically experience (Arnett, 2000; Savickas, 2013). At this stage, students commence the process of assessing their competencies and preparedness for the workplace, including their ability to communicate in English (Bandura, 1997; Lent et al., 2000).

Previous research has mainly treated foreign language anxiety and career preparedness as two different factors. In their research "The Correlation between Language Anxiety and Foreign Language Achievement among Undergraduate Students at the University of Tabuk," Hussein & Altamimi (2023) worked with a group of 80 students in Saudi Arabia. The researchers applied the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and academic scores to test foreign language anxiety. The findings revealed that there was a strong correlation between foreign language anxiety and students' foreign language achievement. The more foreign language anxiety a student experienced, the less foreign language achievement they demonstrated.

Similarly, Zaharuddin et al. (2023) employed a study titled "The Correlation between Foreign Language Anxiety and Willingness to Communicate among Students of Arabic as a Foreign Language." The study used a survey and an interview as instruments in collecting data from a sample of 80 Arab postgraduate students. The findings revealed that foreign language anxiety affects students' willingness to communicate, particularly in academic or cross-cultural contexts. The interviews also revealed that fear of negative evaluation, lack of self-confidence, and negative past experiences influenced foreign language anxiety. However, this study focused more on the aspect of willingness to communicate than on career outcomes.

Previous research concentrated either on students who were not in their last year or on career-related issues that did not include career preparedness in particular. Some past researchers indicate that foreign language anxiety negatively impacts the level of students' self-confidence and behaviour in a career environment; there is no empirical research on the effect of foreign language anxiety on the career preparedness of final year students. Consequently, this research will concentrate on the career preparedness of students majoring in Hospitality Management since their professional activities will involve communication with foreign guests and colleagues. For this reason, foreign language anxiety will have some impact on their preparedness for dealing with career demands.

This implies that studying the connection between foreign language anxiety and career preparedness is significant, particularly among students who need to have excellent communication skills in their future careers. Students enrolled in the field of Hospitality Management must interact with foreigners and other people working at the establishment. Therefore, good English communication skills are very significant in their future careers. Therefore, students experiencing foreign language anxiety can encounter challenges in becoming confident and competent communicators in the professional world. Although it is evident that English is crucial within the hospitality industry, few researchers have been able to examine the correlation between foreign language anxiety and career preparedness among hospitality management students in their final year. This research intends to establish if there exists any connection between foreign language anxiety and career preparedness among students. This study is intended to make a contribution to the existing knowledge on how students can improve their English speaking proficiency amid foreign language anxiety.

2. METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to explore the relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Career Preparedness among final-year students of the Hospitality Management Study Program, Universitas Negeri Padang. This study was conducted using a quantitative approach due to its numerical nature, which requires statistical analysis to identify the relationship between variables in terms of direction and degree. The correlational research design was appropriate in this study, considering that it was designed to explore the relationship between variables without manipulating and controlling them (Creswell, 2014).

The population in this study comprised 230 students who were about to complete their studies in the Hospitality Management Study Program. Sample size in the study was calculated using the Slovin Formula, which is normally used to determine the number of subjects in a study depending on the total population and the margin of error. As noted by Sugiyono (2019), the formula for determining sample size involves taking into account the size of the population under investigation and the degree of accuracy needed in this study. For this research, the population involved 230 students, with the margin of error being 15%. This gave a sample size of 37 students. Purposive sampling was applied in the current research since the subjects were selected based on certain criteria; in this study, those students nearing completion of the Hospitality Management Study Program.

This study employed two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was all about checking how much people felt anxious when learning a foreign language. Horwitz et al. originally made the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and this was changed from that (1986). "The scale had 15 items, split into three parts: how nervous people get when they communicate, their fear of being judged negatively, and test performance anxiety. The second questionnaire was set up to check how ready people felt for their careers. Lent and his colleagues came up with the idea, which they based on their Social Cognitive Career Theory, or SCCT. (1994), along with the stuff from Sung (2013). The questionnaire also had 15 questions about being aware of career options, making plans, talking to people at work, and feeling good about one's own career abilities. This research used a five-point Likert scale for all the questions in both questionnaires. The options went from "strongly disagree" all the way to "strongly agree."

Content validity was established through the alignment of the questions in the questionnaire with relevant theories and research goals, and expert judgment was provided by a lecturer from the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang. For the reliability test, Cronbach's Alpha was used in SPSS software version 25, and high reliability was established for both instruments, FLA and Career Preparedness, at $\alpha = 0.971$ and $\alpha = 0.960$, respectively.

Table 1. Reliability Foreign Language Anxiety

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's	
Alpha	NofItems
.971	15

Table 2. Reliability Career Preparedness

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's	
Alpha	NofItems
.960	15

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

Result

The objective of the data analysis was to find out the levels of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Career Preparedness, as well as the relationship between the two variables among the final-year students of the Hospitality Management Study Program. From the data analysis, it was revealed that the students experienced a moderate level of Foreign Language Anxiety, since the mean score was 47.08 and the standard deviation was 14.91. This indicates that the students, despite being used to the language during the time they studied, still experienced emotions such as nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and being judged. In addition, the students experienced a moderate level of Career Preparedness, since the mean score was 56.16 and the standard deviation was 10.92, which also falls into the moderate category.

