

AN EXPLORATION OF INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING ANXIETY

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Abstract

This research reports the factors that trigger Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety as perceived by Indonesian EFL learners. The qualitative method was employed in this research. The participants of this research were the 33 Indonesian EFL learners from the class X IPS 3 of SMAN 1 Pandeglang, year academic 2019-2020. The initial process of collecting the data was by spreading a questionnaire known as Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). Then it was followed by an in-depth interview for the ten students with high anxiety levels based on their FLCAS Score. The data was then analysed through three steps developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The triangulation technique was used to strengthen this research's credibility. This research found that the factors that could trigger students' anxiety are divided into two. The first is teacher-related factors such as assertive teaching and the teacher's calling method. The second is student-related factors such as their negative view of English, being mocked by friends, fear of making mistakes, self-confidence, and inadequate support to practice English speaking. To reduce anxiety, students need to be exposed to the target language as often as possible and get used to it to improve their confidence in speaking English. In addition, the teacher should always be able to find a way to make an entertaining and less tense classroom environment.

Keywords: EFL learners, foreign language speaking anxiety, student anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Speaking English is the critical expertise that ought to be practiced by students for communication. Speaking helps students to improve their English skills. They can convey their opinions; feelings; talk and discuss orally using the target language and demonstrate the function of language. Furthermore, speaking English will help students to broaden their world and easily connect them to people from abroad since it is an international language.

According to Brown (cited in Ghermaoui, 2019), there are these following aspects or components that can be considered to measure students' speaking ability: (a) pronunciation;

(b) fluency; (c) vocabulary; (d) grammar; (e) discourse features (cohesion, sociolinguistics appropriateness, etc); (f) Task (accomplishing the objective of the task is closely dependent on comprehension). Speaking should be taught not only theoretically, but also practically through classroom activities. All students need to be actively involved and engaged within the interaction that made inside the classroom (Afriani & Utami, 2021). In addition, Brown (2001, pp. 271-274) stated that “there are six kinds of speaking activities in a classroom, they are: (a) imitative; (b) intensive; (c) responsive; (d) transactional; (e) interpersonal; and (f) extensive”.

However, “Speaking is assumed to be the most stressful among the four language skills” (Hauck & Hurd, 2005; Liu, 2009; Öztürk and Gürbüz, 2014; Young, 1992; Akkakoson, 2016; Sidik, et. al. 2021; Riswanto, et. al., 2022). The statement above is in line with the result phenomenon that found by the researchers through the preliminary observation in the class X IPS 3 of SMAN 1 Pandeglang. It stated that amongst the four language skills of English, speaking skill is regarded as the most agitating activity and make them anxious. Speaking is a productive activity where students are required to produce speech as the output, while at the same time their friends and the teacher are watching their performance. The students’ speaking apprehension can be possibly caused by their worries and anxieties since they do not have enough vocabularies in mind. Thornburry (2005) states that the causes which can increase to talk incorrectly and creates an intense sense of anxiety are the needs of vocabularies, improper grammar, and worries of mistakes.

The term Language Anxiety and Foreign Language Anxiety are commonly used related to language performance, language learning, and use. As mentioned by Brown (1991, p. 80), foreign language anxiety is “a feeling of intimidation and inadequacy over the prospect of learning a foreign language”. Furthermore, consistent with Gardner and MacIntyre, as cited in Oxford (1999, p. 60), “It is fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the target language”. Moreover, Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 127), suggested a conceptual establishment of foreign language anxiety. They stated that foreign language anxiety appears in the type of anxiety as follows: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Furthermore, Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 128) also acknowledge that foreign language anxiety is not only about the combination of those types of anxiety related to foreign language learning context. They also considered that, “foreign language anxiety as a distinct complex of self- perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”.

