

AN ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENTS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING ANXIETY AT A
PRIVATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN INDONESIA

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Article History:

Accepted November 2023;
Revised December 2024;
Approved February 2024.

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to find the factors, types, and the level of students' anxiety in speaking English at a private senior high school in Indonesia. This research employed qualitative research method with case study design. The participants were 10 students who felt anxious while speaking English. The data was collected through interview and observation. The result of this research showed that there were three factors of anxiety that students faced those were linguistics, psychology, and external factors. From linguistics factor inadequate vocabulary, lack of grammatical understanding, and inadequate pronunciation were the main factors that hindered students to speak. For psychology factor, nervous, shy, and lack of self-confidence were the significant one. While for the external factors, fear of negative evaluation, fear of making mistakes, and lack of preparation were the most factors that hindered students' to speak English. Due to the dominant factors that hindered by the students was the external factor, the researcher formulated that the types of students' speaking anxiety categorized into state anxiety, which rings a bell as a temporary emotional condition characterized by apprehension, tension, and fear about a particular situation outside. Moreover, for the result of the students' speaking anxiety level in this private senior high school was categorized into mild anxiety.

Keywords: anxiety, private senior high school, speaking

INTRODUCTION

The language we use to communicate with one another can be spoken or written or even both. People all over the world deliver information and let others know what the speaker is talking about when they speak. Speaking is one of the most important skills to be mastered by students of English as a foreign Language (EFL) (Harmer, 2007 p.38). Students can tell listeners what they want to say by speaking. The successful language learner is not accessible to students if they do not have the desire to speak English. Besides, speaking can contain the structure of the rhetoric that could make someone feel afraid of speaking because speaking has many elements that must be mastered (Noermanzah, 2020).

Irsyad & Narius (2013) also argued that one of the language skills that must be mastered by students in learning of foreign language is speaking, besides listening, reading, and writing. Other English language skills can be improved independently. However, for speaking, students cannot speak by themselves, and they have to find someone who can speak to them to achieve their speaking skills (Indrianty, 2016). One of the goals of learning English is to be able to speak it well, but every student has different courage and abilities. When a student tries to speak English but is nervous or afraid of making a mistake, or when they observe a friend speaking fluently but is unconfident or upset by their English-speaking ability, both situations' present challenges. The condition where students face these challenges it called anxiety (Darmawati, 2017).

Anxious situations can be seen when someone feels nervous, worried, and afraid. People struggle, tremble, perspire, and our hearts beat quickly (Tobias in Ansari, 2015). A lack of vocabulary, incorrect grammar, and fears of making mistakes are some of the factors that can lead to speaking failure and acute anxiety. In addition, Ohata (2005) said that anxiety is brought on by anxiety about oneself and others. Beliefs about language learning held by learners, beliefs of teachers regarding language instruction, procedures for classrooms, actions taken by teachers and students, and language testing.

Passer and Smith (2009) stated that anxiety as a state of tension and apprehension as a natural response to perceived threat. Anxious students feel uncomfortable when communicating in the L2 and the inability to express oneself may lead to frustration since their knowledge of the new language is limited and they cannot control the situation (Horwitz, 1986 cited in Toubot et al., 2018). Juhanna in Izumi (2017) stated that very limited chances to practice can be the causes of no confidence, shyness, and silence that impede natural communication. In many cases, they may have an anxiety reaction which impedes their ability to perform successfully in a foreign language class (Horwitz, 1986 cited in Toubot et al., 2018). Students who want to be successful in speaking English must get rid of anxiety when speaking English, and think that they can be successful in speaking English.

Understanding of Speaking

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Burns & Joyce, 1997 in Torkey, 2006). Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. Another definition of speaking from Richards and Renandya (2002, p. 204) states that effective oral communication requires the ability to use the

language appropriately in social interactions that involves not only verbal communication but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as pitch, stress, and intonation. Moreover, non-linguistic elements such as gestures, body language, and expressions are needed in conveying messages directly without any accompanying speech.

Based on the definition above, the researcher can conclude that speaking is always related to communication. Speaking itself can state the skill to use the language accurately to express meaning in order to transfer or to get knowledge and information from other people in the whole life situation.

