

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY IN VIRTUAL LEARNING CLASSROOM DURING THE COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find (1) the level of students' speaking anxiety; and (2) factors causing the anxiety among students during virtual learning. This research used descriptive qualitative method, with the aim of analyzing data taken from 30 students of second semester students of English Education Department at Syiah Kuala University in academic year of 2021/2022. In conducting this study, the researcher used PSCAS (Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale) questionnaire by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). The results revealed that most of students (67%) were in medium level which experienced by 20 out of 30 students. Meanwhile, the factors that most influenced student anxiety is lack of preparation factors (73%). Then, the next factors are grammatical error, motivation, friend/classmate, embarrassment, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, shyness and limited vocabulary. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that speaking in the virtual classroom can make students feel anxious and pressured. Anxiety can negatively affect students' speaking achievement; therefore, it is important for lecturers to be concerned with students' anxiety and find the best learning methods to reduce their anxiety, also by making the class atmosphere more comfortable and not monotonous.

Keywords: *speaking anxiety, virtual learning, PSCAS*

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, there are four skills that are expected to be mastered in learning English, namely reading, writing, listening and speaking. Among these four skills, speaking has a very important role in daily communication (Majid, 2021). Through speaking, people can easily express their feelings, share their opinions and thoughts to others. Furthermore, speaking is a key in communicating as an interactive process between one person to another to convey meaning which involves producing, receiving, and processing information (Bailey, 2005, p. 2). For instance, in the teaching and learning process in the classroom, teacher and students will interact each other to make them understand and being understood.

Meanwhile, speaking can be a challenging task for many students in learning because it requires an interaction process, which means one needs a partner to interact with. While other English skills can be improved and trained independently, for speaking skills, students need a partner to develop their speaking skills in foreign language (Indrianty, 2016). Besides, there are many factors that can affect students' speaking ability, one of which is anxiety. Anxiety is a feeling that occurs in a person, where these feelings cause the person to become self-doubt, frustrated, nervous and anxious (Brown, 1991). Although many people have experienced anxiety, this can have a very negative effect on the teaching and learning process.

With the change in the learning system during the pandemic, this will certainly have an impact on all students throughout Indonesia. They must adapt to the new learning process, must have a smartphone or laptop as the main tools of virtual learning, and must always be connected to the internet so as not to miss lessons. Although there have been many studies and experts had conducted research about students' speaking anxiety in speaking, research on student anxiety during online learning during COVID-19 is still lacking due to its little attention. For this reason, the researcher believes that research on student anxiety still needs to be done. Based on the reasons explained above, the researchers are interested in investigating the level of speaking anxiety experienced by students and the factors that influence the anxiety during virtual learning classroom. These can be formulated by research questions: What is the level of speaking anxiety experienced by the students? and What factors do influence the anxiety during virtual learning classroom?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Function of Speaking

Speaking is one of the basic productive skills that students must master when learning a foreign language, especially English. The function of speaking is to conveying ideas, thoughts, feeling and it express spontaneously and verbally. Furthermore, Richards (2008) designed three speech functions in human, as follows:

a) Talk as interaction

Talk is a daily activity that humans do to communicate with each other. Interaction is a process between one person and another to convey information, ideas and thoughts. In order to occur the interaction, people need a speaking ability and language as a media in exchanging the information.

b) Talk as transaction

In talk as a transaction, the speakers focus on conveying messages and making others understand the information being said and being understood. In this speaking function, the teacher students focus on the intent and meaning of the information conveyed.

c) Talk as performance

The type of talk as performance tends to be more focuses in public speaking. In this function, speaking is the process of conveying information to the audience, with the aim of expressing ideas, thoughts, and also influencing other people's points of view. The examples are presentations, speeches,

announcements, etc.

Speaking Anxiety

Chaplin (2006) states that anxiety is a mixed feeling between fear and excessive worry that arises because of fear of something that will be faced. Meanwhile, speaking anxiety is a psychological reaction that causes feelings of fear, worry, and feeling pressured and when speaking a foreign language in front of other people. According to Peplau (1992), the founder of psychiatric nursing, there are several levels of anxiety, which are divided into 4: mild, moderate, severe and panic anxiety.

1) Mild Anxiety

Mild anxiety is the type of anxiety that most people experience in daily life. At this level, people tend to feel anxiety with a mild condition, but not too severe. Examples of mild anxiety are: when a person is waiting for a job interview and when someone gets lost in a city they have never been visited before. Symptoms experienced by someone at this level may include irritability, sweaty, palms, fidgeting, and heightened sense (Majid, 2021).

