



ANXIETY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PONTIANAK

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Abstract

Studies on learning anxiety of EFL learners have been done by many educators. Different experts have investigated the issue of learning anxiety from different perspectives. It is believed that students' anxiety has an impact on language learning, especially in learning speaking. In Indonesia, English is learned as a foreign language at high school levels. This study intended to investigate the anxiety factors in the speaking performance that faced by grade 12 students at SMA Santu Petrus in Pontianak. There are two purposes of this study (1) To investigate the factors that cause students to feel anxious when they speak English, and (2) to find out the most dominant factors that cause the students' anxiety in speaking English. Data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method and were obtained by conducting interviews and observation. The findings indicated that there were factors that triggered the feeling of anxiety among the students when they speak English, namely: rumination, fear of feedback and avoidance and the most dominant factor was avoidance.

Keywords: *Language Anxiety, Speaking Anxiety, High School students*

Introduction

Everyday people communicate in various ways, starting from using words, actions, or expression to express their feelings or delivery the information. Most communication is conveyed through a language to information.

English is regarded as a global language for communication and is employed as a medium of interaction between two people who come from different national, and cultural backgrounds which suggests the english language could be a media in delivering any information between two different languages (Sharifian, 2009).

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language for students and as EFL learners students have problems when speaking English which is known as speaking anxiety. The intimidation of anxiety can

distract someone whether from inside or outside of themselves.

Students at SMA Santu Paulus Pontianak learn English using National Curriculum of 2013. The writer did a pre-observation with the English teacher of SMA Santu Petrus to find out the problems of speaking English among students. He said there was definitely a problem, particularly in speaking in which a number of the students were extremely quiet and passive. And the possible reason for that might be the feeling of anxiety.

Based on the situation at the school, there are two purposes of the study: (1) to know the factors that cause students to feel anxious to speak in English, and (2) to seek out the most dominant factors of students' speaking issues in relation with the anxiety.

Literature Review

Communication is considered effective if the speaker delivers the message that is

clearly understood and, if possible, acted upon.

The most stressful skill among the four skills for English learners is speaking (Sutarsyah, 2017). English speaking is difficult for some speakers because they should know many significant components like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Learners should possess enough English speaking ability in order to communicate easily and effectively with other people. Another researcher added that EFL students' speaking skill is influenced by some linguistic components of language like phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics and psychological factors such as motivation and personality (Mahripah, 2014)

Meanwhile, Leong and Ahmadi stated that speaking a language can cause anxiety. Some people are not able to control their feeling of apprehension (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

Boyes, in her book, explained that anxiety is concerning the feeling of worry, nervous and unease which come from personal mindset and she mentioned some factors of anxiety that overcome someone, which are:

1. Ruminatation

It is about overthinking and the feeling of anxious that people will criticize and keep blaming ones for not doing well.

2. Fear of Feedback and Criticism

Feedback always help people to improve themselves. However, anxious people will avoid any feedback from other people because they will feel frustrated and annoyed.

3. Avoidance

It is about avoiding situations or avoiding anything that will cause anxiety. The anxious people tend to avoid something they dislike, and they lose the opportunities to learn something good or fall behind in gaining skills. (Boyes, 2015).

Anxiety in language learning is a complex phenomenon. Most studied in this area concerned about the speaking anxiety

in the classroom. There are different reasons that trigger it and its consequences are detrimental to students' learning and performance.

Thus, it can be concluded that in educational research, anxiety is usually classified as being trait or state. Trait anxiety is a relatively stable temperament trait. A person who is trait anxious tends to feel anxious in certain situations. State anxiety, on the other hand, is a temporary condition experienced at a particular time (Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bailey, P., & Daley, 2000).

Method

This study employed the qualitative descriptive research method because it aims at providing an insight into the problems of language anxiety in the SMA Santu Paulus Pontianak grade 12 students, especially anxiety in speaking English.

Descriptive study is about describing the situation, problem or phenomenon related to the problem being studied (Kumar, 2019).

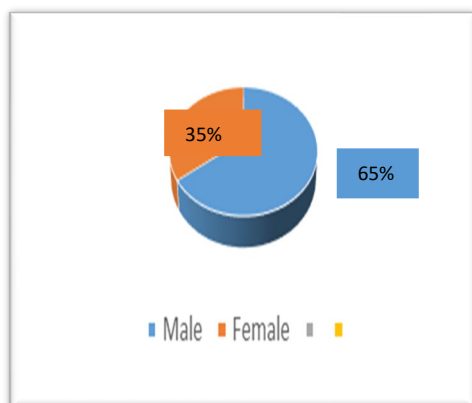
The participants were 20 students in grade 12, Social stream. A set of 12 structured interview questions were used to gather information about their speaking problems related to the feeling of anxiety. Finally, the data were listed and discussed that enable the writer to draw a conclusion of this research.

