



An Analysis of EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety Factors in Speaking in Formal Context Class

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received</p> <p>Accepted</p>	<p>This study investigated speaking anxiety factors that lead EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students feel anxious in <i>Speaking in Formal Context</i> class. The participants of this research were 29 students of class B1, 2nd semester, English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, even semester, academic year 2022-2023. This research was conducted with descriptive qualitative approach by administering questionnaires to students which consisted of five closed-ended questions. The questions were taken from FLSAS questionnaires. Observation was also applied to this study. Lecturer observed the progress of students' speaking performances from the second meeting until the last regular meeting. The findings revealed that students' speaking anxiety factors in English speaking class mainly dominated by the lack abilities in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, worried of being laughed at by peers which resulted to the anxiety, inconfidence and fear in speaking. These findings suggest that the lecturer's role is also significant to encourage students to be more active and courageous in speaking English.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p><i>Speaking anxiety</i></p> <p><i>Language anxiety</i></p> <p><i>Students' anxiety</i></p> <p><i>Speaking English</i></p> <p><i>EFL students</i></p>	

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INTRODUCTION

In studying a language, whether it is in first language acquisition or second language acquisition context, there are four pivotal skills that must be learned by a language learner, those skills comprise listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Among these required skills, speaking skill determines the language proficiency of a learner. However, this skill is highly used for daily interactions or for almost language settings. Moreover, Rao (2018) argues that speaking serves a dominant role in a foreign or second language acquisition. Speaking is predominantly utilized by lecturers in order to promote students' good speaking skill as speaking is beneficial for developing people's networking, personality, and characters.

English is the most popular language in this ICT (Information, Communication, and Technology) era. In Indonesia, public awareness about the importance of English in this globalization era increases rapidly. Thus, in responding to this phenomenon, in 1993, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Education's Decree allowed schools to teach English since elementary school level. This is in line with (Hampp, 2019) and (Hampp et al, 2021) suggested that Indonesian children should be taught English language from an early age. By learning English earlier, it is expected that Indonesian students can communicate or speak about their feeling and ideas in English. Besides, speaking English is one of required skills in this competitive era, this 21st century.

In its implementation, formal education does not teach speaking adequately, so that sometimes students often experience confusion communicating with English, (Cynthia, 2014). Moreover, due to the status of English in Indonesia is still as EFL (English as a Foreign Language), therefore, it is only natural, if we find the fact that students in Indonesia still have difficulty in using English. We often encounter students stammering or anxious when speaking English or lack vocabulary when conveying ideas in English. Many of the students had severe speaking anxiety, which made them less motivated for speaking tasks. Some of them know how to form sentences but they hesitate to speak. Another reason is the lack of motivation to practice the second language in daily conversations (Nasution & Manurung, 2023). They are afraid of making mistakes in English pronunciation or grammar. Also, they are afraid that other students will make fun of them, so they keep quiet and keep their thoughts and feelings in mind. As Zhang (2009) stated that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. Shen and Chiu (2019) in their study reported that difficulties in speaking English faced by students were psychological problems (e.g. nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence), linguistic problems (e.g. insufficient vocabulary, grammar, expressions, insufficient sentences organization, etc.), and environmental problems

(e.g. lack of learning context for English conversation). Speaking English is problematic for many Indonesian students. Students feel anxious while they are speaking English as it is known as speaking anxiety.

Psychologically, anxiety is a state of uncomfortable emotion where danger is perceived, and the victim has a powerless feeling with expression of tension in anticipation of danger (Gaibani and Elmenfi, 2014, p.1). Anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. (Horwitz, Horwitz, Cope, 1986, p.125). Chiang (2012) defined anxiety as a synonym of worry, uneasiness, disquiet, disquietude and inquietude. Sari (2017) says that Sari (2017) argued that “anxiety is natural and sometimes experienced by everyone.” However, severe anxiety sometimes keeps the sufferer from doing anything. Anxiety has received the most attention in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research, and anxiety is an important aspect of self-esteem. Mulyono (2019) argued that anxiety is connected negatively by criteria of second language proficiency, including grades awarded in foreign language studies. This means that high anxiety is accompanied by low levels of success in learning a second language.