Anxiety can appear out of many different sources. It in some cases comes from classroom exercises and strategies which related to instructors informational and demands. For instance, speaking activities usually shows up as one of the most nerve wrecking activities in EFL learning and cited by learners as the most anxiety provoking cause. Horwitz et al. (1986) found that speaking within the foreign language as the foremost anxiety-producing experience. In addition, Koch and Terrell as cited in Oxford (1999) supported that oral dramas and oral presentation in front of the classroom are the activities that produce anxiety the most. They also noted that being called on to respond orally can produce anxiety. They are also afraid of being judged and negatively evaluated by the teac

her and peers which exposed their lacks. Furthermore, in some cases students often laughed at their friends who made a mistake. They fear of making themselves look stupid in public so they would rather to be silent than speak to master their English. To conclude, the finding from Price (1991), found that fear of being laughed at by other is one of the greatest sources of anxiety.

Besides the aforementioned factors, sometimes anxiety also comes from the students themselves. One is by believing that foreign language learning is hard. For example, students believe that they should be able to speak flawlessly. While others think that English is not an easy subject. This kind of beliefs can lead to language anxiety. Horwitz (1986, p. 127) noted that “certain beliefs about language learning also contribute to the students’ tension and frustration in the classroom”. This also shows that low self-confidence can produce anxiety. Price (1991) noted that students with anxiety believed their language skills were weaker than any other students.

The previous research in this field indicates that emotions like anxiety really affects students’ performance within the process of learning English and speaking skill is the one that contributes the most in making students feeling anxious. However, the researchers would like to know more about what factors triggering students’ anxiety especially in speaking English. Hence, the researchers intended to examine what factors triggering the anxiety in order to get better and deeper understanding of the issue regarding English speaking anxiety.

METHOD

The method that the researchers employed in this study is the qualitative method with case study approach. The researchers decided to choose this method in order to seek an understanding of the specific phenomenon of foreign language speaking anxiety as perceived by the class X IPS 3 of SMAN 1 Pandeglang year academic 2019-2020. Based on Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), case study is a qualitative study approach that studies a single individual, *Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching*
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group, or important example to formulate interpretations to the specific case or to provide useful generalization. The initial participants of this research were the 33 Indonesian EFL learners from the designated class, who were asked to fill out a form of questionnaire regarding Foreign Language Anxiety Scale. The final participants to be interviewed further were narrowed to ten. They were students who tend to have the high level of anxiety in English class based on the result of the given questionnaire.

The initial process in collecting the data was by spreading questionnaire known as Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and adapted it into *Bahasa Indonesia* in order to avoid confusion among students. The students can choose the respond related to the statements from strongly agree to strongly disagree according to their own experience and point of view. Five-point Likert scale is used in scoring: 5=Strongly Agree; 4= Agree; 3= Neutral; 2= Disagree; and 1= Strongly Disagree and reversed value for the negatively worded statements (statements number 2,5,8,11,14,18,22,28, and 32). The total score will range from 33 to 165 (Aida, 1994. Cited from Salehi and Marefat, 2014, pp. 933-934). The higher score they get the higher anxiety they have. High scores indicate how strongly agree they are with each statement.

Students that indicate having the high level language anxiety based on the FLCAS score were asked if they feel anxious in English class, especially when they were being asked to speak up. This interview was aimed to gather the thoughts and reasons of the students who consider themselves to be anxious in English-speaking class. Due to Covid-19 pandemic all the teaching and learning process were done online and schools are closed. Thus, all the interview processes with the students were done through calls and text messages. Besides the students, the English teacher was also interviewed in order to get better understanding and result more accurately since the person who knows better about the students is the teacher of the class.

The data then analyzed through three steps developed by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion. Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, classifies, directs, get rid of unnecessary, and organize data in such a way that the final conclusions can be drawn and verified. The big amount of data needs to be systematic and well-organized and somehow significantly reduced which only relevant data source was used. Thus, the reduced data will be displayed in order to help the researchers for the data interpretation. Furthermore, on drawing a conclusion, it involves looking and stepping back to consider what analyzed data mean and to evaluate their implication and relation to the research question. In this stage, the researchers drew meaning from the data in a display.