Findings and Discussion

This section aimed at elaborating the statements of the students collected from the interviews.

The list of the informants that consists of 13 females and 7 males students is presented in chart 1.

Chart 1. Data of Informants
Source: School 2020



The interview had focused on searching which of the three aspects of anxiety the students experienced when they had to perform speaking in English. There were 12 questions and the answers were varied.

Question 1: Do you like studying English?

Among 20 students, 16 students who like English and only four students who do not like English. It means that the majority of the respondents like English.

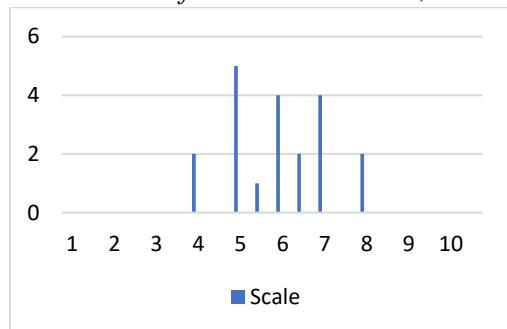
Question 2: Is it hard to speak in English?

Ten students admitted that to speak in English is hard, and the rest said that it was not difficult for them to speak English.

Question 3: In the scale of 1-10, how would you rate your speaking skill?

The answers to this question are shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. The Rate of Speaking Skill
Source: data of students' interview, 2020



Question 4: Do you feel nervous when speaking English in the classroom?

Eight students mentioned that they were nervous while seven students said they did not. On the other hand, three students said sometimes they became nervous but only sometimes, and two students admitted that they were not too nervous. The finding indicated that most students were nervous when they had to speak English in the classroom.

Question 5: When you do the English presentation, do you use text?

The majority accounted for 16 students said that they used text. It meant that most of the students prepared text to help them to memorize the presentation. Four students said they sometimes wrote the text and sometimes they did not.

Question 6: If one day in the class, your English teacher suddenly asks you to do a presentation or speak in English, how would you feel?

The answers were varied and it can be seen below:

- Student 1: Scared, worry

- Student 4: Panic

- Student 5: Not too scared

- Student 6: Panic and not confident

- Student 7: Scared, shy, panic

- Student 8: Panic, nervous

- Student 9: Nervous, but at first only

- Student 10: Shock, scared

- Student 11: Panic and worry

- Student 12: Panic and worry

- Student 13: Depend on the learning material

- Student 14: Panic

- Student 15: Panic and not prepared

- Student 16: Panic, Scared

- Student 17: Nervous, Panic, Scared

- Student 18: Nervous

- Student 19: Nervous

Student 20: Nervous

The replies showed that half numbers of all the participants were panic. The rest were scared, nervous, shy and shock.

Question 7: How do you feel when you get negative criticism from your teacher or friends about your speaking skills?

This question referred to the factor of fear of feedback or criticism. The result showed that fourteen students in the group said that criticism was fine with them. They took it positively. The rest of the participants acknowledged that they felt bad, insecure, and sad of negative comments from others.

Question 8: Do you always think about other people's opinion about your performance?

This question aimed at seeking out the students' rumination or overthinking about something when speaking in English. The result showed that there were 11 students who never thought that other' opinions were important but the teacher, six students agreed that they thought about people's opinions, two students said sometimes and a student said they did not overthink it. From the results, it can be concluded that most of the students did not worried about other people's opinions about their performance.

Question 9: Do you feel scared of being laughed at by your teacher or friends during a presentation?

Only five students answered that they became scared if someone laughed at them during the presentation, and a student said that she was rarely scared of being laughed. This question aims to find out about students who tend to feel afraid toward feedback from others and the result showed that most of the students did not feel scared being laughed at by others.

Question 10: You know your speaking ability, do you feel insecure in front of other friends?

Among 20 students, 16 students who answered that they did not feel insecure. Another three students said that sometimes they had the insecure feeling and sometimes they were fine. One student voted that he was insecure in front of his friends because he knew that he could not speak English well.

Question 11: did you try to avoid to speak in the classroom and how did you do to that?

This question was asked to reveal the avoidance factor. The result showed that most of the students tended to avoid looking at the teacher during the lesson so they would not be picked to speak in the classroom. Twelve students chose to avoid, three students determined to focus and did not avoid, five students said it depends on how interesting the topic was and the rewards they could get by participating.

Question 12: Do you always feel like you fail to perform well when you speak English?

Ten participants disagreed about failing in the speaking performance because they thought they were good, seven students agreed as they were not confident about their speaking skill, three students mentioned that they sometimes failed. The majority of the students said they did not feel that they failed to perform in the speaking class.

