

A Case Study of Students' Anxiety in Speaking English And How They Cope The Feeling

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Abstract: This study analyzes the factors of the students' anxiety in speaking English and also explores the strategies used by the students to cope with their anxiety. The three participants of this study were selected from 36 students of X TKJ 1 in SMKN 2 Jember that experienced speaking anxiety as illustrated by Oxford. This study applied qualitative and quantitative case study design. Classroom observation was done four times to select the participants. The results of questionnaire and interview were analysed by using Miles and Hubberman's model. The findings showed that the students in the English speaking class experienced excessive fear and anxiety. There were 2 participants who exhibited test anxiety and the other one exhibited communication apprehension. Their strategies to overcome the anxiety were; avoiding eye contact, relaxation, and asking for teachers' help.

Keywords: language anxiety, speaking English, factors affecting anxiety

Introduction

Speaking remains a challenging task for EFL (English as foreign language) students. Tsiprakides (2009) reports that speaking anxiety is a person's reluctance to participate in conversations using a particular language and this may arise because learners are unable to understand the existing psychological conditions and are used to letting the situation drag on (Zhiping and Paramasivam, 2013).

Speaking is one of the important aspects in human life process and also a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. It is a process that involves two or more people of sending and receiving message or information in oral communication to speak and express their ideas, feelings, and emotion to others.

Therefore, speaking has received the greatest attention among both students and teachers. To sum up, speaking is the way we say things depending on the situation to send a message which allows the speaker to express their thoughts and feelings about a topic. Every student has a different psychological condition; some students can speak confidently in front of the class while some cannot. One of the problems the students face

is whenever they try to speak English, they feel nervous.

Literature review

Anxiety in EFL learning

The term anxiety refers to the complex set of negative emotions, which include fear, apprehension, and worry. Anxiety can be seen as one of the main reasons that can prohibit students from gaining a good level of language proficiency (Alrabai, 2014). According to Sadighi and Dastpak (2017:111) "Foreign language anxiety is associated with feelings of fear, uncertainty, disorder and concern with the conditions in which the language is learned, such as English as foreign language classes". This means that language anxiety is a negative feeling and psychological tension that learners go through in learning a language or performing a task (Xiao & Wong, 2014). Having said this, some people feel apprehension when they are demanded to speak publicly. Having said this, some people feel apprehension when they are demanded to speak publicly.

Presumably, students' feelings can have a key impact on their motivation, performance and language proficiency. In other words, students may feel anxious in their speaking classes because of their negative self-assessment which possibly results in being reticent and quiet. Likewise, language anxiety may cause students to have an uncomfortable feeling and reticent during English classes, specifically spoken ones (Thompson & Lee, 2013). However, this does not mean that language anxiety only affects students to improve their English fluency, but also accuracy (Rassaei, 2015).

Horwitz (2001) proposed two kinds of anxiety. First, Trait Anxiety; Generally, this anxiety is a kind of anxiety where a subject is generally anxious in many things. Sandi and Richter-Lev (2009) revealed that trait anxiety is a well-known risk factor to develop depression, and anxiety disorders and depression present a high comorbidity. In this case, someone with trait anxiety experiences anxious every time. In other words, Omrod (2011) clarified trait anxiety may appear even in a nonthreatening situation. He continued that this kind of anxiety can be the character of a person.

Second, .State Anxiety: this anxiety is as apprehension that is experienced at a particular moment in time as a response to a definite situation. It means that the person only experiences the anxiety in a given situation. The kind of anxiety is also temporary. It is because the person only feels anxious in an event which can be dangerous for him. It

has been explained before that anxiety is someone's feeling of nervousness in facing an event in a particular situation. The anxiety is often evoked for students in the English speaking class.

Kayaoğlu and Sağlamel (2013) found several causes of language anxiety. First, linguistic difficulty in the form of lack of vocabulary, lack of grammatical understanding and bad pronunciation. Second, cognitive challenges in the form of feelings of fear cannot communicate, fear of failing the test, the fear of making mistakes, shame to fail in front of others, low self-esteem. Third, lack of understanding of the original language; and fourth, teacher's role and competitiveness. To sum up, anxiety is a serious problem for students that can influence their achievement in speaking performance. For this reason, Antony (2004) claimed that it is necessary to overcome students' anxiety in speaking performance. The students can plan for change, change the way of think, confront the anxiety-provoke situation, change the way to communicate and improve the relationship, medicate, copy with rejection, meet new people, learn to make the presentation with confidence, and stop trying to be perfect.

