

Breaking Barriers for L2 Learners of English

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1. Abstract

The goal of this study is to see if barriers for L2 learners of English are removed, will Willingness to Communicate (WTC) improve. Barriers referred to in this study, pertain to the anxiety and fears which are impeding L2 learners of English from learning the language purposefully and enjoyably. The researcher used 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year elementary and English secondary course students from Yamaguchi Gakugei University (YGU), and 1st year day care course students from Yamaguchi College of Arts (YCA), as participants for this study.

Various studies and theories regarding L2 learning barriers were considered in this study. Motivation, willingness to communicate, and anxiety were the key topics of research. Information found regarding these topics, was used to analyse course methods that have been designed to remove barriers, as well as to measure resulting motivation levels. Given that motivation is usually measured using qualitative means, this study chose a quantitative device to measure results.

The quantitative device used was the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), and it measures WTC levels of L2 learners. The results of the AMTB study were correlated, comparing the variable of which school the participants were members of, being either YGU or YCA. Using these results, variables such as learning background and future career choices, were also considered as elements affecting the anxiety and fear levels of the participants. Considering the results and all affecting variables, the validity of the methods used to remove English L2 learning barriers as a means to improve WTC levels, were assessed accordingly.

2. Introduction

“Far too often students who have been assessed as being Proficient in English using tests like Eiken, have proven not to be able to produce output greater than or equal to those who do not possess any certifications” (Parkin, 2019, 137). This phenomenon has been observed by the researcher of this study, time and time again. The question as to why this happens, has confused countless L2 language instructors through the years.

It is the belief of this researcher that it is not ability that determines English L2 learners' output, rather it is governed by the motivations they have to produce it. Using this as a leading consideration, then there is one question we English L2 instructors must ask. That question is, what effects the motivation of our students to learn English? The answer that most people in the field of L2 acquisition would give, is anxiety. This answer creates an ever more perplexing question, which is how to identify anxiety and how to remove it.

During this study, methods were used to help identify student anxiety. These methods

often provided students with opportunities to face their own anxiety, and to hopefully remove it in the process. While helping students to self-identify their own anxiety, the methods also provided the course instructor with valuable information, which was used to remove many of the learning barriers. "Second language anxiety has a debilitating effect on the oral performance of speakers of English as a second language" (Woodrow, 2006). This statement is very true, for it has been observed by this researcher that many students often shut down depending on the L2 activity they are given. The activity could involve something as simple as saying "Hello" or to answer "How are you?" Even though the Japanese English education system has provided canned responses like "I'm fine thank you, and you?", they still shut down due to anxiety. More examples of the negative effects of anxiety will be discussed in the body of this paper.

After providing methods to overcome anxiety, this study needed to identify if motivation levels became favourable as a result. Several theories concerning the measurement of motivation in an L2 setting were researched, and it was decided that the AMTB model would be used to quantitatively assess students' WTC levels. The AMTB was administered to the classes of YGU and YCA, to see what the WTC levels were for each school, as a comparative analysis. The methods of how the AMTB was used as well as a discussion of the findings, will be given later in this paper.

To better understand the concepts concerning anxiety and motivation, a literature review of some of the leading theories and studies is provided in section three following.

3. Literature Review

3. 1 Motivation and Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

"There is widespread recognition that motivation is of a great importance for successful L2 acquisition, but there is less agreement about what motivation actually consists of" (Ellis, 1994, p. 36). Rod Ellis who is a leading researcher in second language acquisition made this statement, which many leading researchers in the field would resoundingly agree with. A consensus is needed, that uses variables that are not only qualifiable, but also quantifiable, so that we can truly conduct scientific research, addressing the question of what motivation is.

The measurement of motivation as it applies to L2 acquisition is a very difficult procedure, given

A major interpretation placed on the relationship of attitudes and motivation to second language achievement is that such achievement is dependent in part on attitudinal/ motivational characteristics and in part upon language aptitude (Gardner and Lambert, as cited in Gardner et al., 1985).

This statement expresses at least some of the variables needed to be considered, when trying to evaluate and measure motivation, in the context of a L2 classroom setting. However, thankfully for the purpose of this study, there are measurement devices that have been designed to evaluate such variables and more. Once such model was created by Gardner himself, called the Socio-Educational (SE) Model, that considered "Three major factors influencing language learning: integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation" (Gardner, as cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, pg. 44).

