



Students' Anxiety in Speaking English

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates students' anxiety in expressing their English in a speaking class. This study examines anxiety, and sources of anxiety when students speak English. This is a case study where data were obtained through interviews. Data were analyzed descriptively and interpreted to answer research questions. This study revealed that students experience two kinds of anxiety, the nature of anxiety and static anxiety. The findings also indicate that student anxiety in English classes was caused by lack of vocabulary and lack of preparation before they deliver their presentation in front of the class. To tackle those issues, lecturers should be more aware of students' anxiety in order to help students gain self-confidence to speak in English class.

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INTRODUCTION

"Speaking is one of the basic skills that everyone has, so everyone can communicate and interact with others. Nadia, H., Yansyah (2018). However, not everyone can speak well in front of the audiences especially in English". Since the late 19th century English has been referred as a global lingua franca. Moreover, English is the most widely used foreign language on the internet (80%) and for book publication with over 60 countries publish titles in English. Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world (Graddol, 2000: 4 - 9). According to Indrianty., S (2016) English is an official language of the United Nations and many other international organizations, including the International Olympic Committee. In fact, English is by far the most widely spoken language in the hospitality industry. That is why English is currently perceived as the language most often taught as a foreign language.

As Indrianty Septy (2016) argues that today, speaking can be a challenging task for many students because it needs interactions. The other four skills can be practiced alone, but for speaking, the students cannot really speak alone, that is why students should make every effort possible to find somebody to speak with. In line with this point, Nunan (2000:39) states that

speaking is one of the key aspects of learning a second or foreign language. In the context of speaking English, being able to speak to friends and even speak with foreigners, in their language which both of them understand is surely the goal of many learners of English. However, the biggest problem student of English face is to speak.

“Anxiety is feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry about potential negative outcomes or events” (Spielberger, 1983, as cited in Seinfeld et al, 2016). In line with this definition, Foreign Language anxiety can be assumed to be a distinct complex of self-perception, behavior, feeling, and belief related to using a foreign language in classroom communication. Since anxiety has been considered as a very important factor which affects the learning process, a great number of studies focusing on this research area has been undertaken since the 1970s. The major purpose of the study was to explore the causes of language anxiety.

This study was aimed to find out the factors that cause students’ anxiety of speaking English in the class. Additionally, investigating the students’ anxiety might contribute to students’ motivation to have more chances to use the target language in daily life and for academic purposes. Obtaining the data of students’ anxiety would give valuable input for teachers so that they are able to give the appropriate solution to overcome the anxiety and they could improve their teaching and encourage students to be able to speak without feeling anxious in speaking English inside or outside the classroom.

. “Anxiety is feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry about potential negative outcomes or events” (Spielberger, 1983, as cited in Seinfeld et al, 2016). Shri (2010) also stated that anxiety is a subjective feeling of unease, discomfort, apprehension or fearful concern accompanied by a host of autonomic and somatic manifestations. Horwitz et al. (1986) said that “anxiety is the subjective feeling of apprehension worry, even dread that make the learner has difficulty in concentrating, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitations”. Based on the definition of anxiety above, students’ reaction toward learning something is the main focus of anxiety source. An anxiety reaction may have big impedes at students to perform successfully in a foreign language class Horwitz et al. (1986). According to (Shri, 2010), anxiety is a normal, emotional, reasonable and expected response to real or potential danger. Moreover, “anxiety could happen when it is linked to academic situation, in exam time, even right students feel threatened” (Sarason, 1978). “Thus situation make the individual sees himself/ herself as incapable to handle task, and also the individual anxiety and fear of being lost their concentration. In other words, anxiety in people is varied in level, and it is associated with the anticipating situation, experiencing it, and recovering from it” (Sarason, 1978).

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) said that “there are three perspectives of anxiety in general as: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation specific anxiety”. The Trait and state anxiety was introduced by Catell and Scheier (1958 as cited in Grillon et al, 1993), they had defined trait anxiety as a kind of anxiety that seems to be stable and permanent which doesn’t easily change over time, it will happen for every situations. It depends on the personality of that person’s point of view. So, the Individuals with this kind of anxiety tend to be more nervous and more likely become anxious than those who do not have this kind of anxiety. The next type of anxiety that will happen is that static anxiety, this kind of anxiety is also known as “here-and-now” experience of anxiety as an emotional state. According to Muhlis (2014) the Individuals with this kind of anxiety will undergo anxious feeling during different occasions unlike trait anxiety which occurs almost every time. As (Macintyre & Gardner, 1994) explains, The state of anxiety occurs only under some certain and specific situations with ability to differentiate accurately threatening or non-threatening situations.

METHOD

This study used a case study as the research design of students’ anxiety in English speaking class, and the sources of anxiety. Therefore, this study was done in a small scale and would not try to make any generalization as general condition of the other students.