To determine the relationship between the variables, the Pearson Product- Moment Correlation analysis was employed. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.436$ with a significance value of $p = 0.007$. Since the significance value was less than 0.05, the correlation between Foreign Language Anxiety and Career Preparedness was statistically significant. The negative sign of the correlation coefficient revealed an inverse relationship, which suggested that students who experienced higher levels of foreign language anxiety also experienced lower levels of career preparedness. Using the correlation strength interpretation, the correlation coefficient of -0.436 revealed a moderate relationship. The following table shows the relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and Career Preparedness.

Table 3. Correlation between Foreign Language Anxiety and Career Preparedness

Correlations			
FLATOTAL	Pearson Correlation	1	-.436**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	37	37
CPTOTAL	Pearson Correlation	-.436**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	37	37

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a moderate level of correlation between Foreign Language Anxiety and Career Preparedness. The negative correlation coefficient shows an inverse correlation between the two variables. This means that as foreign language anxiety increases, career preparedness decreases, and vice versa. Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

In order to determine the correlation of each component of Foreign Language Anxiety with the variable Career Preparedness, the following variables were used: Communication Apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation, and Test Performance Anxiety. Correlation of each component of Foreign Language Anxiety and Career Preparedness is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation between Components of Foreign Language Anxiety and Career Preparedness

CA_TOTAL			FNE_TOTAL	TPA_TOTAL	CP_TOTAL
CA_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	1	.888**	.826**	-.351*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.033
	N	37	37	37	37
FNE_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	.888**	1	.913**	-.412*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.011
	N	37	37	37	37
TPA_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	.826**	.913**	1	-.419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.010
	N	37	37	37	37
CP_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	-.351*	-.412*	-.419**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.011	.010	
	N	37	37	37	37

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows how different components of foreign language anxiety, like Communication Apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation, and Test Performance Anxiety, are connected to Career Preparedness. The results show that all three parts of foreign language anxiety are significantly and negatively correlated with career preparedness.

Communication Apprehension shows a weak negative correlation with Career Preparedness ($r = -.351$, $p = .033$). This means that students who feel more nervous about communicating in a foreign language are slightly less prepared for their future careers.

Fear of Negative Evaluation shows a moderate negative correlation with Career Preparedness ($r = -.412$, $p = .011$). This suggests that students who worry more about being judged or criticized are likely to feel less prepared for their careers.

Test Performance Anxiety also shows a moderate negative correlation with Career Preparedness ($r = -.419$, $p = .010$). Out of the three, Test Performance Anxiety has the strongest correlation, showing that this aspect is the most influential in correlation to career preparedness.

Discussion

From the findings, it can be concluded that there exists a statistically significant moderate negative correlation between Foreign Language Anxiety and Career Preparedness amongst final year Hospitality Management Study Program students. These findings have shown that the students who scored higher on Foreign Language Anxiety had a lower Career Preparedness score. Even though this correlation is moderate, this research has been able to

establish a link between language anxiety and career preparedness.

These results are in accordance with the theoretical framework provided by Elaine Horwitz, Michael Horwitz, and Joann Cope (1986), according to whom the foreign language anxiety influences students' self-confidence, feelings, and communication performance. The same results were obtained in a study conducted by Nicole Mills et al. (2006) who observed that language-anxious students showed lower self-confidence in their foreign language learning ability. In the current research as well, it was found that the students who suffered from high anxiety felt less prepared for their future career life.

Moreover, the results have proved the Social Cognitive Career Theory, as introduced by Robert Lent, Steven Brown, and Gail Hackett (1994). The theory focuses on the significance of self-efficacy during the career process. It is expected that the Foreign Language Anxiety may decrease the sense of self-confidence in the use of English language among students, thus influencing their readiness to act professionally.

Nevertheless, whereas most of these studies have concentrated primarily on academic achievement and/or foreign language acquisition, this particular study explored the link between FLA and Career Preparedness in final year Hospitality Management students. Thus, this research helps to contribute to the extant literature in demonstrating that, apart from affecting academic achievements, foreign language anxiety also influences how ready students feel about their future careers, particularly in fields which require English speaking abilities. Moreover, out of all dimensions of foreign language anxiety, Test Performance Anxiety was found to correlate most highly with Career Preparedness.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, based on the findings of this study, it can be said that students in their last year of the Hospitality Management Study Program had foreign language anxiety and career preparedness levels in the moderate range. Moreover, there was a statistically significant correlation between foreign language anxiety and career preparedness at the moderate level, meaning that high anxiety levels corresponded to low career preparedness.

Out of all the Foreign Language Anxiety factors, the Test Performance Anxiety dimension had the strongest correlation with Career Preparedness. Thus, it is assumed that anxiety regarding assessment and language performance can significantly affect the degree of confidence in dealing with workplace challenges. Hence, lowering Foreign Language Anxiety levels and offering support for English learning can enhance career preparedness.

In conclusion, this research has made a contribution towards the field of studying the relation between Foreign Language Anxiety and Career Preparedness, especially among Hospitality Management students who need to develop good English language skills for their future careers. It would be beneficial for future studies to investigate other psychological factors concerning career preparedness.

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