

THE INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' ANXIETY LEVEL ON THEIR SPEAKING ABILITY OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM OF FKIP UIR

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Abstract

This research aimed to determine whether students' anxiety levels have the influence on their speaking ability in EFL speaking class. The population of this research consisted of third semester students from the English Study Program of FKIP UIR, class A and B, with 30 students randomly selected as the sample. The research employed a descriptive quantitative design using a questionnaire and a presentation test as instruments. The questionnaire used was the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), while the presentation test was assessed using a presentation rubric evaluated by two raters to ensure the reliability of the test.

The results indicated a significant negative influence on students' anxiety levels and their speaking test scores from rater 1, and rater 2. The strength of this influence was categorized as moderate, and the direction of the influence was negative, meaning that higher anxiety level were associated with lower speaking test. Furthermore, the findings revealed that most students were categorized as "Mildly Anxious" in terms of anxiety level and "Basic" in their presentation.

It can be concluded that anxiety can affect students' speaking ability, especially when making presentations in front of the class. Several factors such as fear of making mistakes, being seen by many people, or being interrupted by lecturers can increase students' anxiety level.

Keywords: *Influence, Anxiety Level, Speaking Ability, EFL, FKIP UIR.*

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is the main problem of learning process in foreign language especially in speaking test. This is supported by the words from the students who feel anxious when their lecturer called them to speak in front of their friends. The students also refused to sit on the front row of the class because they are afraid to be asked and avoided eye contact from their lecturer.

Foreign language anxiety is a common situation which can be found in EFL learners. Foreign language anxiety is a situation when the students feel anxious, afraid or worry when using foreign language. According to Suleimenova in Neman & Ganap (2018) when anxiety interferes with their ability to process information, a student may not be able to absorb a spoken dialogue quickly enough. Moreover, Horwitz, (2010) stated some students may claim to have

anxiety when they come to learn to speak a second of foreign language. It makes students have less confidence, stress, and nervousness that hinder their learning process.

Speaking is one of the core skills in learning a foreign language, and it holds a crucial role in determining a learner's communicative competence. In the context of students enrolled in the English Study Program of FKIP UIR, speaking ability is not only an academic requirement but also a reflection of their ability to use English effectively in real-life and professional contexts. However, many students still struggle to express themselves confidently in spoken English, despite years of language instruction. This indicates the presence of underlying factors that may be influence their speaking abilities. Among the most significant of these are individual learning styles and anxiety levels, both of which are often overlooked in classroom settings but can have a substantial impact on language performance.

In higher education, speaking test is mostly used by the lecturers to encourage their students in practicing their speaking in English. Meanwhile, many students are not confident and feel anxious with their performance in front of the class when delivering the presentation in the foreign language. The fear of making mistakes and seen by a lot of people in the class can influenced the students' presentation.

In the third semester of FKIP UIR, there is a course called Speaking in a Professional Context. In this course, students learn how to deliver their presentations effectively, prepare their materials, and then deliver it in front of the class. Students' presentation in this course is influenced by anxiety. Even though they have mastered presentation skills, many factors, such as fear of making mistakes and being seen by many people, can hinder students' concentration and can impair their performance. In conclusion, students' anxiety affects their speaking test.

This research aims to investigate the influence of students' anxiety levels on their speaking ability of English Study Program of FKIP UIR. By identifying the effect of students' anxiety level on their speaking ability, this research is expected to help lecturer and students develop better strategies to reduce anxiety and improve speaking skills in the EFL classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anxiety

In general, anxiety appears as a reaction of the human body to a certain situation. Anxiety defined as a feeling of fear, nervousness, stress, or tension. There are several definitions of anxiety found by researchers. According to Mohtasham & Farnia (2017), anxiety is a state of an individual when he feels restlessness, frustration, self-doubt, worry, or concern" that is similar to other specific anxieties.

Student anxiety is a common and often debilitating issue that affects many students, particularly in high-stakes academic environments like higher education. Anxiety in students can manifest as physical symptoms, such as restlessness or fatigue, as well as psychological symptoms, including fear of failure, excessive worry, and difficulty concentrating. This can severely impact academic performance, leading to avoidance of academic tasks, reduced engagement, and poor outcomes. Khoshlessan & Das (2017) said that student anxiety is a feeling, thought, and experience that causes a level of worry during the learning process and affects student academic achievement. Then, according to Sutarsyah (2017) anxiety is a

psychological and physiological state characterized by somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling of fear and worry.