Research Setting and Participant

The instrument used to collect data was interviews. The participants were second-year students of English education in a speaking class. There were 17 students involved in this study. Of the 17 students, only 4 (four) students were selected as respondents for the interview.

Data Analysis

To answer research questions, data analysis in this study was carried out during the course research. Analysis and interpretation of ongoing data will be based on data from interviews in the class. Data from observations were analyzed descriptively. The analysis process begins with making a class interaction transcription. Then, the transcription is read repeatedly. During the reading process, researchers used coding activity by matching data with research questions. The coding processes are intended for break down data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate data comparison in and between these categories. (Maxwell, 1996: 78). Data from observations were analyzed to validate data from interviews with students. Analysis is based on anxiety encountered by students in speaking English which is the focus of this study. Data from interviews are transcribed, categorized and interpreted to answer the research question. In this sense, researchers categorize student comments into themes that have become the focus of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Language Anxiety

From interviews, it was found that there are two types of foreign languages anxiety; the nature of anxiety and static anxiety. Both types of anxiety occur in students majoring in English education.

Anxiety

The nature of anxiety is considered as a constant stage of anxiety. This type of anxiety is part of a person's character. Therefore, it is permanent, and it can hamper learning English. Based on observations, there were only four out of 17 students who experienced this type of anxiety. That student cannot deliver presentations in English and tend to be very nervous. As recognized in the following interview excerpts. "The nervousness that I experienced was like difficulty concentrating, stuttering / trembling voice, very fast heartbeat, dizziness and most importantly it was just going to faint". (Respondent# 4)

In addition, the students' facial expressions and gestures showed that he was worried and nervous. From observations, it is shown that this anxiety only occurs in four students. In line with this, Lucas (2009: 9) explains that person with this type of anxiety may be due to a mental disorder known as gloss phobia. This can be caused by a number of experiences in life, such as a traumatic event in the past, 'lack of socialization' of a child, where children cannot trust their own abilities, low self-esteem, and expectations of failure, sometimes because they are overly criticized by peers. He seems to have bad or traumatic experiences in English subjects or speaking in front of people like presentations. The above evidence is further confirmed by the students themselves in the following statement:

"The nervousness that I experience is more embarrassed to speak English, because I am not confident in the end I even stammer when speaking English, also with a little mastery of vocabulary". (Respondent#3)

The statement shows that students have a very negative attitude towards speaking in front of the other, regardless of what was assigned to him. In addition, it is also supported by McCroskey (1986) asserts that individuals are greeted with negative reactions from others.

In response to their efforts to communicate, develop a sense of staying calm. Thus, students with anxiety need to be treated properly to avoid worse effects. If the nature of anxiety remains untreated, students may begin to develop panic attacks and try to avoid it the subject. However, paying attention to learning factors need to be considered. As Horwitz (1991) contends that anxiety of speaking a certain language can affect student performance. Thus, this shows that the teacher can consciously create communicative and friendly atmosphere.

Static Anxiety

Static anxiety is associated with temporary changes in a person's emotional state due to an external factor. Static anxiety is a normal physiological response; feeling anxious finally subsides, and the person will then feel "normal" again (see Spielberger, 1983). Observation and

interviews were conducted with students, and it was shown that students tend to have this type of anxiety when they have to speak English. This type of anxiety is evident in observations and proven in interviews. Observations show that students experience anxiety especially in certain situations.

The first is anxiety in making presentations. Students feel that delivering presentations in English is not an easy task. Observations show that students tend to do things that are not important such as always holding their hand, holding a pen, reading their power point or handout, and "smiling". Most of students choose not to see their classmates and stand very close to their chairs. For example, their voices suddenly become softer, their hands tremble. Those symptoms were confirmed by students through interviews. The respondents made the following statements:

"When I feel nervous, I'm usually confused about what I want to do, but in the end my mind goes blank. For example, at the speaking test I have memorized the sentences I want to convey in front of the class, but because I am not confident in the end automatically everything I have prepared just disappears from my head, usually when I start to get nervous by overcoming it by sitting or moving my hands". (Respondent # 3)

The statements above reflect that when students are asked, they indicate some concern about their ability to express their thoughts and others are anxious about being the center of the attention, most are engaged in self-deprecation, reflecting one of the values of traditional culture, modesty or lack of confidence. Then, Learners feel more comfortable in pair work and personalized activities, but this is a relative concept; some activities seen as comfortable tasks, while others regarded it stressful (Cubukcu, 7: 2007). Moreover, fear of shame and of making mistakes are very common among students who think that the others might laugh at them and scorn them regarding their language proficiency.

Source of Foreign language Anxiety

There are three main sources of foreign language anxiety that the researcher found in the study; communication apprehension, anxiety of exam, and fear of negative evaluation.