2) Moderate Anxiety

Moderate anxiety is a type of anxiety that makes people feel nervous and worried at the same time. This type of anxiety usually makes a person only focus on situations that make them nervous and ignore everything around them. People who experience moderate anxiety tend to experience emotional anxiety such as sweaty palms, muscle tension, back pain, a shaky voice, and changes in sleep pattern.

3) Severe Anxiety

Severe anxiety is a type of anxiety that makes a person unable to think rationally and panic in certain situations. People who experience anxiety at this level usually feel scared, confused, nervous, worried and find it difficult to think clearly. Psychological reactions caused by people with this type of anxiety usually breathe faster, and the muscles are extremely tense.

4) Panic-level Anxiety

Panic-level anxiety is the highest level of other types of anxiety. This type of anxiety makes a person's abilities not fully function properly. A person may experience inability to move or speak, cannot think rationally and their perception might be distorted. People who experience anxiety at this level tend to perceive the situation they are in as dangerous and can't do anything about it. According to Peplau (1992) Extreme life stressors can cause reactions that make people feel like they are victims of crime, living in disaster and soon.

Virtual Learning

Based on the government's appeal in March 2020, the face- to-face learning system was changed to online or virtual classes in order to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. According to Pannen (1999), online or virtual learning is a learning process that occurs in virtual classrooms in cyberspace and is interconnected through the internet. Online learning refers to the use of internet network with access, connectivity, and flexibility to bring up multiple interactions (Firmansyah et al., 2021). In practice, e- teaching and learning activities are being conducted virtually through Google classes, WhatsApp

groups, Zoom meetings and Moodle platforms, among others (Wu & McGoogan, 2020). In addition, online learning is very dependent on the internet network to connect with each other. With this changing learning system, students and teachers are required to adapt for new learning systems, including speaking classes. Online learning allows teachers and students to keep in touch even though they are in different locations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a descriptive-qualitative method with case study design. Qualitative descriptive research generates a descriptive summary of events in everyday terms as experienced by people and is an appropriate research design when a straight-forward description of a phenomenon is desired. Gay and Airasian (2007, p. 217) state that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the research subject. The researchers use a descriptive method where this method is used to describe what actually happens. It is used as a guidance for conducting research from beginning to end of the work. The description of students' anxiety in speaking English is exploring using this method. The focus of this research is on students' anxiety (anxiety level and anxiety factor) in speaking English. As data, this study take from a closed-ended questionnaire.

Data collection techniques are the ways researchers collect data from the samples and informant as object researched. Data collection technique used is a questionnaire adopted from Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). The researchers explained the purpose and objectives of the questionnaire, and how to answer the questionnaire and also the estimated time required to answer the questionnaire on the main page of the google form. In collecting the data, first, the researcher distributed the online questionnaire link to participants via WhatsApp platform. Second, the students answer the questionnaire given and the researchers collect the answer from students.

Lastly, the data obtained from the PSCAS questionnaire are analyzed with Excel 2013 version in the form of percentages in the table, then the researcher determines the level of student anxiety, find the factors that most influencing students' anxiety, and then draws conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Level of Students' Anxiety in Virtual English Speaking Classroom

The following figure provides the result of questionnaire, which were obtained from the summed points of each statement in the questionnaire. Below are the levels obtained by the second semester of the English Department of Syiah Kuala University in the virtual English-speaking class:

Based on figure 1 below, it shows that the medium level is the highest level obtained by second semester students at English Education Department of Syiah Kuala University, 67% or as much as 20 students. While the low anxiety level is experienced by 20% students or 6 students, and the least is the high anxiety level by

13% which experienced by 4 students.

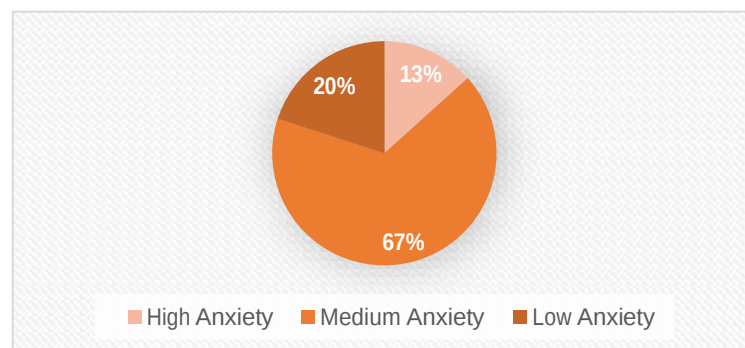


Figure 1. Students' Anxiety Level in Speaking Class

Factors of Students' Speaking Anxiety in Virtual English Speaking

There are two factors there that causing anxiety in speaking English on average students at the second semester students' English Education of Syiah Kuala University, which are internal and external factors.