Anxiety is a common human emotion. People describe that emotion using words such as nervous, stress, worry, fear and panic to describe feelings of anxiety. No matter the words that are used to describe it, most people will agree that anxiety causes some unpleasant symptoms. The findings indicated those symptoms existed among

the students of Grade 12 students at SMA Santu Paulus Pontianak during the speaking performance.

The research questions number one was answered by revealing that all students were affected by rumination, fear of Feedback and Criticism, and avoidance that was described in their confessions during the interviews.

In term of rumination, students showed no sign that they were disturbed by what their classmates' comments or opinion regarding their speaking performance. They responded to inputs positively as a way to improve their speaking. "I will use those comments to improve myself." (Student 10)

"I take it as a positive comment. We need to practice harder." (Student 12)

"Yes, I think about what part that I am still not good, and I will make it better later on." (Student 14)

"I feel fine. Just take it as a motivation!" (Student 15)

When asked in thinking about something repeatedly over a long period time, only some of the students have problem with overthinking. For example, Student no. 7 who said that she always thought about people's opinion on her performance, always concerned being laughed at by her teacher or friends during a presentation and always worried that she would fail to perform when speaking in English.

Being careful about something that would happen is a good thing to do because that can make people prepare themselves better. However, the overthink about it can risk making someone become less confident.

When asked about their feeling of negative feedback or any criticism the received from their teacher or their classmates as in Question 7 (Q.7), the majority of students surprisingly said that they took it fine when they received

criticism or negative feedback. This was considered positive feedback when it helped people to improve themselves. However, anxious people tended to avoid any feedback from other people because they felt frustrated and annoyed. For some students, fear of feedback even if it was a positive one was a problem. Probably, the most common reason for someone to be this sensitive is that in their past they were severely and frequently criticized.

"Yes, I had a bad experience. I had an English presentation, but my grammar was wrong." (Student 3)

"I am shy and not confident." (Student 7)

"I feel not confident and sad because it means they think that I am stupid." (Student 11)

"I feel insecure." (Student 16)

"I feel shy and not confident." (Student 18)

Avoidance was another issue from the findings. The majority of the participants agreed that they would do many things in the classroom in order to avoid being called to speak during the English lesson.

The students chose to avoid the teacher when she/he was looking for a volunteer to answer the question. They chose to avoid by looking around (avoiding eye contact with the teacher) or being busy with activity, such as playing with their pen, pretending to write something on the book. They did that because they were scared that they gave the wrong answer, as mentioned by Student 6, "I choose to avoid, of course! I am scared if I cannot answer his questions correctly."

"Yes, I ever had a bad experience. I had an English presentation, but my grammar was wrong." (Student 3)

"Yes, I had a bad experience. speaking in the class, but my teacher asked me to do it again." (Student 7)

“I have already memorized my text, but when I had to perform, I forgot what I wanted to say. Blank...” (Student 16)

It might be normal if some of them had a bad experience during learning English because English was not the first language for the students. However, the impact after having such experience had contributed to the feeling of insecurity and anxiety in them.

Conclusion

Language anxiety had become a problem for students of SMA Santu Petrus Pontianak of grade 12 social 5, which affected the performance in their speaking class. The interview-based on the three aspects of anxiety, such as rumination, fear of feedback and criticism, and avoidance revealed those three issues existed in English speaking classroom.

Students could overthink or ruminate about what happened in the past or worrying about what would happen when they were going to perform in the speaking class. Surprisingly the study revealed that this was not the main issues for them. Most students were not overthinking about what other classmates think of their performance. In term of fear of feedback and criticism, students had the ability to use negative feedback as a motivation which was very important in the speaking skill. However, the most dominant problem was avoidance in which most students avoided situations or anything that would cause anxiety. In order to avoid whatever triggers their anxiety they use compensatory strategies—like being extremely passive in the classroom but that only decreased their anxiety temporarily. On the other hand, being passive increased anxiety over the long-term.

In light of the results of this study, teachers needed to employ different strategies appealing to students to decrease

their anxiety levels. A certain strategy that would benefit students in reducing anxiety was to stop stigmatizing them and avoid blaming them for their lack of participation.

Teacher was also responsible to improve the English proficiency level of the students and create a supportive learning atmosphere in the classroom that was enjoyable and fun. Providing a wide range learning technique to encourage and motivate students to speak English was also an essential strategy. By doing so students would see an opportunity to improve themselves and this should encourage and motivate them to be an active member in the speaking classroom.

To overcome the anxiety issues, students should aware of their shortcomings and with the teacher’s assistance, students then identified their problems, dealt with the issues to enable them to increase their performance.

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