As an effort to validate the result of this research, methodological triangulation was used by involving more than one methods to gather the data. The researchers investigated multiple sources, such as the results of the questionnaire and interview responses from the students and teacher as many times as necessary to attain the credible findings of this study and the data can really be accounted for. Furthermore, the findings and discussion are reported in verbatim quotes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Students' Levels of Speaking Anxiety

The researchers intended to find which students have the highest speaking anxiety level in order to be interviewed next. This is done as an effort to purposefully choosing the best respondents of the total participants that could provide the best answers. To interpret the score, the researchers used the categories suggested by Krinis as cited in Gerencheal (2016). The number of students in X IPS 3 and their anxiety levels are provided in this following table:

Table 1. Students' anxiety level suggested by Krinis as cited in Gerencheal (2016)

Total Score	Number of Students	Percentage	Foreign Language Anxiety Level
33-82	1	3.03%	Very Low Anxiety
83-89	2	6.06%	Moderately Low Anxiety
90-98	4	12.12%	Moderate Anxiety
99-108	4	12.12%	Moderately High Anxiety
109-165	22	66.67%	High Anxiety

With the total of 33 students who turned in the questionnaire, the researchers got the result as displayed on the table above. The lowest score was 80 which fell into very low anxiety category and the highest score was 135 which fell into high anxiety category. The results showed that the majority of the students in X IPS 3 have the high anxiety level with 66.67% of the population, and the rest are in moderate high to very low anxiety. Moreover, the researchers finally got to sort out the ten students with the high anxiety level, and they were willing to be interviewed.

The Result of the Students' Interview**Table 2. Students' interview results**

Interviewee	Speaking Anxiety Factors as Reported by the Interviewees
Student 1	Different Pronunciation Suddenly being called by the teacher to speak up Brains went blank and forgot what to say Low self-confidence Deficient vocabulary Firm way of teaching and demands students to always right
Student 2	Confusing grammar Deficient vocabulary Performing alone Different Pronunciation Laughed by classmates Fear of making mistakes and directly being corrected
Student 3	Students' negative views towards English Firm way of teaching that leads into tense classroom environment Deficient vocabulary Inadequate medium and support to practice English speaking
Student 4	Students' negative views towards English Low self-confidence Fear of making mistakes and getting negative reaction Ruined mood Inadequate medium and support to practice English speaking
Student 5	Students' negative views towards English Intense stare from teacher Fear of making mistakes Mocked by friends Inadequate medium and support to practice English speaking
Student 6	Difficult pronunciation Laughed by classmates Fear of making mistakes if the teacher is being too serious Deficient vocabulary
Student 7	Students' negative views towards English Difficult to utter long words Fear of making mistakes Firm way of teaching Deficient vocabulary
Student 8	Complicated pronunciation Fear of making mistake Laughed by classmates Fierce teacher Deficient vocabulary
Student 9	Complicated grammar Low self-confidence, thinking that she is not fluent enough Fear of making mistakes People's awareness towards her mistake Serious teacher
Student 10	Jittery behavior Fear of making mistake Teacher's unpleasant reaction Deficient vocabulary
Teacher	English as Foreign Language Lack of English background knowledge Fear of making mistake in grammar and pronunciation.

Discussion

The findings provided various sources of Foreign Language Anxiety as experienced by the students of class X IPS 3 in their English-speaking class. It could be seen that those anxiety provoking factors come from both sides the students and the teacher. According to

the findings that have been obtained through questionnaire and interview, the factors could be identified as follows:



Figure 1. Indonesian EFL Learners' Speaking Anxiety

A. Teacher Related Factors of FLA

1. Assertive Teaching

One of the teacher related factors effecting to students' anxiety as reported by most participant, is that the assertive way of teaching could lead into a tense classroom environment that made them feel anxious to speak. They got nervous when the teacher was being too assertive and demanding on them. As shown in this interview result:

R: While you are speaking, who is most likely to make you feel nervous?