Speaking anxiety is one of the most important affective variables that influences foreign language learning, often has a detrimental effect on the students’ oral performance of English (Melough, 2013). Speaking anxiety can inhibit the learning process, MacIntyre (1998) ascertained that worriedness and an emotional reaction rising during studying or using a second language, which affects the learning process negatively is known as anxiety.

Students often experience the physical symptoms of anxiety in speaking English such as fear, discomfort, and difficulties staying focused (Johnston, 2006). Basic (2011) added that anxious students are often very calm and passive when it comes to speaking. Furthermore, Afshar & Asakereh (2016) indicated that the major problems faced by the students in speaking English could be divided into affective-related problems, socially-related problems, and linguistically-related problems. The affective-related problems include attitude, self-confidence, motivation, anxiety, duration of the exposure to the language, classroom conditions, environment, family background, and students and lecturers’ competencies. The socially-related problems include comprehension to practice English outside the classroom, and comprehension in speaking class. The linguistically-related problems include vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and pronunciation.

There were some researchers have carried out studies in relation to English Speaking Anxiety. For instances, Liu (2006), he investigated Chinese undergraduate non-English majors of three distinct competent levels. Liu came to the conclusion that more than one-third of the pupils in each group seemed apprehensive in the spoken English classroom based on the data. Students who were more adept had lower levels of anxiety. The students experienced the greatest level of anxiety while speaking in front of the class and to the lecturer, but they experienced the least amount of anxiety when working in pairs and even much less anxiety when speaking in public.

Another study was conducted by Damayanti and Listyani (2020). The title was *An Analysis Of Students’ Speaking Anxiety In Academic Speaking Class*, the class in

English Language Education Program (ELEP) in a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. Based on the research, it suggested that a large number of students suffered from anxiety in front of others. The result demonstrated that the students' anxiety in foreign language class was caused by three primary factors of anxiety. It was communication apprehension factor, test anxiety factor and fear of negative evaluation factor.

Balemir (2009) implemented a study involving 234 students to investigate the origins of foreign language anxiety and the relationship between proficiency level and foreign language speaking anxiety level. The results of the adapted version of the Foreign Language Speaking Ability Scale (FLSAS) developed by Huang (2004) showed that there was a moderate level of anxiety related to speaking a foreign language among the participants. Female participants were slightly more anxious than males. The research indicated that students who began their English studies earlier experienced less nervousness when speaking. Additionally, the study found that students who were more motivated had reduced speaking anxiety.

The recent study was carried out by Yuniarti, et al., (2022), in their research, Yuniarti investigated Speaking Anxiety in EFL classroom, the researchers used the tenth graders of SMK Negeri 5 Palembang as subject of the research. Based on the data analysis, mostly the students suffered from speaking anxiety related to communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. They have the same reasons for experiencing speaking anxiety due to fear of being in public, shyness, nervous, lack of confidence when speaking English. During English Speaking session, the students avoided eye contact with the lecturer, kept silent, looked down and pretended to be busy as if they were writing or checking their books as the strategies used to cope with anxiety.

This research is aimed to investigate factors that made students feel anxious during speaking activities in *Speaking in Formal Context* class for one semester. *Speaking in Formal Context* class offered some speaking activities in the classroom such as doing mini presentation, practicing dialogues with peers in varied contexts, story telling, or even class discussions. Exposing the speaking anxiety factors lead students to do a self-reflection to their own speaking performances. They are expected to be aware of those inhibiting factors. After analysing their weaknesses in speaking, students are encouraged to do some effective strategies to reduce their anxiety in speaking English in the future. Alongside emphasizing self-reflection from students, this research also highlights the lack of awareness of lecturers in acknowledging the fact that speaking anxiety exists and it is encountered by students in speaking class.

Despite the fact that speaking anxiety is a prevalent dread among students, many professors or lecturers ignore it. They solely assess the correctness and fluency of pupils' speaking skills, not the emotive components. If professors or lecturers do not address students' speaking nervousness, it will have an impact on their status and accomplishment (Situmorang et al., 2023). This factor has rarely been discussed by previous researchers. Thus, through this study, the researcher hopes lecturers will pay more attention to it, so it will not affect to students' achievements.