3. 1. 1 James McCroskey (WTC)

In the field of motivation as it applies to L2 learners' willingness to communicate or WTC, James McCroskey is considered the founding father. In 1992, he published a paper called Reliability and Validity of the Willingness to Communicate Scale, which looked at various factors affecting an L2 learner's willingness to communicate (McCroskey, 1992). Many of the factors concern negative anxiety barriers, but also consider positive factors as well. Variables used in the WTC scale include stage fright, speech anxiety, shyness, unwillingness to communicate, talkativeness, and verbal activity (McCroskey, 1992). The scale looks at three constructs which measure anxiety, actual talking, and approach/avoidance of communicating (McCroskey, 1992). WTC is designed to consider behaviors which are observable by others and self observed by the individual themselves (McCroskey, 1992). The WTC scale allowed L2 researchers to finally have a means to logically and quantifiably measure motivation, and more specifically a willingness to communicate in a foreign language. Since his creation, several other similar devices have been created to measure motivation.

3. 1. 2 Robert Gardner (AMTB)

Robert Gardner has done extensive research in the field of motivation as it applies to L2 learners. In 1985, he published a paper based on an extensive study he conducted, that used a questionnaire called Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which was designed to measure both linguistic and non-linguistic goals (Gardner, 1985). Linguistic goals pertain to reading, writing, speaking, and understanding a language, while non-linguistic goals pertain to understanding the L2 languages community, the desire to continue such studies, and perhaps the learning of another L2 language (Gardner, 1985). The original AMTB was designed for L1 English speakers trying to learn French as an L2 language. However, it was later modified to be used in many languages, including Japanese (Gardner, 2004). The AMTB questionnaire has since been modified and used by many researchers, due to its proven ability to give reliable and valid quantitative results, pertaining to L2 learners' motivation levels, and in the context of this study WTC levels.

3. 2 Anxiety

3. 2. 1 Learning Anxiety

Everyone can attest to feeling anxious in a communication situation, at least one point in time in their lives, and it is often based in a learning environment. Understanding why, how, and what to do in this situation, is vitally important to removing barriers for L2 learners. Negative transfer of L1 language while using the L2 language is less likely to occur in a classroom setting, however avoidance of using the L2 language increases as the settings become more formal, and errors can be more easily detected (Ellis, 1985). This informs us of the potential for classroom settings, to make L2 learners more open to using the foreign language, given it is in a less formal setting. However, Ellis (1985) says that perceived formal settings can result in anxiety, and in avoidance reactions by the L2 learners. Finding the proper balance is the key to removing anxiety in the classroom, while promoting the use of the second language.

L2 learning can be a very traumatic experience for students, as it can threaten a student's

self-concept, and how they see the world (Guiora, as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986). This phenomenon is known as foreign language anxiety, and it can be seen when students forget information they know, simply because they are taking a test or are faced with communication exercises (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Gardner's AMTB is used to evaluate student motivation levels, and more specifically their WTC levels. AMTB uses several types of questions, with some of them focusing on the measurement of anxiety. However, another more anxiety specific measurement tool was designed by Horwitz et al. (1986), called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). FLCAS was designed specifically to target classroom anxiety as its main variable of interest. Although this anxiety measurement tool was not utilized in this study, there is a very good chance it will be used in future studies.

3. 2. 2 Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is a very common anxiety suffered by many people, regardless of L1 or L2 specific circumstances. Although speaking anxiety often is seen as public speaking anxiety, it also pertains to several situations regardless of their being a group, or just two people. Lindy Woodrow conducted a study based on a device she created to specifically measure speaking anxiety, and although it was not a nationwide or globally accepted study, I felt it warranted mentioning (Woodrow, 2006). Woodrow (2006) created a second language speaking anxiety scale (SLSAS) to measure speaking anxiety both inside and outside of L2 classroom settings. Her study found that L2 speaking anxiety was directly related to oral achievement, most anxiety occurred when interacting with native speakers, and two major problems existed concerning retrieval interference and skills deficit (Woodrow, 2006). One interesting item found in her study, was that countries like China, Korea, and Japan were more anxious than L2 learners from other ethnicities (Woodrow, 2006).

4. Method

4. 1 Participants

The participants for this study came from two different schools, Yamaguchi Gakugei University (YGU) and Yamaguchi College of Arts (YCA). The students from YGU were either elementary school or English secondary school education majors. The students from YCA were day care education course majors. The YGU classes used for this study were the first year Creative English I course, the second year Oral 2a course, and the third year Methods of English Language Education for Elementary School course. The YCA classes used for this study were English Communication classes A, B, C, and D. Given that the students from YGU differ from YGU students regarding some key variables, we will list those school specific differences.