M: The first is myself since I am not really confident, then the teacher cause I am too afraid of my English teacher

R: You said that you are too afraid of your English teacher, what makes you feel so?

M: Not that afraid, it is just the teacher is too firm and she wants the students to always pronounce English correctly. (From interview 1)

The result above shows that the teacher's demand of a correct answer from her students will make the students feel afraid and nervous. Especially to those students who are not really confident with their English skill, they will be afraid to speak up since the teacher might directly correct them when they mispronounce English. This result is in line with the questionnaire statement number 19 of the FLCAS (I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make) with 51.5% of the students responded agree to this statement.

2. Teacher's Method of Calling

Another teacher-related anxiety factor is the teacher's method of calling. Some participants stated that they would feel really startled when the teacher randomly chose one of them to speak up or answer a question individually. One of them reported that she would even forget things to say due to her anxiety. While the other one added that he would prefer

to perform with friends rather than alone. In addition, this factor is in line with the questionnaire number 12 (In English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know) with 72.9% of students responded agree to this statement, and then the questionnaire number 16 (Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it) with 82% of students responded agree to this statement.

Furthermore, this factor is similar with the result from William and Andrade (2008) that said random selection procedure used by the teacher to call the students is cited as one of the situations that trigger anxiety. The students felt anxious since they had no idea when will their turn of being called out. As a solution to this factor, the teacher may tell the students in advance to memorize certain topics that are going to be asked or discussed so the students at least have prepared something in mind.

B. Students Related Factors of FLA

1. Students' Negative Views toward English

The result regarding the students' views toward English has been collected through the interviews. Some participants showed negative attitudes toward learning English by believing that learning English is difficult, while some others showed positive attitude by saying that learning English could be pleasing. However, despite with some of the positive reaction from the participants, anxiety is still appeared. It is proven by the result of the questionnaire that shows such a big part of the class population have high anxiety level. The percentage of students who were considered having high level of anxiety reached 66.67% and the percentage of students with moderately high anxiety reached 12.12%. Moreover, there were 12.12% of the students considered having moderate anxiety, 6.06% with moderately low anxiety, and 3.03% with very low anxiety. (See Table 1)

Meanwhile, based on the teacher interview, students who liked to expose themselves with English, it could be from English songs or movies would have less anxiety than those who are never exposed at all. This following interview data shows the situation:

R: Do you see any different perceptions among students regarding English language? For instance, there are students who like English, and there also some who do not. Do students who like English will have less anxiety and those students who do not will have higher anxiety?

T: well in that case, there must be a deeper research, but in my general point of view, those who are used to listen, and then write or use English terms, they will have lower anxiety than those who never get exposed by English at all. Because when they were frightened, I asked them "Why? Have you ever listened to English songs?" "No Ma'am" so the fright of those who never feel comfortable with English is because they feel like they never listen or use it. English is like something new to them. (From interview 11).

Similar with the result by some previous researchers, students with high anxiety

appear to hold negative thoughts about themselves, low perceived self-worth and erroneous beliefs based upon their self-degradation (Tobias, 1986. cited in MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 297; Tanveer, 2007).

2. Mocked by Friends

Mocked by friends was reported as one of the major sources of anxiety. Most of the interviewees stated that the other classmates showed unpleasant manner as if unintentionally making errors in speaking English is something that they could laugh at. They confessed that their classmates often laughed, mocked, and even shouted at them but not in a motivating way. This situation is shown in the interview data below:

R: What do you feel when you have speaking assignment and required to speak English)

NZ: My heart was pounding, nervous and something like that, especially when I needed to speak then my friends heard that I pronounced it wrong, I got shouted at. (From interview 5)

R: According to you, how was people's reaction when you make a mistake?