Horwitz et al. (1986) classified foreign language anxiety into three components. The first is communication apprehension, means students feeling nervous or afraid to communicate with others. The second is test anxiety, students with test anxiety are afraid of getting bad scores, so they become nervous and can't perform well even if they already studied. The third is fear of negative evaluation, means students being afraid of what other people think. Through the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire developed by Horwitz (1986), the anxiety levels were separated into five stages started from the highest into the lowest. There are: very anxious, anxious, mildly anxious, relaxed and very relaxed.

Anxiety is generally categorized into low, moderate, and high levels by Scovel (1978):

1. Low anxiety may be beneficial because it keeps students alert and motivated. This is often referred to as facilitative anxiety.
2. Moderate anxiety can help learners stay focused but may begin to interfere with performance if not managed properly.
3. High anxiety, negatively impacts learning outcomes by reducing concentration, confidence, and willingness to communicate.

Speaking Ability

Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in various contexts Brown (2010). It involves several sub-skills such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. According to Harmer (2007) speaking is not only about producing words and sentences but also about communicating effectively and appropriately in real situations. In an EFL context, speaking ability reflects how well students can use English to express their ideas confidently and understandably. Speaking is one of skill in learning English that must be learned. It is also must be mastered. Hornby (2005) defines that speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real-life situation. It is an important part of everyday interaction and most often the first impression of a person is based on his/her ability to speak fluently and comprehensively.

Speaking is considered one of the most essential skills in language learning because it enables learners to communicate effectively. According to Brown (2004), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. It requires not only linguistic competence but also the ability to use the language appropriately in different contexts. Speaking is often viewed as the most challenging skill for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners because it demands real-time language processing and confidence Bailey (2005). Hence, speaking ability reflects not only linguistic knowledge but also psychological readiness.

There were several previous studies related to this research. First, the research from Nadia Agustin, Mulyadi, Elfrieda (2019) entitled "The Analysis of Factors that Affect Students Anxiety in Speaking for Presentation Class (A Study of the Fourth Semester Students at the English Education Study Program of University of Bengkulu in Academic Year 2018/2019)". The research found that students mostly experienced mild anxiety in speaking, with fear of

negative evaluation being the most dominant factor, followed by communication apprehension and test anxiety, affecting their performance in presentation classes.

The second previous study was from Rheyhold J. Daymiel, Jovelyn M. Cantina, Van Ryan I. Alipoyo, Meynard O. Comecilla, April S. Patay, and Joji T. Recamara (2022), entitled "Anxiety in Second Language in Relation to Students' Speaking Performance". This research shows that linguistic anxiety can predict speaking performance, with anxious learners often performing worse than native speakers. Teachers should provide interesting oral tasks for these students.

The third previous study was from I-Ju Chen, Kai-Ru Cheng & Chieh-Hsiang Chuang (2022) entitled "Relationship between Language Anxiety and English Speaking Performance". The result examined the correlation between language anxiety and English speaking performance among Taiwanese college students, finding a negative correlation between anxiety levels and performance on computer-based speaking tests.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research employed a descriptive quantitative design, where the data are presented both numerically and descriptively. This approach was chosen because the data collected in this study were quantitative in nature, and the researcher then explained the findings in a descriptive form. In addition, the quantitative method allows for statistical measurement and evaluation of a large number of participants through the use of specific questionnaires with standardized response categories.

According to Sudijono (2009), the descriptive quantitative method is a technique used to describe the condition of a phenomenon based on data collected through measurement instruments, which is then processed according to its function. In other words, descriptive quantitative research involves organizing and analyzing numeric data to provide a clear, concise, and systematic understanding of a phenomenon or event.

In this research, questionnaire and test were used as the instruments. The questionnaire was an anxiety scales FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) adapted by Horwitz et al. (1986). Meanwhile for speaking test using a scoring rubric adapted from Iowa State University.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the data of students' anxiety level and speaking test score, the researcher analyzed the influence using Pearson Product Moment in SPSS 23 Software. The result of both raters was, there was a significant influence of students' anxiety levels on their speaking ability, even though the influence was moderate. The findings of this research reveal that anxiety level significantly influences students' speaking ability. Most students experienced moderate to high anxiety levels when asked to speak English.

Figures and Table

Table 1
The Influence of Students Anxiety Level on Their Speaking Ability

		SPEAKING_SCORE	ANXIETY_LEVEL
SPEAKING_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.630**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
ANXIETY_LEVEL	Pearson Correlation	-.630**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows that the correlation coefficient (r) between the two variables is -0.630, with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000 and a sample size (N) of 30. The negative sign of the correlation coefficient indicates a strong negative relationship between students' anxiety levels and their speaking ability. This means that the higher the students' anxiety level, the lower their speaking performance tends to be.

