

A STUDY ON STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study explains students' anxiety in speaking English. This study employs a qualitative research design. In collecting data, the researchers used interviews. There were three major phases of the data analysis, they were: data reduction, data display, and data verification. From the data analysis, the researchers came across some conclusions: first, the researchers found that the factors of students' anxiety in speaking English are: come from the teacher (threatening acts, incomprehensible input, and pressure). Second, it comes from the students (lack of knowledge, fear of negative evaluation, low self-esteem, and perfection of speech). Third, it comes from the environment (non-intensive English school and unsupportive classmates).

Keywords: Students' Anxiety, Speaking, and English

BACKGROUND

English is mostly used in this world for communication with other people. Wherever people travel, people will frequently see the sign and English advertisements. Crystal (2003:2) mentions that when someone is going to a hotel or a restaurant in a different country, people there could understand English and there would be some menus in English. It proves that English is highly significant in this era no matter where someone is or where someone is from. As long as they want to keep in touch with a larger amount of people beyond the country, English is always a need. Furthermore, English is used for increasing people's knowledge, creating a better life, and learning a new culture. To master English, learners should also learn the culture of the English of native speakers because they always use phrases or idioms. According to Mappewali (2019), to get a good understanding of English idioms, learners should learn the culture of where

the language comes from, in this case, it is the native speakers of English. The learners have to understand how the native speakers use the idiom daily to get the proper translation.

Almost all Indonesians and students from other countries face the same problems in learning English. Thus, Indonesians consider English as a foreign language because English is one of the most difficult languages to master. The Indonesian government, especially in facing ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), has been feeling the importance of English. Government and students must prepare for the MEA. One of the preparations to face AEC is learning English. One of the English language skills that the students should have is speaking skills.

Speaking is an essential tool for communicating. Living in the era of globalization, one must be able to speak English because it becomes a necessity to

build social relationships and create good communication with other people who come from different countries. Thus, improving the ability to speak English is very essential for Indonesian students who know that the ability to speak English well will make a big contribution to their future careers. Nevertheless, it is not an easy task. It needs a lot of practice and strong willpower to keep practicing. In line with this, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) state that speaking English is not easy because components like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, plus fluency, and comprehension need to be mastered by the speakers.

Through speaking, people can deliver their ideas, thoughts, opinions, and feelings in their ways. According to Brown (2001:267), speaking is an interactive way to construct meaning which involves producing, receiving, and processing the information, and presence of a speaker and listener. Speaking is a productive skill and cannot be separated from listening skills. If someone speaks, it means he/she produces the text and it has to have a meaning. Thus, someone, who is rarely able to speak or listen to English will feel isolated from English.

According to Alonso (2011), speaking is one of the most difficult skills to obtain for language learners. When speaking, it carries out grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, English learners have to compete with limited time to memorize the words, concerned about the intonation and pronunciation that sometimes interrupt the speaker. Therefore, it is sometimes unattainable to achieve a fluency level in speaking English.

Mostly, students in Indonesia have been learning to speak English from the secondary school until university. According to Nurwardani (2016), graduates of the English Education Study Program are expected to have adequate and relevant speaking skills of students and stakeholders

when they work in social, industry, scientific, and professional needs. However, most of the students feel it is difficult to achieve such demand.

Leong and Ahmadi (2017) mention that two factors can influence the learning of speaking. They are linguistic and non-linguistic factors. The linguistic factor includes vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and accuracy. Meanwhile, the non-linguistic factors include anxiety, shyness, fearfulness, and lack of confidence.

Based on preliminary observation, the researcher found that most of the fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program are anxious when speaking up in front of the class or answering the lecturers' questions. The researcher comes across a sign of anxiety through jittery, avoidance behavior, and less participation from the students. As a result, many of them become passive and silent in the class. If the students are continuously silent in the class, they will have less chance to practice and develop themselves. In other words, anxiety can reduce students' comprehension while receiving material.

Since anxiety can have serious effects on foreign language acquisition, it is important to find out the students' speaking anxiety. Therefore, the researchers are interested in investigating the factors of students' speaking anxiety in learning English more deeply.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

This qualitative research aimed at identifying and describing the anxiety in the oral skill of fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at the Muhammadiyah University of Palu. A qualitative method was chosen because this study provides an insight into the case of language anxiety. According to Creswell (2009:176), the most essential thing behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to

address the research to obtain that information. Therefore, the study case approach allows the researchers to study particular students in an attempt to find out the case of language anxiety.