I: I was being laughed at. (From interview 8)

In line with the result above, the finding from Mustachim (2014) also stated that ridiculed by peers is one of a great source of anxiety that comes from students. Consistent with what Oxford added that ridicule is one of the essential matters regarding language anxiety (cited from Mustachim, 2014). As an effort to solve this problem, the teacher can give a correction in a positive way without creating anxiety in the students. The teacher might be *modelling* students' answers by repeating the correct form of what the student is trying to say (Young, 1991, cited from Occhipinti, 2009). By demonstrating the correct answer together, the students will receive the right input without being offended and ridiculed in front of the others.

3. Fear of Making Mistake

Another source of the students' anxiety is fear of making mistake. Beside the negative reaction they possibly get when they make mistake, this fear is also due to their poor grammar, deficient vocabulary, and inability to pronounce the words of the target language correctly. These following results answered by interviewees regarding this matter:

R: According to you, is speaking English difficult or easy?

F: Neither easy nor difficult

R: What kind of difficulty that you feel so far?

F: Confusing grammar and vocabularies. (From interview 2)

The interview result above is in consistent with the questionnaire number 30 (I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English) since grammar is defined as the collection of rules dealing with the sentence structure and tenses. This

questionnaire earned 48.5% students who responded agree to this statement.

Furthermore, some students claimed that they could not completely understand English if they do not remember the exact meaning of every vocabulary. They also sometimes forgot the vocabularies they already knew before. It makes them feel doubtful to speak.

R: How about limited vocabulary? Does it also affect your speaking performance?

SP: Yes Miss, it really does. Sometimes when we wanted to speak English we often forgot the vocabularies, so when it was our time to answer we went silent. (From interview 6)

In addition, another issue regarding students' mistake is their inability to Pronounce English correctly. They admitted that it was hard to pronounce some English words especially the long ones. They also added that English pronunciation could be completely different to what they were written. This interview data below describes the situation:

R: Which part of difficulty that makes you feel hard while speaking?

A: When I have to say long words, it was hard to say them, Miss. (From interview 7)

R: Is speaking English is hard? If yes, which part that makes it hard?

F: It is hard, the pronunciation that is different with what it is written. (From interview 2)

Supporting the data above, the teacher also agreed that one of the factors that cause anxiety to her students is their fear of making mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. It is due to English itself as a foreign language and the insufficient exposure of English during the students' early stage of learning. The result of the interview with the teacher below shows that situation:

T: ...Doubtful feeling, fear, and awkwardness were existed within those who never speak English. Not only while performing in front, but when they were simply being asked, they will be afraid. They even often said something like "Ma'am, hope It is okay if I make mistake" in bahasa Indonesia, so they would say something like that beforehand.

R: do you think the cause of their anxiety?

T: Well in English actually the first one is because it is a foreign language. The second one is that students even since they were in Junior High School, they feel that they are still lacking in grammar. They are afraid that they might mess up the words' order. Then the main one is mispronunciation. In English it is often that the written form and the utterance are different. Thus, many of them are afraid that they might pronounce it wrong. So, there are those three causes. However, everything is still started from English as a foreign language, not second or first language. (From interview 11).

This finding is similar with Herwanto (2013) that said some major mistakes the students made during their speaking performance that could trigger anxiety are pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

4. Self- confidence

In addition to the mentioned speaking anxiety factors above, the next one is the students' self-confidence regarding their English skill. Some interviewees reported that they

had inferior self-confidence to speak English. This was also the cause of their nervousness while performing. The situation is described in these following interview results:

R: you are speaking, who is most likely to make you nervous?

M: The first is myself since I am not confident, then the teacher. (From interview 1)

R: What do you feel when you speaking assignment or being asked to speak English?

K: lack of confidence, nervous

R: Who is most likely to make you nervous while speaking, for example performing in front of class?

K: Myself, I feel like my speaking is not fluent enough. (From interview 9)

The result is in line with the questionnaire number 1 (I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English) with 66.7% students responded agree to this statement. They thought they were not fluent enough. This kind of thought prevented them to confidently speak a foreign language. Nevertheless, the researchers thinks that it is better for the students to set aside their insecurities regarding their fluency in speaking foreign language. They are just EFL learners who did not acquire English since birth, and English is regarded as a foreign language. Therefore, students should not feel discouraged if they are not able to speak English perfectly. As they stated on the interview, in a total of ten respondents, eight of them started learning English when they entered elementary school, one respondent started learning English when she entered Junior high school and last respondent started learning English when she entered kindergarten.