There are three components of foreign language anxiety that have been identified (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986): a) Communication Apprehension Communication apprehension is defined as a feeling of shy as the impact of fear to communicate with other people. In this case, the students who have a problem with speaking in a group usually have difficulties in speaking in a foreign language class. The students have less control in the communicative situation. Thus, it influences their speaking performance

Even, the students who most prepared often make errors in the test. In conclusion, the factors of student's anxiety are categorized into three major problems, firstly, the factors are categorized as communication apprehension. In this case, the students feel anxious because of embracing feeling when speaking in front of the class. Secondly, the factors are called test anxiety. It means that the students feel worried when they have to face the English test. It is due to the level of difficulty of the test. Lastly, the anxiety appears because of fear of negative evaluation. It can be implied that someone feels anxious when he or she has to speak in every social evaluative situation, such as an interview for a job. In teacher-related factor, the language teachers' beliefs about teaching and language learning have also been attributed as a cause of students' speaking anxiety.

The teacher should put him/herself as a facilitator rather than being a person who rules, reprimands and corrects students' mistakes. Pedagogically, therefore, teachers should create a supportive learning environment for learners and tolerate their language mistakes in speaking activities (Davies and Pearse, 2000). This is basically because to motivate students in order to actively participate in the class and use a good amount of English language (Hedge, 2000).

Many learners feel that some error correction is necessary; the manner of error correction is often said as provoking anxiety. Those studies that investigated anxieties concerning instructor-learner interactions show that students are more concerned about how their mistakes are corrected rather than whether error correction should be administered in class. Also, some of the classroom activities in oral presentations in front of the class are causing as potential sources of anxiety. Furthermore, classroom activities which are the core of the learning process must fulfil the needs and interest of the students. Activities that tend to make students silent and passive in class will make them more anxious.

Generally, they have similar strategies in coping with anxiety. Liu (2008) reported the only couple of students from 24 students who can reflect on what strategies they had used to cope with anxiety in class. They said that motivating and convincing themselves to be confident and stay count. Further, Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) affirmed that students tend to be silent, avoiding eye contact, being with a friend, and making an expressive reaction. Tanveer (2007) argued that the most general idea to reduce anxiety was to make the language classroom environment less formal and more pleasant, where students can make faults without looking or sounding unskilled. It is essential for teachers to be friendly and make some fun class activities rather than being strict and uncared with the students. Indeed teachers should be more aware of the existence of anxious students and show empathy to them (Liu, 2009).

Review of previous studies

There have been several previous studies dealing with the issue of Foreign Language Students' Anxiety in Speaking English. First, HAN, Tanriöver & Şahan (2016) investigated EFL students' and teachers' attitudes toward Foreign Language Speaking

Anxiety. The researchers applied quantitative and qualitative design for this study. The quantitative results of this study revealed no significant difference between students' attitudes toward FLSA they experience in classes taught by NESTs and non-NESTS.

However, there was a significant statistical difference in the students' attitudes toward FLSA between the two Turkish teachers' classrooms, although this distinction was not apparent in the qualitative data. Qualitatively, the results are consistent with the findings of previous research of speaking anxiety. Peer pressure, which stems from speaking in front of the classroom, and the fear of making mistakes are described by both teachers and students as the main causes of speaking anxiety. Lack of confidence and competitive classroom environment are also the causes of students' anxiety in speaking.

Second, Liu (2008) investigated 24 students attending a college English Listening & Speaking Course at a Chinese University in Beijing in the way of classifying the students by FLCAS, background information, and reflective journals. She found that most of the students seemed to be helpless about being anxious when speaking English in class. Anxious students reported that they were afraid to speak and felt deeply self-conscious when asked to risk revealing themselves by speaking English in the presence of other people.