Communication Anxiety

Communication anxiety is characterized by fear and anxiety about communicating with others (Horwitz et al, 1986). Meanwhile, Cubukcu (2007) states that the fear of communication in learning a foreign language comes from personal knowledge that a person may have difficulty in understanding others and making oneself understand. Thus, many people like to talk quietly in class. In short, it can be said that communication anxiety is channeled through avoidance and the effects of feeling anxious both mentally and physically. This source of anxiety was proven in observations and confirmed in interviews with the following statement:

"When I want to make a presentation, sometimes I feel like I want to pass out and want to finish quickly. Already so it feels like lazy so when told to go forward by the lecturer ". (Respondent#4)

Reflecting on the above findings, students' understanding of communication has created unrestrained anxiety in the body and inability to speak clearly which then turns to avoid speaking English. This is supported by (Scott & Rockwell, 1997, quoted in Campbell, 2006) states that people who worry about communication usually adopt avoidance and withdrawal. Therefore, they tend to engage in verbal communication.

Fear of Exam

Fear of exam refers to a type of performance anxiety resulted from a fear of failure. Test anxiety is believed to be one of the most important aspects of negative motivation. It can be defined as "unpleasant feeling or emotional state that has physiological and behavioral concomitants and that is experienced in formal testing or other evaluative situations" (Dusek 1980, cited in Cubukcu, 2007). A little nervousness can actually help students perform their best. This can be seen in one of the respondents' statement below.

" When in pronunciation, then even laughed at, when my grammar is not right, then made fun of by bringing my study program" English study program why grammar is covered ", When unable to speak English spontaneously because of limited vocabulary that is mastered, while the opponent talk have been waiting for what sentence we want to say ". (Respondent # 3)

The statement above indicates that the anxiety is highly associated with the fear of doing badly or as Horwitz (2007) explain that fear of failure can severely hampered one's performance. Test anxiety is found to have a detrimental effect on students' ability and confidence (Tanveer, 2007). The figure above shows how students' acceptance is influenced by two major concerns

when they have to face test situations. The case above is in a row with what Tanveer (2007) described this test anxiety is found to have a detrimental effect on students' ability and confidence. Although the effect is temporal but still it gives the students constant fear when they comes to test situations in every school subject.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Feeling afraid of negative evaluation, apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectation that others will evaluate them negatively is the third type of anxiety. It may occur in any situation. Learners may be sensitive to direct evaluation. The fear occurs in a situation where students have to speak in front of familiar audience or examiner. Students concern about opinion from important people such as teachers, friends, or parents. This can be clearly seen in a statement below

"Actually, I can already speak in English. But, I'm really nervous when I'm skilled in English. So that it becomes one of the causes of a feeling of lack of confidence. ". (Respondent #4)

"Fear of grammar is wrong, afraid of forgetting an vocabulary so that the English sentence that you want to say becomes muted, but of all that I am more afraid when my pronunciation is wrong when speaking, because one of the habits of Indonesians when making mistakes in English is to laugh at me and me often experience this". (Respondent # 3)

Liu (2007) explains that fear of negative evaluation is the anxiety associated with the learner's perception of how other onlookers; instructors, classmates or others; may negatively evaluate their language ability. However, students in this particular class are more concerned with their social relationship. Classmates' opinion may give negative effects on students' self-esteem and participation. The findings above seem to support research done by Tanveer (2007:39) that anxiety is intrinsic factor to language learning and significantly higher than other class anxieties (e.g. mathematics, research methodology, etc). The general finding concerning sources of anxiety students experience revealed that most of the students tend to be nervous in speaking English. As the data from the observation revealed, students speaking English in the class looked anxious and there were three types of anxiety. The three types of anxiety have similar effect on the students. However, they have differences in terms of initial or stimulating factor. In short, those language anxieties happened in learning one of the productive skills of English and it caused detrimental effects on students' learning motivation and level of participation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results, there were two types of anxiety, namely nature anxiety and situational anxiety. Nature anxiety is a part of a person character and hence it is permanent, and it can hinder language learning. State anxiety is a normal physiological response. When the anxiety subsides the person will give up then he feels "normal" again. Another type of anxiety, students' anxiety in expressing their language in front of class caused by three main sources anxiety, e.g. communication fear, fear of exam and fear of negative evaluation. This pressure of public speaking has created uncontrollable anxiety in the body and prevented the learner from speaking clearly. Finally the learner may avoid speaking in English. In the context of fear of exam, this anxiety was found to have a detrimental effect on student abilities and it downgrade self-confidence. In the same vein, the fear of negative evaluation, the fear occurs in situations where students should speak in front of a familiar or audience examiner. What's more, the interview data revealed a lack of vocabulary and lack of preparation also another source of student anxiety in speaking. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students experience anxiety in speaking class due to lack of vocabulary, lack of preparation, afraid of making mistakes, afraid of being laughed at by his friends.

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