In order to improve the learners' confidence, they are expected to use English as often as possible in a natural conversation without being corrected. For example, responding to a friend by saying short words such as "really?" "yes" "no" in a right context could help them make a good progress. In addition, required to speak English while asking permission to go the toilet or entering the class will help them improve too since they keep saying the same phrases everyday or every time they need.

5. Inadequate Support to Practice English Speaking

The last factor that the researchers has examined from the interview is the students' chance to master their speaking. They stated that they barely practice English speaking outside class. In other words, they would not casually speak English unless they were told to. This happened due to their limited medium and support to practice. None of the interviewees take extra lesson in speaking. The least thing that they have done was practicing on their own at home. However, it was still not enough to make them get used to speak English.

R: Beside school, is there any other place for you to learn English, especially speaking?

NZ: Emm to be honest to seriously learn English, none (From interview 5)

R: Beside school, is there any other place for you to learn English, especially speaking?

N: no, it was only in school. The best thing I could do was watching YouTube on how to learn English. (From interview 3)

Furthermore, this result is similar with the one that has been found on Herwanto (2013) that stated the limited exposure as one of the anxiety factors. The main English class did not give the students enough opportunity to master their English skill. The practical solution that can be provided for this problem is that students can try to join an extra lesson or extracurricular that will help them improve their English skill especially in communication. Students can join English Debating Club that the school has. There they can get the opportunity to communicate in English often and even in a more advanced level.

CONCLUSION

This research found some issues regarding to the factors that trigger anxiety in a foreign language speaking class. The factors are divided into two: teacher related factors and students related factors. Teacher related factors on FLA are the factors that come from teacher as cited by students to be the major source of anxiety. The first teacher related factor on FLA is the firm way of teaching. It is about how the teacher handling the class and how she creates a classroom environment. Students reported that they would feel uncomfortable and anxious in a tense classroom environment, when the teacher was being too firm and serious. The second teacher related factor on FLA is the teacher's method of calling her students. Students would be startled when the teacher suddenly called and demanded them to speak individually.

Furthermore, beside the teacher related factors on FLA, there are also factors that trigger students' anxiety redundancy. The first factor is the students' view towards English. Some students admitted that English is difficult, and some said English could be pleasing sometimes. Those students who think that English is difficult will most likely get anxious during an English class. The second factor is mocked by friends. It is about their reaction to each other when someone made a mistake during English speaking, they would laugh. The third factor is fear of making mistake due to their poor grammar, lack of vocabularies, and inability to pronounce the words of the target language correctly. The fourth factor is self-confidence. Students believed that they are not fluent enough while speaking, so that is why they would feel afraid and doubtful to speak. The last one is the inadequate support to practice English speaking. Students reported that they do not have any other places to practice English other than their main class.

According to the result of this research, there are several suggestions that can be proposed to help reduce anxiety of EFL learners. Learners should be aware about language anxiety factors that are appeared. They should be able to identify the source of their trouble that interrupts their speaking ability. By knowing their own lacks in speaking foreign

language, they are expected to discover the best strategy on how to cope and deal with it. In addition, students need to be exposed to the target language as often as possible. Therefore, eventually, they can get used to it. Once they get used to it, their confidence in speaking the target language will be improved.

Furthermore, the next suggestions are for the teacher. The teacher should always be able to find a way to make a better classroom environment. The classroom environment that is comfortable for learners which is entertaining and less tense. It will also be good if the teacher is able to maintain the learners' good mood. If the situation does not feel great, the teacher could do ice breaking activities or some games to regain the students' excitement. In addition, teacher is expected to always encourage every learner for their effort to learn English, despite they might still make some mistake during the process, but they are still worth to be appreciated.

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