4. 1. 1 YGU

The courses taken by the YGU students are both mandatory and elective. The English to Japanese instructional language ratio used is 95-99%, English to Japanese (L2:L1). Compared to YCA, it appears that more students like English and are motivated to use the language. The motivation to study English is more likely to be intrinsic in nature, given many of the students

have the autonomy to take the class or not. The content of the courses is designed to enhance skills sets used to instruct elementary and secondary English classes.

4. 1. 2 YCA

The courses taken by the YCA students are mandatory. The L2:L1 instructional ratio is about (88-95%) : (12-5%). Most of the students when asked, will openly tell you they do not like English! The motivation to study English in the courses is more likely to be extrinsic in nature, given they are obligated to take the courses. The content of the courses is designed to enhance skills used to instruct day care English classes.

4. 2 Activities Used

Activities used in the courses of this study have been designed to provide the L2 participants opportunities to face their own anxiety. After facing their anxiety, students should recognize it, remove it if possible by themselves, with the help of their classmates, or with the assistance of the course instructor if needed. The following activities listed are some of the ones used in the courses offered to the YGU and YCA students.

4. 2. 1 Tell Me More (TMM) – Language Learning Software

TMM language learning software is used in each class, to help students build necessary English skills, and to provide them with opportunities to overcome their own learning anxieties in the process. The software allows students to practise reading, listening and speaking, in interesting and interactive situations (Parkin, 2018b). Through the various scenarios given, they build listening, speaking, and comprehension skills, while reducing many of their former L2 learning anxieties. It needs to be noted that at first, students usually experience increased anxiety due to the steepness of the learning curve of the software. However, within the first few classes, the students become accustomed to the software and soon master the learning process. Once this occurs, students quickly start improving in their comprehension skills, while building several other skills at the same time.

4. 2. 2 Question Crazy Cards

“The Question Crazy Card system was designed by the author about 13 years ago utilizing the Interaction Hypothesis to engage students with face to face communication in a junior high school setting” (Parkin, 2018b). The Question Crazy Card system was used in this study, to provide students with opportunities to face their own speaking anxieties, and by doing so reduce and hopefully eliminate them. The students not only use the system to interact with the course instructor, they also use the cards to interact with all faculty members. The system allows the students to have native English level interactions, but also to engage in L2 English language exchanges. These interactions allow students to build functional commands of the language, gain confidence in communicating, and also help to remove many of their pre-existing anxieties in the process. Although students must complete one full card or 35 boxes worth of questions within one course (Parkin, 2018b), students are often seen openly enjoying the process, while they receive points towards their grades. Much like the TMM system at the beginning, students usually are very anxious when first starting the Question Crazy Card

system. However, after students start to use the system, they soon understand how non-confrontational it is, as their speaking anxieties fade away.

4. 2. 3 Course Instructor Demonstration Lessons

One of the methods used in the YGU Methods of English Language Education for Elementary School course and the YCA English Communication classes, is Course Instructor Demonstration Lessons. “The second session of each class is where the course instructor conducts an elementary English school lesson, while the students participate and try to act like elementary school students” (Parkin, 2018b). Although the lessons given to the YCA students are tailored towards daycare students, the contents and methods used are very similar to those of the YGU lessons. The classes are designed to provide students with authentic opportunities, to learn English teaching techniques. Students’ L2 learning anxieties soon fade, as they try to mimic elementary or daycare students that they will teach in the future. The activities and methods used, allow students to work together, and to forget about their own language anxieties and inhibitions. The students are required to remember the methods used by the course instructor, in order to face their next anxiety challenge, teaching.

4. 2. 4 Mini Lessons Taught by Students

After the Course Instructor Demonstration Lessons are finished, students must then separate into smaller groups and conduct Mini Lessons, by taking turns teaching one another. The goal of the mini lessons is for students to teach a portion of the class previously demonstrated by the course instructor, while trying to employ the same methods used. The mini lessons can induce many anxieties for the students, given that they must not only face L2 learning anxieties, they must also face teaching anxiety, while trying to give classes in a foreign language. “The key points stressed for the mini-lessons are confidence, use English as much as possible, “Perfect English” is not necessary, always connect with your students, and always stress enjoyment in the class while remaining professional at all times” (Parkin, 2018a). Within the first few weeks, anxiety levels often remain high during the mini lessons. However, students conducting the lessons start to overcome their own fears, while utilizing the methods provided to them by the course instructor. Laughter soon fills the air by the third week, while students practise trying to master the required skills needed for their end of term final teaching test.