Table 1. The Internal factors of students' anxiety in speaking English

No.	Indicator Components	Score (%)
1.	Lack of confidence	64%
2.	Shyness	59%
3.	Motivation	68%
4.	Fear of making mistakes	62%

From the table 1 above, it can be seen that there are four internal factors that influenced students' anxiety in the virtual English speaking class, they are: lack of confidence, shyness, motivation, and fear of making mistakes. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the motivational factor is the most dominating factor of the other four factors, which is 68%. The second is the lack of confidence factor (64%), fear of making mistakes factor (62%), and the last factor is shyness (59%).

Table 2. The External factors of students' anxiety in speaking English

No.	Indicator Components	Score (%)
1.	Lack of preparation	73%
2.	Limited vocabulary	55%
3.	Grammatical error	71%

4.	Friend/Classmate	68%
5.	Embarassment	66%

Based on the table 2, it can be seen that there are five external factors that had a correlation with students' anxiety in speaking virtual English speaking, namely: Lack of preparation, limited vocabulary, grammatical error, friend/classmate, and embarrassment. From the table above, it can be seen that the lack of preparation factor scored 73%, the limited vocabulary factor scored 55%, the grammatical error factor scored 71%, the friend/classmate factor scored 68%, the embarrassment factor score was 66%. From the five factors above, lack of preparation factor is the most dominating factor from the other factors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Anxiety is a normal emotional feeling that is often felt by many people when facing a certain situation. But anxiety can be bad if it is felt excessively, especially when learning a foreign language. It is also mentioned by Asysyfa, Handayani & Rizkiani (2019) that speaking anxiety is something that has a big influence on students' self-confidence because it often makes them experience failure when they are unable to speak and show what they know.

Moreover, Suleimenova (2013) added that students' speaking anxiety has a debilitating effect, which prevents learners from speaking, causing them to face 'mental block', remains silent and feel inferior to others. Based on some of the statements above, the researcher can conclude that the anxiety that occurs in speaking can cause students to have difficulty concentrating and processing lessons in class and as a result students' language performance can be negatively affected, and students can perform poorly when speaking English. The previous studies about students' anxiety during the virtual learning have convinced the researcher that the differences in learning systems from face-to-face to online learning can cause students' anxiety in learning languages, and can affect students' language achievement.

From the results above, it can be seen that the average second semester students at the English Education Department of Syiah Kuala experienced a level of anxiety at the medium level or can be categorized into moderate anxiety type. Moderate anxiety is a feeling of anxiety that arises in a person when facing something different from usual and warrants special attention (Keltner, 2013). At the medium level, students may feel nervous and worry at the same time. This type of anxiety usually makes a person only focus on situations that make them nervous, and ignore everything around them. People who experience moderate anxiety tend to experience emotional anxiety such as sweaty palms, muscle tension, back pain, a shaky voice, and changes in sleep pattern. Meanwhile, the factors that most influence students from internal factors are motivation factors, and from external factors are lack of preparation factors.

It can be concluded that the average student lacks sufficient motivation or encouragement to learn a foreign language, which can greatly affect their language achievement. Motivation is something that comes from within a person, but can also be influenced by others. Therefore, in the external factor,

many previous studies stated that lack of preparation is one of the factors that make students anxious when learning a foreign language (Liu & Jackson, 2011). This of course can have a bad effect on students' abilities, especially in the speaking aspect. Before starting to learn, especially in the process of learning a foreign language, preparation is one of a very important factor. It is also mentioned by Chivers and Shoolbred (2007) that good preparation and planning before studying are essential for a successful presentation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of data analysis that had been conducted by using PSCAS questionnaire adopted by Yaikhong & Usaha (2012), the researcher can conclude that the average second semester students of English Education Department of Syiah Kuala are at the medium anxiety level, which is obtained as much as 67% students. At this medium level, students tend to feel moderate anxiety when speaking in virtual classes, which usually causes psychological reactions such as sweating, nervousness, depression, shaky voice, and experiencing nervous and worried at the same time. Anxiety is something that many foreign language learners experience, and is one of the common processes encountered when someone learns a new language.

Besides, the researchers also found that there are two types of factors that influence students' speaking anxiety, namely internal factors or factors that come from within students, and external factors or factors that are influenced by things outside of students, such as situation or environment faced by students. From the results of the PSCAS questionnaire adopted from Yaikhong & Usaha (2012) that have been conducted before, researchers can conclude that of the other eight factors, lack of preparation is the highest factor in influencing the anxiety of second semester students of English Education Department of Syiah Kuala in speaking in virtual speaking classes, with a score of 73%. And, the lowest factor influencing students' speaking anxiety of the other eight factors is the limitation of vocabulary with a score of 55%. This means that the main factors that most influence students' speaking anxiety are external factors, that arise from the situation faced by students.

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