Furthermore, the significance value of $0.000 < 0.01$ indicates that this correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Therefore, it can be concluded that students' anxiety levels have a significant and negative influence on their speaking ability.

In this research of 3rd semester English Education Program of FKIP UIR, there was a significant negative correlation between students' anxiety level on their speaking ability. This means that as students' anxiety increased, their presentation scores tended to decrease, and when anxiety was lower, their scores were higher.

During the speaking test, students displayed different behaviors such as mumbling, mispronouncing words, and trembling. These reactions occurred because many of them were not fully prepared to perform in front of the class due to a lack of practice. However, some students performed well; they appeared confident and spoke clearly with accurate pronunciation. The students' behavior was strongly influenced by their level of anxiety, the higher their anxiety, the more it affected their performance. According to Horwitz (1991), anxiety creates an affective filter that blocks learners from effectively receiving language input, hindering their language acquisition progress. When learners experience high anxiety, it becomes difficult for them to succeed in learning a foreign language. This was supported by the findings of the study, which revealed that students with lower anxiety levels achieved better speaking test results compared to those with higher anxiety.

In other words, students who perform well in speaking tend to experience lower levels of anxiety because they feel confident in their abilities, which helps their performance run smoothly. The impact of speaking anxiety becomes evident when students are required to speak

in front of the class. Anxiety can arise from the speaking process itself, as students often fear making pronunciation or grammatical errors, or using incorrect vocabulary during their performance. Some may also believe that their English skills are insufficient to express themselves clearly, which further increases their anxiety. However, anxiety is not the only factor that affects speaking performance. Being aware of one's own anxiety level can be beneficial. Scovel (1978) also noted that anxiety can have a positive or facilitative role in language learning. A certain amount of nervousness or discomfort can keep students alert and focused. Therefore, anxiety can serve as a signal for students to be more cautious and mindful of what might trigger their nervousness.

The present findings also confirm the theoretical framework proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), who stated that foreign language anxiety comprises communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These three factors were reflected in the students' experiences during this research. Many students reported that they were afraid of being judged by others, anxious when speaking in front of the class, and worried about making mistakes, all of which hindered their oral performance.

Moreover, these results are consistent with Liu (2007), who found that anxiety reduces students' willingness to communicate and results in shorter and less fluent utterances. Similarly, Woodrow (2006) emphasized that anxiety interferes with students' fluency and pronunciation, as it distracts them from focusing on the content of their speech.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

After analyzed the data, the findings revealed a significant negative influence of students' anxiety level on their speaking ability. This negative correlation indicates that the two variables move in opposite directions. In other words, when students' anxiety levels were high, their presentation scores tended to be low, and when their anxiety levels were low, their scores were higher. Furthermore, the results supported the alternative hypothesis (Ha) and rejected the null hypothesis (Ho). The alternative hypothesis stating that "there is a significant influence of students' anxiety level on their speaking ability of English Study Program students at FKIP UIR" was therefore accepted as the answer to the research question.

The correlation coefficient (r) showed a moderate relationship, indicating that most students fell into the "Mildly Anxious" category, while their speaking scores were generally in the "Basic" level. Overall, the research confirmed that students' anxiety levels significantly affected their speaking ability, particularly during speaking test. Factors such as fear of making mistakes, being observed by many people, or the possibility of being interrupted by the lecturer contributed to higher anxiety among students.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusions of this research, several suggestions can be proposed for students, lecturers, and future researchers. For students, it is important to recognize that anxiety is a normal part of learning a foreign language, especially when speaking in front of others. However, students should make continuous efforts to build self-confidence and reduce their

fear of making mistakes. Engaging in regular speaking practice, participating actively in classroom discussions, and focusing on communication rather than grammatical perfection can help minimize anxiety and improve speaking performance.

For lecturers, it is suggested to create a supportive and low-anxiety classroom environment that encourages students to speak without fear of criticism. Teachers can apply communicative and interactive teaching strategies, such as pair or group work, to help students feel more comfortable expressing themselves. Constructive feedback and positive reinforcement are also essential to build students' confidence and motivation. Teachers should be sensitive to students who display signs of high anxiety and provide them with encouragement and emotional support.

Finally, for future researchers, it is suggested to explore other affective factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and attitude that may also influence students' speaking ability. Future studies may also employ qualitative methods such as interviews or classroom observations to gain a deeper understanding of how anxiety affects students' learning behavior and speaking performance. By addressing these aspects, future research can contribute more comprehensively to the understanding of the relationship between emotional factors and language learning outcomes.

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