4. 2. 5 Final Team-Teaching Exam

The Final Team-Teaching Exam is the culminating activity for the YGU Methods of English Language Education for Elementary School course, the YGU Oral 2a course, and the YCA English Communication courses. It is easy to see how anxieties play a central role for such an exam. It therefore, is imperative that the other methods used in the course, are successful at reducing and hopefully removing such anxieties, before the students do their exam. Students are encouraged to come to the course instructor’s office for assistance, and many if not most students do. This act shows students’ WTC levels increase due to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Several L2 learning anxieties are addressed throughout the exam preparation process, in addition to the pedagogical elements required to be utilized. In

addition, “The final test teaches our students that collaborative learning is useful for team teaching and for L2 learners of English to acquire language skills” (Parkin, 2018a). Given that the final exam is primarily a teaching exam, the students’ L2 anxieties often improve, because English is not the main focus. Of course, English is always used and required, but many L2 learning stressors are removed from the students, compared to other language courses. The students are encouraged to use English to the best of their abilities, but perfect is never the focus. Of course, students’ lesson plans and various other materials are checked for correctness, but English accuracy during the lessons is only one marking element.

4. 2. 6 Final Reflections

WTC in this study was measured using AMTB, but Final Reflection sheets were also used qualitatively to see students’ willingness to communicate, by using English to express their thoughts. The final reflection sheets are used by the students to self assess their own performances, plus to assess the course they were taking. The students express their anxieties regarding the use of English, varying from listening to the instructor to their own abilities of using the language to communicate their own thoughts and ideas. This tool allows the instructor to better evaluate the methods used in the course, for the students are often very candid in expressing their ideas and feelings.

4. 2. 7 Attitude Motivation Test Battery – AMTB

As mentioned earlier, one of the most effective devices used to quantitatively measure students’ WTC levels, is Gardner’s AMTB (Gardner, 1985). For this study, it was decided after reading a study conducted by Yuki Hashimoto, that a mini-AMTB version modified to be used with English speakers, would be used for our YGU and YCA students (Hashimoto, 2002). The researcher of this study, further modified the mini-AMTB to create a slightly more compact version. However, much care was taken to maintain the five constructs and most of the subsets listed. The only real modifications were that the subsets were reduced in numbers compared to the proposed one by Hashimoto, and a few of the questions were also reworded. The five Constructs are listed in figure 1.

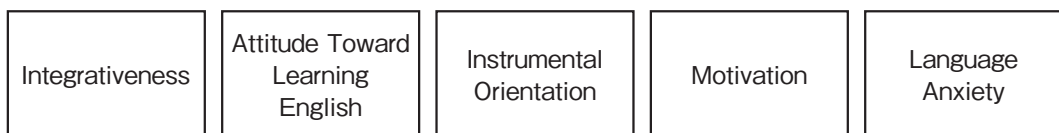


Figure 1.

Five Constructs Used to Create a Modified Mini- AMTB

Table one shows the mini-AMTB used for this studied, which utilizes a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree on the left to strongly disagree on the right. Both reversed and non-reversed questions were used. An example of one of the reversed questions is “Studying English is not Fun”. The participants must understand this type of question to answer it correctly.

Table 1

Mini-AMTB – Using a 7-Point Likert Scale

Section A - Circle your answer

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	So So Disagree	Neutral	So So Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I want to learn English to speak with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I enjoy learning languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I enjoy meeting English speaking people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I like to learn from my English teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I like going to English class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	English is important for my future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	I study hard for my English class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Studying English is not Fun.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	Studying English makes me nervous.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	Speaking English makes me nervous.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section B - Circle your answer

1. I enjoy speaking with people I don't know:

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

2. I enjoy using English:

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

3. I enjoy speaking in big groups (10-20 people) :

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

4. I enjoy teaching/using English in class:

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

5. I enjoy talking to my friends:

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

Do you have confidence using English for:

6. Shopping

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

7. Restaurant

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

8. Doctor

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

9. Talking on a phone

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

10. Taking a plane

Strong NO!! ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7 Strong YES!!

5. Results and Discussion

The goal of this study is to see if barriers for L2 learners of English are removed, then Willingness to Communicate (WTC) will improve. Given that the barriers referred to in this study pertain mainly to anxiety, the results and the discussions to follow will be given mostly based on anxiety and WTC, observed and measured.

5. 1 Observed Barriers

Based on the literature reviewed in this paper and on observations by the researcher during classes listed in this study, the following barriers to learning were perceived.