Concept of Anxiety

Anxiety, according to Chaplin (2006), is a combination of fear and worry about future emotions without a specific cause. Anxiety is the feeling of fear and anxiety about something that will happen in the future despite the absence of any obvious cause for concern. Anxiety, as defined by Nevid et al. (2005), is characterized by physical dependence, unpleasant tension, and anticipation. A state of worry that bad things will happen is called apprehension. This indicates that anxiety is a state in which a person is physically dependent due to an unpleasant sense of tension and a fear that bad things will happen.

Freud (Feist & Feist, 2008) anxiety is an emotionally disagreeable condition and is very and deeply felt in its power, accompanied by a physical sensation that warns a person against an approaching danger. This unpleasant feeling is usually vague and difficult to ascertain but always felt. This indicates that anxiety is a negative condition that causes a person to feel certain emotions, some of which become so strong that a person experiences physical sensation. Durand & Barlow (2006) defines anxiety as a state of future oriented mood characterized by anxiety because individuals cannot predict and control events to come. It means that anxiety is a feeling of worry with the circumstances to come. The researcher can draw the conclusion, based on the preceding explanation, that anxiety is a negative condition that causes fear, tension, and worry about something bad that makes a person unable to effectively communicate with a large audience.

Types of anxiety

Spielberger (1983) divides anxiety into two categories: state anxiety and trait anxiety. The trait anxiety is described as the individual's capability to perceive different situations from the environment like danger and threat. On the other hand, state anxiety is described as the perception of an individual's emotional situation. State anxiety is a type of anxiety that refers more to how someone feels when they feel a threat or danger and this anxiety is considered temporary. A person with state anxiety shows anxiety only under circumstances, such as before an exam. Besides, trait anxiety, this is usually felt as a feeling of people in typical situations experienced by everyone every day.

According to Ellis (1994 cited in Indrianty, 2016.), anxiety can be divided into three types. Namely: trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety is a more permanent predisposition to be anxious". It is best viewed as an aspect of personality. State anxiety is nervousness or tension now in response to some outside stimulus. It occurs because learners are

exposed to a particular situation or event that is stressful to them. And situation-specific anxiety can be seen as a subcategory of trait anxiety experienced at a given context. Thus, language anxiety can be included in situation specific anxiety.

Levels of Anxiety in Communication

Basavanthappa (2007) in Erdina, N. (2020) stated that there are some levels of anxiety such as a mild level of anxiety, a moderate level of anxiety, severe level of anxiety, and panic level of anxiety. Hildegard, P. (2022) developed a model describing four levels of anxiety: mild, moderate, severe, and panic. Mild anxiety is part of everyday living and can help an individual use their senses to perceive reality in sharp focus. Symptoms of mild anxiety include restlessness, irritability, or mild tension-relieving behaviors such as finger tapping, fidgeting, or nail biting. Moderate Anxiety is the physiological stress response kicks in with symptoms such as perspiration, elevated heart rate and elevated respiratory rate, the individuals may also experience headaches, gastric discomfort, urinary urgency, voice tremors, and shakiness; however, they may not be aware these symptoms are related to their level of stress and anxiety. Severe anxiety the perceptual field of a person experiencing They may either focus on one detail or on many scattered details. They often have difficulty noticing what is going on in their environment, even if it is pointed out; they may appear dazed or confused with automatic behaviour. The symptoms of the stress response intensify and may include hyperventilation, a pounding heart, insomnia, and a sense of impending doom. The last level of anxiety is panic it is the most extreme level of anxiety. The individual is unable to process information from the environment and may lose touch with reality. They may demonstrate behavior such as pacing, running, shouting, screaming, or withdrawal, and hallucinations may occur.

There are some studies that were conducted by the researcher related with analysis of students' anxiety in speaking English. The first research was conducted by Assysifa (2019). Her study revealed two findings related to the students' speaking anxiety those are lack of preparation, afraid of being laughed by his/her friends, unconfident to spell, pronounce and select the words in English. These findings suggest that students should do to reduce their anxiety are do more preparation before speaking, try to be more confident in saying English words, and pronunciation practice. The second research is from Maisarah (2019) with his title Factor causing anxiety in speaking English experienced by the students of senior high school in Jombang. The research shows that there were three factors that make students anxiety in speaking English, the factors were: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and negative evaluation. The third research is from Nadia, (2023). Her study examines anxiety, and sources of anxiety when students speak English. The findings also indicate that students' 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, teacher should be more aware of students' anxiety in order to help students' gain self-confidence to speak in English class.