The fact that anxious students feared they would not understand all the language input was also consistent with communication apprehension. He found some sources or factors such as lack of vocabulary, low English proficiency, lack of preparation, fear of making a mistake and being laughed at, fear of losing face, fear of being focus of attention, fear of unable to follow and understand others, inability to express an ideas, and memory disassociation. Third, Tridinanti (2018) investigated the relationships among student's speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and speaking achievement. The result shows that self-confidence is a significantly stronger predictor of speaking achievement than speaking anxiety with self-confidence have higher achievement. Fifth, Ahmed (2016) investigated the speaking of Kurdish University EFL learners. In this qualitative research, a survey strategy was applied using both semi-structured interview and questionnaire methods for data collection. The result of this study is that the main reasons that make students anxious are student's negative evaluation, making language mistakes, lack of ability, lack of preparation in advance and lack of teacher's support and personal

attention.

Those previous studies strongly related to the topic of this study. There were some explanations about the factors that caused EFL learners to feel anxious in speaking English. Although several studies discussed about the different factors caused by students' anxiety especially in speaking English, there were not research that focused on how the students' overcome their anxiety in speaking English. Thus, this research is not only examine the factors of students' speaking anxiety but also explore about the strategies that used by the students to cope their anxiety in speaking English.

Research method

Research design

The design of this research was a qualitative and quantitative case study. It was used to investigate the factors of students' anxiety in speaking English and also explore the strategies used by the students to overcome their anxiety. Case study is a research design and an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Through case study, the researcher can investigate deeply the real situation that happens in teaching and learning process. Creswell (2009) states that a case study is a problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a "case" or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Case studies are usually done naturally which means the data are obtained is done in a real-life context. There is no need for certain treatments for both the research subject and the context in which the research is conducted so that the data obtained is true without being subtracted or added.

Research participants

The research participants in this study is the selected students from X TKJ 1 in SMKN 2 Jember where the students tended to have speaking anxiety especially in speaking English. Classroom observation was done four times for selecting some students as the participants of this research. Also, students indicated by numbers to make the researcher easier in choosing the participant.

The researcher chose some students who tended to have speaking anxiety indications based on the characteristics of anxious students illustrated by Oxford (1999) such as: General avoidance: Showing carelessness, low levels of verbal production, lack of volunteering in class, seeming inability to answer even the simplest question. Physical actions: Squirring, stuttering or stammering, displaying jittery behaviour, conversational withdrawal, lack of eye contact, image protection or masking behaviour (exaggerated smiling, laughing, joking), and being unable to reproduce the sounds or intonation of the target language even after repeated. The questionnaire was done once by giving it to the selected participant to make sure they felt anxious in speaking English.

Research data and analysis

In collecting the data, the researcher used classroom observation, questionnaire and interview in order to examine the factors that cause the EFL learners in SMKN 2 Jember to have anxious in speaking English and also to explore the strategies are used by the students to cope their anxiety especially in speaking English. The focus of the observation was on the students' speaking anxiety when they are speaking English in class and trying to give responses to the teacher and class atmosphere. The researcher used the observation checklist in selecting the participant. The researcher used the questionnaire namely Foreign Language Anxiety Scale that is proposed by Horwitz (1986) and consists of 31 items to connect some backgrounds and descriptive data about students' anxiety. In addition, interview was done once to students in order to get further information related to the respondents' responses to the questionnaire and better understanding of sources and factors of anxiety and also how to cope the anxiety. The researcher used semi-structured interviews which was conducted during class breaks. Every participant was scheduled for an interview, depending on the participants' readiness. Each interview was last for about 10 to 15 minutes. The aim of interview was to clarify the contents of the questionnaire. **The data** of this research were analyzed by using the model of Miles and Huberman (1994) in analyzing the data. Those steps are data reduction, data display, and conclusion and verification.

Research results and discussion

This data collection process began with observation. The observation were made to 36 students of class X TKJ 1 (Computer and Network Engineering)at SMKN 2 Jember by observing the aspects of general avoidance consisting of showing carelessness, low levels of verbal production, lack of volunteering in class, etc. and aspects of physical action consisting of squirming, stuttering or stammering, displaying jittery behaviour, and conversational withdrawal.

The observations were carried out four times. Based on these observations, there were 3 students with the highest anxious level. They were mostly anxious in speaking activities such as speaking in front of the class, being called on by the teacher or waiting turn to speak. From the teachers' question, the students were worried about grammatical and pronunciation mistakes. Sometimes, they said to the teacher that they did not know how to pronounce and arrange the correct sentence to answer the teachers' question. It also revealed that students often laughed at student who made a mistake. Some students appeared to be anxious when their peers ridiculed them. Further, it also appeared that students might feel anxious when the teacher delivered a lesson. They felt uneasy when they did not understand the lesson. They talked on their own, focused on cellphones, joked with friends, while the teacher was not paying attention to noises, and only focused on some students who listened to her.