5. 1. 1 Personal Character

Many studies list personal attributes or character as a variable which may serve to create barriers for L2 learners. Simple examples of such attributes could be interest in languages, studying, foreign cultures, the ability to retain information, or more specifically aptitudes for language learning. Considering the statement made by Woodrow (2006), that most anxiety occurred when interacting with native speakers, character undoubtedly would play a large role in this factor. The shyer or more reserved the L2 speaker's character is, the larger the anxiety that will occur. Many students, especially during the beginning of this study, exhibited such reactions when engaging with the native course instructor, by not being able to speak or even look at them.

5. 1. 2 English Skills

Parkin (2019) indicated that English proficiency often does not result in an L2 learner producing output greater than those without proficiency in the language. English skills are one basic variable which allows students to have ability to use the language, but often anxiety still exists, limiting their ability to use it. It has been found that, strong character often allows L2 learners to fill in any English skill deficits with determination, which allows them to communicate better than those with higher levels of proficiency. Noticing a deficiency in language proficiency triggers a mental process, where the L2 learner produces modified output, and this process is considered second language learning (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, p. 371). The students in this study often showed they could overcome supposed barriers, such as lack of English skills, by producing output beyond their own beliefs.

5. 1. 3 Learned Anxiety

It has been observed by the researcher that anxiety in L2 learners often results from a learned process taught to them by their family, their friends, and by society. If an L2 learners' parents do not like or fear English like so many do in Japan, they often pass those fears onto their own children. Such fear is likely to manifest itself in the form of anxiety. Friends in a school setting are instrumental to the learning development of a student, and this is often truer in an L2 classroom setting. Fear and anxiety naturally pass between humans faster than positive attributes like happiness and knowledge. If many of an L2 learner's friends are anxious towards learning English, then it is only natural that this anxiety will be passed on to them. It takes a strong individual to ignore such negative feelings. Society is one of the largest teachers

for students. TV, social media, and web pages, all teach students what they should learn. In Japan, there is a stigma that only smart people can speak English, and it is a very hard language to learn. This is seen daily on TV shows, and SNS platforms do not seem to support the opposite of this belief at all.

5. 1. 4 Conditioned Response

It has been observed by this researcher, that anxious L2 learners of English often have several different conditioned responses, when they are faced with using the language, especially with a foreign teacher. One type of conditioned response is when an L2 learner has a decrease in confidence, when answering easy questions like “how are you?” Another response, is when their openness and honesty disappear, as they quickly give any answer, so they can flee away. Many times, their basic grammar and vocabulary skills vanish. The highest level shown by anxious L2 learners is what this researcher terms, a “Language Skills Shut Down”. An example of this situation, is when an L2 learner is faced with having to communicate with a foreigner, and they simply freeze, unable to engage in the L2 language at all. After this shut down occurs, often they are unable to talk with the foreigner in either the L2 or L1 language. Many times, these conditioned responses are accompanied by defense mechanisms. Some examples are strange attitudes, inappropriate laughter, harsh words in their L1 language, or total avoidance of the situation, as their heads are down and they evade eye contact at all cost. These are just a few of the observed reactions by this researcher, regarding L2 anxiety.

5. 2 Results of the Mini-AMTB

Table 2

Mini-AMTB – Using a 7-Point Likert Scale

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Cronbach’s Alpha α - Per School and Per Values Tested

	Integrativeness			Attitude toward Learning English			Instrumental Orientation			Motivation			Language Anxiety		
	Mean	SD	α	Mean	SD	α	Mean	SD	α	Mean	SD	α	Mean	SD	α
YGU	5.83	0.94	0.70	5.94	0.87	0.74	6.73	0.56	One item	5.10	1.43	0.48	3.72	1.73	0.87
YCA	4.40	1.21	0.80	4.68	1.32	0.80	4.65	1.26	Only	5.05	1.72	0.53	2.94	1.59	0.81

The results of the mini-AMTB were grouped together by schools, and are shown in Table 2. YGU participants’ n value = 52, while YCA participants’ n value = 84. The data was analysed using an Anova: Two-Factor Without Replication. This analysis was conducted on each of the five constructs used in the study, and was done twice, once for YGU and a second time for YCA. The results selected from the Anova: Two-Factor Without Replication analysis for this study, were mean, standard deviation SD, and Cronbach’s Alpha α . The purpose of the statistical analysis was to first verify if the mini-AMTB results were valid, and then to compare those results between the two schools. Here is a summary of the analysis:

Cronbach’s Alpha indicated Reliability/Consistency as follows:

Integrativeness: YGU .70 and YCA .80 Good

Attitude: YGU .74 and YCA .80 Good

Instrumental Orientation: No value was returned due to the construct having only one question.