From the previous study above, the researcher find the similarities of investigating that is the factor of students' speaking anxiety while for the types and the level of anxiety have not investigated yet, hence this research focus of investigating the factors that contributed to students' English-speaking anxiety, the types and the levels of students speaking anxiety.

METHODOLOGY

The method used by the researcher is qualitative research. And the design is case study. Ary (2006), argued that qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of human participants in the study. Therefore, it can be interpreted that this research involves humans to provide an overview of the event. In addition, (Sugiyono, 2010 in Santriza, 2018) defines qualitative research as a kind of category of study that is used to analyse natural events. While Case study is a research method in which the researcher exploring or exploring a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals in depth. These cases are limited by space and time of their activities. Researchers collect data in depth with using various methods of data collection certain time period (Creswell, et al 2003). The research was conducted at a private high school-students in Indonesia. The subject of this research were eleventh grade students of a private high school in Indonesia, consisting of 10 female students ranging from age 16 until 17 years old.

In this study, the researcher used interview to collect the data and validate the information from students. Heigham and Crocker in Saputri (2016), said an interview is aim to dig deeper the respondents' experiences, view, feelings. Researcher also used observatioan to gather the data, to get the real situation in speaking English. Heigham and Crocker (2009) said that Observation is the conscious noticing of participants behaviour in the natural setting, such as classroom, or any other environment where the English language is being studied.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part the researcher described and presented the finding of the research. The data collection used in this research is interview and observation. In interview the researcher recorded students' information in regard with their speaking anxiety and then transcribed and poured it into writing. The most important thing in this part is to reveal the factors, types, and the level of students' English-speaking anxiety. In observation, the researcher observed the students' speaking anxiety level. The results of this observation used to support the results of interview.

Data from interview

The researcher estimated that there were three factors that becomes students' speaking anxiety those are linguistics, psychology (Internal factor), and external factors. The amounts of students who has the linguistics are 9 students have not enough vocabulary to speak their ideas, 7 students anxious of grammatical errors, and 7 students who anxious about pronunciation. While the amounts of students who has the psychology (Internal factor), 8 students embarrassed to express their English, 8 students who were nervous, and 6 students lack of self-confidence. And external factors felt by students are 9 students fear of friend and teacher evaluation, 8 students that afraid of making mistakes, and 8 students lack of preparation.

Linguistics factors

Limited Vocabulary

The first state anxiety factor that faced by students is lack of vocabulary. There were 9 students who have the similar case. Most of the students argued that "to speak English easily, you must master English vocabulary". They estimated that vocabulary is the key to speak English hence they must have the huge effort to memorize the vocabulary. In Islamic boarding school, the vocabularies were often given in the large amount with difficult and unfamiliar words to be

memorized and finally, it was become one of the students' factors while speaking English. As it is testified by

(S1: "...One of the factors that made me anxious while speaking in front of the audience is having a little knowledge of vocabularies I ca not master the vocabulary. I often have trouble memorizing vocabulary".

The similar factor in regard with vocabulary happened by student (S2) she argued that:

(S2: "...The most problematic factor for me is, I lack vocabulary, I have difficulty memorizing vocabulary...").

Grammatical Errors

The use of grammar in speaking is no less important than its use in writing. It is known that grammar brings clarity to the text. A text with poor grammar can change the entire meaning of a sentence, and the readers may not understand what the authors say. That is why the proper use of grammar is also suggested in speaking. However, some students admit that learning grammar is difficult to understand. Due to the difficulties of learning grammar, hence students are seldom to use grammar in speaking, and it is actually-making students feel anxious. As it is testified by students (10):

(S10: Yes, because grammar is very important in making sentences. I think when we want to make good sentences, we must master grammar. So, if we want master grammar, we must like the grammar lesson first. I quite like grammar lessons but when I do not practice, do not learn it again, I forget again. Moreover, the formulas must be remembered).

Inadequate Pronunciation

The last state anxiety factor is pronunciation. Based on the finding, many students have anxiety because of inadequate pronunciation, they told they found many unfamiliar vocabularies which are hard to pronounce. As it is testified by students (2)

(S2: Yes, there are some unfamiliar vocabularies that are rarely spoken, and those words are difficult to pronounce. But I see in the dictionary how to read or pronounce it correctly).

This similar case also testified by student-4

(S4: "...Pronunciation is one of the linguistics aspects that I worried about, when I want to speak English, especially vocabulary which unfamiliar and rarely heard makes me difficult to pronounce it).