This study used accidental sampling by asking students who want to become participants of the fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu. During the initial process with the students, the researchers explained the nature of the study and that all interviews were conducted in Bahasa as the students' first language, to elicit answers without limiting or inhibiting the students. Those who indicated a willingness to participate were scheduled for an interview.

In this study, the researchers used the interview guide. This interview was in direct face-to-face form or an in-depth interview with an open question. According to Bungin (2012), an in-depth interview is a process to obtain information for research by face-to-face questioning between the interviewer and informant or interviewee. In conducting the interview, the researchers asked the students who considered themselves to be anxious in English classrooms and were willing to be interviewed. The interview guide is adapted from Worde, Horwitz, and Price (2003) focusing on foreign language anxiety. The questions in the interview are listed as follow:

1. Would you like to tell me about your experience in an English-speaking class?
2. What problems did you face in expressing your idea?
3. Did you sometimes feel anxious in expressing your idea?
4. What makes you feel anxious?
5. How do you cope with your anxiety?

The obtained data from the interview were analyzed descriptively. In this technique of data analysis, the researchers only describe the factors of speaking

anxiety faced by the fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at the Muhammadiyah University of Palu.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), data analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity or major phases which follow the framework in qualitative analysis. They are data reduction, data display, and data verification. This study used descriptive analysis by classifying the discussion theme according to the obtained information from the respondents that become the research discussion and the result of the research.

In reducing data, the researchers chose the aspects that appear in the interview and should be minimized or fully aside for the research. Then, the researchers examined all the relevant sources for the description and themes of the research findings.

In the data display phase, the data were organized, and a compressed assembly of the information permits for conclusion drawing. The researchers display the reduced data to facilitate data interpretation. It was displayed in a table with the categories such as the factors contributing to speaking anxiety.

In data verification, the researchers drew meaning from the data in a display. The validation of the data was conducted by interview responses as many times as necessary to obtain the valid findings of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The data were gathered through interviews from the participants or students who were considered anxious in English speaking class. The table below is a data display from the interview. It showed what factors that might contribute to the students' anxiety.

Table 1. Contributing Factors to Anxiety

Contributing Factors to Anxiety	Signs
Threatening acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict or tense lecturers • Fewer smile lecturers • Blaming lecturers
Incomprehensible input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less explanation. • Speak too fast.
Pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfectionist lecturers • Too many demands • Too many tasks
Lack of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less vocabulary • Lack of grammar. • Less listening skill
Fear of negative evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afraid of making a mistake • Afraid of negative comments • Wrong answer • Unacceptable opinion
Low self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shy • Nervous • Friends have better English (insecure)
Should perfect while speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should understand the material
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afraid to talk • Too much noise • Shocked • Do not get used to the new people • Do not get used to the language

Discussion

The findings defined several factors that can contribute to students' anxiety in their English-speaking classes. It indicated that the factors were coming from teachers (threatening acts, incomprehensible input, pressure), students (lack of knowledge, fear

of negative evaluation, low self-esteem, should be perfect while speaking), and from the environment (come from non-intensive English school and friends are rarely using English). Based on the findings the factors that could contribute to students' anxiety can be classified as follows.

1. Teacher as Contributing Factor of Anxiety

• Threatening Acts

The lecturer who has less of a smile and shows a threatening face could make the students tense. It came from the 1st Interviewee that says, "If the lecturer is fun we can enjoy the class. But if the lecturer is killer, we will feel tense."

The lecturer sometimes blames the students when making a wrong pronunciation. It came from the 2nd Interviewee that says, "A lecturer used to say, "why did you pronounce it like that? You have to learn proper pronunciation!"

These kinds of comments create anxiety in students. They contribute to the students' fairness to speak. Therefore, teachers, lecturers, or English instructors need to give motivating comments to students.

• Incomprehensible Input

According to the students, less explanation can contribute to their anxiety when speaking English. They said that sometimes the lecturers give them less explanation which can make them unable to understand the material.

"I can't understand, because the explanation is less. Sometimes the lecturer only gives tasks." (2nd interviewee)

Moreover, there is a student who also mentioned that speaking too fast also is one of the factors that can contribute to her anxiety.

"...and the teachers sometimes speak too fast." (6th Interviewee).

As foreign language learners, students have limitations. One of the limitations is

the hardship to catch what a speaker pronounces. When a teacher or lecturer speaks fast, the students find it difficult to understand and it triggers their anxiety to respond or speak in English.