METHOD

This study used qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative method is employed to comprehend people's views, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions. In this study, qualitative method was applied to find out students' attitudes, views, and experiences regarding speaking anxiety factors they encountered during Speaking in Formal Context class for one semester. The population of this research was 29 undergraduate students of English Education Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, class B1, 2nd semester in even semester, academic year 2022-2023.

The researcher implemented *total sampling technique* which means that the researcher investigated all members of the population. It is in line as Arikonto (2002) said that if the population less than 100 participants, it is better to take all the population becomes the sample. The data in this research were collected from the participants in the form of questionnaires. The data used FLSAS questionnaires as the research instrument. Originally, FLSAS questionnaires consist of 31 questions. However, based on the researcher's consideration, the questions were limited only to five questions. Those selected questions were regarded as the most relevant to the the purpose of the research namely to investigate the language anxiety factors that students encountered in *Speaking in Formal Context* class.

Data analysis procedures

There are three steps that were taken by the researcher in collecting the data. Firstly, The questionnaires were distributed to the participants. Next, the participants of the research were instructed to choose one best answer by ticking it. In this research, the resercher applied a closed-ended questions which means that the participants only responded one relevant answer among the available choices in the column. They were not required to justify or elaborate their answers as in the open-ended questionnaire. There are five column of responses they can chose based on their own opinions, namely Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly disagree (SD).

After the questionnaires were filled out, the researcher collected them, then, the researcher arranged the data by numbering and writing the names of the participants in a table. The questionnaires were analysed by reading the responses carefully, and calculated them into percentage for each question item. The percentage analysis was counted using the following formula:

$$SR = \frac{\text{Answer}}{N} \times 100\%$$

N

SR =Students' Responses

A =Answer

N =Number of Students

FINDINGS

The following table shows the calculation of the students' responses towards English language anxiety factors they encountered in *Speaking in Formal Context* class:

Table : The Results of Students' Anxiety Factors

No	Language Anxiety Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my speaking class	-	16 (55.2 %)	5 (17.2%)	4 (13.8%)	4 (13.8%)
2.	I am afraid that my speaking lecturer is really to correct every mistake I make	2 (6.9%)	9 (31.0%)	8 (27.6%)	7 (24.1%)	3 (10.04%)
3.	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in speaking class	3 (10.4%)	13 (44.8%)	9 (31.0%)	3 (10.4%)	1 (3.4%)
4.	I feel more tense and nervous in my speaking class than in my other class	2 (6.9%)	5 (17.2%)	13 (44.9%)	8 (27.6%)	1 (3.4%)
5.	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language	2 (6.9%)	5 (17.2%)	9 (31.0%)	10 (34.5%)	3 (10.4%)

Based on the table of percentage above, the first statement indicates that 55.2% students (16 students) feel unsure when they are speaking English in their speaking class. Actually, this is a discouraging fact, the students are supposed to speak English confidently as the result of their learning experiences studying English since earlier age in schools as the researcher discussed before. It suggests that the duration of learning English for a couple of years cannot guarantee that all students have good command in English, especially in speaking, so it affects their level of

confidence in learning English. Moreover, if the students experienced less practice speaking English compared to theory in schooling.

The second statement is not so striking in percentage. It denotes that the students quite enjoy the class, it is expressed by the students' responses as neutral (27.6%) and disagree (24.1%), meanwhile, there are 9 students who are afraid to be corrected by the lecturer (31.0%). There are some factors causing anxiety, one of them is language factor. Based on the researcher's observation in the class, most students have difficulty in vocabulary. When they spoke, suddenly they stopped in the middle of their speech, they could not complete their sentences due to lack of vocabulary. Hence, this factor affects to their fluency. The students were not able to express properly while they were speaking. Apart from vocabulary and fluency, grammar is also one of the predominant factor causing anxiety. The students are afraid of making mistakes in grammar. They were anxious using English wrongly. In respond to this problem, lecturer did not put so much pressure on the students, she knew well their language barriers since they were still in the 2nd semester, they still have time to learn more and enrich their vocabulary. Therefore, when the students could not finish their words, lecturer allowed them to mix their sentences using Bahasa Indonesia, after that, the lecturer would help them translate the words into English.