Psychology (Internal factor)

Trait Anxiety

Nervousness

The first factor in the trait anxiety type is nervous. Nervous is often found in students before they speak in front of their friends and teachers. They feel nervous because, the reaction of teachers, friends, and when speaking in front of many people. Students also admitted that, speaking in front of a large audience is more nervous than a small one. Most of them feel embarrassed because of lack of preparation, performing the speaking in front of many important and smarter people. From embarrassment makes them nervous. As it is asserted by stdent-10 :

(S10: When speaking in front of a crowd, I feel so nervous because the the abundance audience were facing on me, and most of the audience were not familiar, if I had the huge audience there must be many people who corrected my mistakes. It was different when I faced a few audiences there must be a few students who correct my mistakes.

In additions student (8) has the similar view, she said that:

(S8: When I felt lack of preparation, like did not memorize, did not make the good speaking text or note. I must be anxious and nervous moreover there were the kiyai was facing on me.

Embarrassment

The next Students' trait anxiety is embarrassment. Many students fail in speaking because of the feeling of embarrassed. They often feel so embarrassed while practicing speaking in front of public and doing some linguistics errors while delivering the message such as grammatical errors, pronunciation errors, articulation errors and so on. As it is testified by students (4 & 2) :

(S4: I want to speak English but I was so embarrassed to use it, even though I really want to be fluent in English).

In additions student (4) has the similar view, she said that:

(S2: I was embarrassed when I was appointed to come forward for public speaking, because I was afraid of pronunciation error, grammar errors, and the audience laugh).

Lack of self-confidence

The next trait anxiety factors that researcher found is lack of self confidence. Students who are not confident must causes by mant factors one of the factors is their own thoughts about speaking English. Students felt so insecure while speaking in front of friends, and in front of language staff. Students said that they did not master English due to not getting used to speak English. Most of them prefer Arabic to English. From those statement, the researcher estimated that lack of self-confidence could provok the students to be anxious in speaking English. Students who were not confidence would be hard to express their speaking English. As it is testified by student (7 & 6) :

(S7: No, I was not confident while speaking English I like Arabic more than English. I often gave up when learning English).

In additions student (6) has the similar view, she said that:

(S6: No, not enough. Not used to speaking English maked me unsure and insecure about my language).

External Factor

State Anxiety

Fear of Negative Evaluation

The first state anxiety factor that faced by students is friend and teacher reaction especially feeling of fear negative evaluation. There were 9 students who have the similar factor. It can not be denied while we are speaking all eyes would be on us. The attention and reaction of the audience is clearly visible, whether they like it or not, and it can be hinder speaker' concentration. Their non-verbal communication implied their feelings like cynical eyes, frowning foreheads, muttering, cynical smiles, and any other expression. As it is uttered by:

(S7: Yes, it really affected me, I felt stupid when I saw the reactions of my friends or people around me, from there I felt down to learn about it. My friends' reactions made me embarrassed, I felt very sad).

The similar factor in regard with audience (friend & teacher) reaction is also mentioned by student (S9):

(S9: Yes, the reactions of friends often made me nervous, my confidence decreased when I saw the reactions of my friends, which I was already confident, but seeing the reactions like frowning head, cynical smiles are on me, they were probably friends who were not supportive, I finally became unconfident).

Fear of Making Mistakes

Fear of making mistakes is the next state anxiety factor found in this study. The fear of making mistakes is often found in students before they speak in front of their friends and teachers. They are afraid of making mistakes because of their limited English proficiency. Most of them felt fear of making mistakes on pronunciation, and grammatical errors. The researcher captured the results of the students' pronunciation, and grammar errors in spoken English. As it is asserted by student (6 & 8):

“(S6: Yes, I was afraid that, there were people who know English better than me and they understood what I was saying about and what I delivered were wrong. Whether from the grammatical, pronunciation, articulation etc. What should be read, I read it like this. When speaking in front of people who were better than me, I felt embarrassed and insecure).”

In additions student (8) has the similar view, she said that:

“(S8: Yes, always. One of the factors of anxiety is afraid of making mistake, one of it is miss pronounce. I worried that the pronunciation was wrong and the grammar was wrong, especially when the person that I asked to talk with was smarter than me).”