Concerning the three participants in this study, they tended to be passive and only active in certain circumstances such as when there were funny things in the class and when the teacher invited them to imitate what the teacher said in English. The passivity of the three participants in the English class was also very striking. It was triggered by each personal character such as FRS who was notoriously naughty in their class and often get a bad score. MRA who was uncommunicative and did not like to talk too much. Also, MFD who liked to talk too much with a friend while lessons were taking place. The findings also suggested several factors that possibly contribute to the students' anxiety in their

English class specifically in speaking. Those factors were not only come from the students but also from the teacher. The researcher found the sources of speaking English anxiety and how the students cope with it. The first factor of students' anxiety found in

this study was communication apprehension. As what Horwitz et al. (1986) explained that communication is a kind of shyness in communication. Furthermore, McCroskey (2001) defines communication apprehension as “fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person.” This symptom made FR passive and did not want to take the risk of speaking English much even though he was known as talkative individuals. This is in line with what was conveyed by Indrianty (2016), who explained that being passive and avoiding conversations using English is an indicator that students have experienced in communication apprehension. Also, based on the results of the observation, most of the students especially FR was getting worry for misunderstanding when communicating with the teacher. They also often experience to be nervous and confused when they speak English with their friends in front of the class, so they felt reluctant to speak English even if it was just answering the teachers’ questions.

Sometimes, students felt reluctant to speak English was because their friends laughed at them and it made them to be traumatic. The second factor of speaking anxiety which is also found in this study is test anxiety. It is the fear of failing in exam situations and unpleasant experiences that are held consciously or unconsciously by students in many situations (Horwitz and Young, 1991). In this case, the students felt worry to make mistake in language. They worried if they failed in taking language test. Besides, they also worried although they were well prepared. As argued by Wu and Chan (2004) “Students deal with test anxiety or a person who has to give a speech in front of the audiences will build up, such as negative thought toward test and have unreasonable opinion in the evaluative situation if he or she feels anxious”.

Based on the observation, when the teacher gave a speaking test which students can’t get any help from any sources, they rejected it. The students especially MFG and MRA asked to bring notes and chose to read it instead of remembered the conversation and practiced it in front of the class. It also showed several strategies that possibly overcome the students’ anxiety in speaking English. One of those strategies is avoiding eye contact. According to Gregersen (2003), avoiding making eye contact with the teacher is a typical non-verbal reaction of anxious students. It was noted in research observations that this behaviour is generally carried out by students when they are strongly anxious. It is

in line with what Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) claimed that sometimes when the lecturer asks questions, students do not look at him or her. The students used this strategy because it is the easiest way to do and got support from the environment where they were.

The next strategy used by the student is relaxation. The researcher found that the student used relaxation to cope with the speaking anxiety. Taking a deep breath was used to make the student relax and calm down in decreasing the feeling of anxiety during speaking performance. The student could keep control to face the anxiety. When students in a relaxed condition, it will help them explore their performance. The purpose of being calm and deep breathing was not to avoid anxiety, but just to take the edge off or help. Students will also be more relaxed if the teacher teaches with some fun activities. The last strategy used by the students is asking for teacher's help. This strategy does not seem to be used and ineffective for them because the teacher tended to give them nothing and asked them to find out the solutions by themselves.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion in the previous chapter, foreign language anxiety was experienced by some students. This result was the same as what the researcher assumed. Anxiety made students reluctant to speak English, and they perceived it as a traumatic tragedy because when they tried to speak English individually or in peers, their students laughed at them. Factors of speaking English anxiety found in this study were test anxiety and communication apprehension. Those two factors were dominant in causing students' fear and anxiety. Also, those were visible in classroom observation. Based on the results of interview, there were 3 strategies that used by the students to overcome their anxiety in speaking English. Each student had the different strategy based on their opinion. But, the students' strategies used to cope with their anxiety seem to be ineffective to reduce their anxiety. Thus, students expected the teacher to teach them with another activity which are fun, entertaining, and relaxing

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