Language barrier can cause fear to students. In line with MacIntyre (1999) that defined language anxiety as the "worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language". If a student feels anxious about his performance in speaking, he may experience hand shaking, shivering, sweating, fear, forgetfulness, blankness, butterflies in the stomach, dry mouth and throat, fast heart beat and squeaky voice are the most common symptoms of speaking anxiety. The 3rd statement was intended to figure out whether students feel their hearts pounding when they were going to be called on in speaking class as one of symptoms of speaking anxiety. There were 13 students (44.8%) who agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, nine students (31.0%) considered it as a neutral thing. The rest, there were three students (10.4%) who responded strongly agree, that means, they completely relate to or experience the symptom. Next, there were also three students (10.4%) who disagreed with the statement and one student (3.4%) who ticked

strongly disagree. The fourth statement is still relevant to the prior number or the statement number 3 which investigated the symptoms of language or speaking anxiety faced by students. There were thirteen students (44.9%) responded neutral, eight students (27.6%) disagreed, five students (17.2%) agreed with the statement and one student who was categorized as a fluent English speaker in the class was strongly disagree with the statement.

The last statement was a reflective question to students. The statement represents students' feeling about their abilities in speaking course. The statement was "I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language", there were ten students (34.5%) disagreed with the statement, it suggests a good message that the students have quite high self-esteem, they do not really underestimate their ability nor felt lower than their classmates, though the percentage was not so high, not dominant responds. Meanwhile, nine students (31.0%) responded the statement as neutral thing. Conversely, they were five students (17.2%) agreed with the statement. It seemed that this made them unrelaxed in the class due to their fears of being laughed at when they speak in foreign language. Two students (6.9%) responded 'strongly agree'. Based on the researcher's classroom observation, these two students were insufficient in speaking English. They feel lower than their classmates in speaking, students always thought that their English language was not as good as the ability of their classmates, so that they did not unrelax to speak in front of other students (Sari, 2017). It can influence their anxiety. Less-proficient students get more anxious than proficient students when speaking English in speaking module(s) (Abrar et al., 2016).

DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data, on the one hand, it gives an insight to the lecturer that students experienced speaking or language anxiety during the class of *Speaking in Formal Context*. On the other hand, the percentage of the entire speaking anxiety factors was not so dominant, except for number 1 statement namely, *I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my speaking class*. This particular statement gained 16 'agree' responses (55.2%), this type of response signified that the internal factor came from the students themselves. The results of the data indicated that the lecturer has created quite stress-free speaking classroom environment that motivated students to improve their speaking ability. Furthermore, the results of the study were also significant for students in evaluating their own speaking performances during one semester. Since they were still in the 2nd semester, they still have time to perform better through persistent learning and practices. When students know their weaknesses, they will try to improve their speaking skills in the future.

CONCLUSION

Creating a stress-free classroom environment is required to decrease the tension in learning. If students are comfortable during the learning process, they will digest the materials more easily and it will develop their speaking performance. Lecturers are suggested to facilitate more varied speaking practices in the classroom to familiarize students with different context of language focus. Lecturers are also expected to be more creative in applying diverse teaching method that encourage students to be more enjoyable and engaged in the learning activities. Furthermore, since lecturers are familiar with students' learning styles, it is suggested that they can adjust their teaching strategies to improve students' speaking performance.

Apart from lecturers' reflection, students should evaluate their speaking performance as well. A good and well-prepared materials and teaching method will mean nothing if students do not cooperatively engage in the learning process, motivate himself or herself internally to understand materials and involve actively in classroom practices. Language anxiety is a normal experience faced by non-native English speakers in a tolerable degree. Time by time, as long as the students keep boosting their confidence and motivation, investing positive mindset and habits in learning, they will perform better.

To overcome language anxiety factors, students can implement meta-cognitive strategies such as joining English Speaking Club, finding partner to speak English more regularly in daily interactions, speaking in front of the mirror to train confidence and bravery, using dictionary to check the meaning of difficult vocabulary, reading more grammar books, listening to English video or audio, and normalizing speaking English more frequently to lecturer during classroom practices. Lastly, the researcher expects that there will be more researchers conduct and explore further study regarding students' anxiety factors in speaking English.

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