Motivation: YGU .48 and YCA .53 Bad/Unacceptable

Language Anxiety: YGU .87 and YCA .81 Poor

Based on Cronbach's Alpha, it was found that the data in this study were good in two of the five constructs being Integrativeness and Attitude, poor in Language Anxiety, and Bad or Unacceptable in Motivation. No analysis was possible with Instrumental Orientation, due to the design of the test.

Standard Deviation indicated Data Variance as follows:

Integrativeness: YGU .94 – Low Variance and YCA 1.21 – High Variance

Attitude: YGU .87 Low Variance and YCA 1.32 High Variance

Instrumental Orientation: YGU .56 Low Variance and YCA 1.26 High Variance

Motivation: YGU 1.43 High Variance and YCA 1.72 High Variance

Language Anxiety: YGU 1.73 High Variance and YCA 1.59 High Variance

Based on standard deviation results, there were three constructs used for YGU that were of low variance, which are Integrativeness, Attitude, and Instrumental Orientation. High Variance results were found for the rest of the constructs, and for each of the YCA values analysed. The high variance results are not considered bad by statistical measures, rather they indicate that the data studied are widely dispersed or spread out.

Mean Comparative Analysis between YGU and YCA:

Integrativeness: YGU 5.83 and YCA 4.4 - YGU demonstrating higher levels

Attitude: YGU 5.94 and YCA 4.68 - YGU demonstrating higher levels

Instrumental Orientation: YGU 6.73 and YCA 4.65 - YGU demonstrating higher levels

Motivation: YGU 5.1 and YCA 5.05 - YGU demonstrating marginal higher levels

Language Anxiety: YGU 3.72 and YCA 2.94 - YGU demonstrating higher levels

Based on the mean results, YGU was found to be higher in all areas compared to YCA. One area which is motivation, was almost the same with a 0.05 difference between the two schools.

5. 3 Conclusions

The goal of this study is to see if barriers for L2 learners of English are removed, will Willingness to Communicate (WTC) improve. Otherwise stated, it is hypothesized that if activities designed to remove anxiety are used in L2 classrooms, then WTC levels will improve. The methods used in this study considered the variable of anxiety, as it applied to YGU and YCA students. Students' reactions to the methods were observed and noted. After these observations, WTC levels were measured using a Mini-AMTB. The resulting data was then analyzed statistically, and was found to be questionable in several areas. Great time and effort was taken to administer the questionnaires to every student, to input the data into spreadsheets, and then to use statistical tools to analyze the findings. After this very long process, the results found were of limited value to the researcher, for no meaningful explanation of the statistical results could be found in the sources used. However, by using the mean values independent of the other values, it could by comparative analysis be seen that YGU students were higher in every area measured. Motivation was the one construct which

warranted most attention, for the values found were almost identical between the two schools. This fact was surprising, given there was a clear distinction between the two sets of participants at the beginning of the courses, regarding their dislike of English as a language of study.

It has been said by many people, that it is through a series of trials and failures, that researchers are able to find the real truths that lie in waiting to be found. This study has shown that future studies are needed, to uncover the truths that have yet to be shown, regarding the hypothesis tested. What has also been found as a result of this study, is that data collection needs to be more consistent, and that a base line measurement should be taken at the beginning of courses. WTC should be measured using the AMTB at the start and at the end of courses, to see if the methods used during the courses to reduce anxiety had any effect on students' motivation levels. "The need for a representative sample of receiver/context items is important for establishing meaningful norms for the instrument" (McCroskey, 1992, p. 18). Another factor that strongly needs to be adjusted, is the evaluation of the AMTB results. Although the AMTB allowed for a comparison between YGU and YCA for WTC, there was no real conclusive analysis conducted to find the meanings of the various values represented. More research is needed to evaluate the validity and the meaning of the data in future studies.

In addition to changing the application and analysis of AMTB, it has also been found that anxiety levels of students should be measured more specifically if possible, at the beginning and at the end of the courses. One method that could be used to do this, is the second language speaking anxiety scale (SLSAS) (Woodrow, 2006). Again, research into the validity of this testing method needs to be conducted to support its use. However, if it is possible to create base level studies and end of course studies for both anxiety and WTC, it is believed that this study has the potential to drastically change English learning in YGU, YCA, and possibly well beyond.

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