- Pressure

The students also think that they sometimes receive too many tasks. In addition, the lecturers sometimes want them to do presentations and storytelling each week and they have to be like the lecturers want.

“To be honest, there are some lecturers who push us to do what they want or a perfectionist teacher” (1st Interviewee).

Sometimes the lecturer wants us to give storytelling and the next meeting we have to do a presentation.” (4th Interviewee).

All teachers want their students to have a good ability in the subject they teach. But without realizing it, they give pressure on the students by giving too many assignments. This pressure then contributes to students’ anxiety to speak.

2. Students as Contributing Factors of Anxiety

- Lack of Knowledge

Lack of knowledge becomes the biggest problem that can contribute to the students’ anxiety. Almost all of them have this problem. The problems that they are facing are a lack of vocabulary, listening skills, and grammar.

From the interviewee:

“To be honest, it is hard to speak because of less vocabulary and second is the listening.” (1st Interviewee).

“less vocabulary, unstable listening skill, and nervous kak”. (2nd interviewee)

“When I am not able to express the sentence that I wanna say, I feel depressed. Because I don’t know to use the proper vocabulary and grammar.” (4th Interviewee)

“Sometimes the answer is already in my head but I cannot say it because of less vocabulary.” (5th Interviewee).

- Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is when they are concerned about the comments that other people give. It could be from the lecturers or friends in the class. It also can make the students choose to be silent rather than to speak up just to avoid mistakes.

“Sometimes I am afraid if what I say is wrong, also I am afraid if my friends could not accept my opinion.”

- Low Self-esteem

A lot of the students also said they have problems with shyness. It is because they think that other people are good at speaking English but they are not. Some students sometimes compare themselves with their friends or seniors who are already good at speaking English.

“I think my friends can speak English but I think I am not.”

- Should Speak Perfect

Another aspect that the student believes contributes to their anxiety is to be perfect while speaking. They think that they have to speak every time with the correct speech. Thus, they think too much before saying something.

“Sometimes if we speak we have to master what we say to avoid friends’ laugh.” (2nd Interviewee).

Perceiving others’ mistakes as a laughingstock is one of the bad habits of teenagers nowadays. Afraid of becoming the laughing stocks makes the students raise anxiety in speaking.

3. Environment as Contributing Factors to Anxiety

- From Non-intensive English School

Some students believe that the environment also can influence or contribute to their speaking anxiety.

Students sometimes who come from non-intensive English schools when immersed in an English-speaking environment will have problems with their speaking ability because, from high school, they were in a less English environment.

“Shocked, because I was from madrasah, here is full English but fortunately I have at least a little vocabulary.” (5th Interviewee).

- **Unsupportive Classmates**

In addition, there is a student who thinks that they are not able to speak because they are in an unsupportive environment. For instance, they have no people to talk to in the class or very rarely her friends to speak English in the class.

"Sometimes in the class, my friends rarely use English so that I don't get used to speaking English." (3rd Interviewee).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Mostly, students who are entering university do not have preparation, especially in English knowledge. The students at least have English knowledge since they are in high school. If they had prepared earlier, they could have smoothly received the material in the class. The students have to realize that to be in an English Education Study Program, at least they have ever been in an English center or course before entering the university because the material and the environment at the English Education Study Program Faculty will be in English. Many students encounter problems in speaking English, mostly not all about anxiety, but tend to be less knowledgeable. If the students have mastered the four English skills, they will not encounter any problems in the class or the English environment. The English course that almost all students obtain from school sometimes is not enough for students because generally they only have it once a week. Thus, whoever wants to enroll

in the English Education Study Program, at least already obtain an English certificate from any courses as their capital to become an English Education Student.

In the research, the researchers found that three factors can contribute to the students' anxiety. They are factors

come from Teachers (threatening acts, Incomprehensible input, and pressure), factors come from students (lack of knowledge, fear of negative evaluation, low self-esteem, and should perfect while speaking) and factors come from the environment.

Suggestion

Almost all students have anxiety. Anxiety is the problem of psychology and emotions. People who are in a good mood when learning will obtain much knowledge. Thus, the teacher should make the class situation more fun and become less strict with the students. Furthermore, the students have to know what to do if they consider themselves have anxiety such as always using self-positive talk that making mistakes is good, giving rewards to the students after completing a certain task when speaking up, pretending that it is an informal chat, and to write down anything that could contribute the anxiety and let the teacher knows.

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