Lack of Preparation

Lack of preparation was the next state anxiety factors that found in this research. There were 8 students who mentioned that they often refuted the preparation. As it is known that speaking needs preparation especially formal speaking like speech, presentation any other formal speaking. Before speaking you have to prepare your text, your appearance, your healthy and mental. However, students often deny it. If they do not have enough preparation, they feel scared, insecure, nervous, and anxious, as it is testified by student (10)

“(S10: Yes, it was very influential. Because when we did not prepare ourselves to come forward and speak English, what we show or what we say will not be perfect. We will inevitably make mistakes if we do not prepare ourselves, nervousness, and fear of wrong pronunciation will happen if we do not prepare ourselves. I would rather not go forward if there is no preparation...”

In additions student (4) has the similar view, she said that:

“(S4: Yes, that is right. Lack of preparation will affect my anxiety, plus I really like to get nervous if I do not prepare properly).”

The Result of Observation

To support the results of interviews and deepen the research finding, the researcher conducted the observation in regard with students' speaking anxiety level while speaking English. This observation was conducted on Thursday, 18th of September 2023, to class 11 high school students totaling 10 participants. The researcher has explained above that, there are 4 levels of anxiety according to Basavanthappa (2007). Mild categorized as the lowest, moderate, severe categorized as quite anxious, and panic is categorized the highest level in terms of anxiety. In the observation, the researcher initially sees and pays attention to the students speaking anxiety level, while they were asked to speak English in front of class. The description of the observation results are described below.

Mild Anxiety

The mild speaking anxiety level got the high percentage there was 70% students categorized into this speaking anxiety level. It is known that mild anxiety is part of everyday livings and can help an individual use their senses to perceive reality in sharp focus. Symptoms of mild anxiety are restlessness, irritability, or mild tension-relieving behaviors such as finger tapping, fidgeting, or nail biting. Based on the researcher's observation, among 10 studentst there were 7 students

who did the symptoms of mild anxiety like tapping, fidgeting, nail biting, in the first performance they often looked a little bit nervous however as the time went by those symptoms were covered and faded by their self-confidence. Hence, they often speak fluently and well after conquering their anxiety.

Panic

The panic anxiety becomes the second speaking anxiety level that experienced by students. There were 20% students who felt it. Panic categorized as the highest level of anxiety. The symptoms of this anxiety level can be seen from individual consciousness the person often forget about what to speak about it can be said as lose touch with reality. They may demonstrate behavior such as pacing, running, shouting, screaming, or withdrawal, and hallucinations may occur.

Moderate Anxiety

The third speaking anxiety level is moderate. This level got 10% of students who feel this anxiety level. This means, students who look and feel this anxiety is only one student. This level is the lowest level available to students speaking English. This level often seen from the symptoms that happened to students like perspiration, elevated heart rate and elevated respiratory rate, the individuals may also experience headaches, gastric discomfort, urinary urgency, voice tremors, and shakiness.

To sum up, it can be assumed that most of the students' speaking anxiety level in this school is categorized into mild anxiety level. It shows from the largest percentage (70%) that this level got. Based on the observation they do not feel excessive panic this is because these students are used to speaking in front of others, and accustomed to speak English in their daily life. This mild anxiety level is the level that close to normal everyday worries and stress. It is normal to feel mild anxiety when performing a speech, or waiting for news on something. Symptoms of mild anxiety are usually fidgeting, sweating, heightened senses, or irritability.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings the English-speaking anxiety of a private high school students in Indonesia, the researcher found there are 3 factors students speaking English anxiety namely, linguistics, psychology (trait anxiety), and external factors (state anxiety). Included in the linguistics factors, there are 3 factors that cause students' anxiety in speaking English. In this case, the first factor that mostly provoking students to be anxiety is lack of vocabulary that occurred by 9 students, the second was grammatical error, and the last about pronunciation. While external factors are fear of negative evaluation or friends/classmates which 9 of 10 students' feel this anxiety. Next is the lack of preparation, this anxiety was felt by 8 students, students' anxiety due to fear of making mistakes, was felt by 8 of 10 students The next factor is psychology (Internal factor), based on the finding, the researcher found three factors that cause students speaking English anxiety. The first factor is nervous, the second factor Embarrassed, and the last is lack of self-confidence,

Apart from anxiety factor, the researcher also explored the level of anxiety felt by students. And categorized them into, mild, moderate, and panic, it was found, 70% of students fell into the mild anxiety category, then 20 of students who fell into the moderate level category, and the lowest students who fell into the panic category were 10%.

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