

ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG INDONESIAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS: IN SEARCH OF CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRAK

In the last few decades, foreign language speaking anxiety (hereafter, FLSA) has been a debatable investigative issue among linguists and TESOL practitioners. One of the most salient factors is it generates an incapacitating impact for speakers to communicate orally in English as a foreign language. However, delving learning activities as a cause of FLSA and its solutions, notably in Indonesian secondary school level remains scarce. To fill the void, this study scrutinized the specific learning activities causing learners' FLSA in the classroom and the solutions to resolve them. Three junior high school learners were recruited as

the participants. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). On the one hand, the findings outlined that the students suffered from FLSA when they engaged in questions and answer session of the classroom English language learning activities and speaking performance activities. On the other hand, the solutions of such FLSA encompassed focusing on the learning process and ignoring the disruptive behaviour of their classmates. Pedagogically, creating a less anxious atmosphere of learning English speaking practices enables students to successfully acquire English language skills (e.g., speaking) and adapt to appropriate social and academic milieu.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia taking English as a foreign language has various problems when the English is taught and learned in schools. One of the problems is that the learning of the language, however, can be an anxiety-provoking experience (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; He, 2017). It is understandable since the prominent reason of it is foreign language speaking anxiety (He, 2013; He, 2017). As a result, the learners may have difficulties in learning English with their teachers.

Speaking anxiety is commonly considered as one of causes for EFL learners when learning English with their teachers in the classrooms. When it occurs, they will be afraid of expressing themselves and ideas orally (Basic, 2011; Akkakoson, 2016). In addition, the learners feeling anxious in their foreign language learning may find their study less enjoyable (Gregersen, 2005; Marwan, 2007). It makes them unable to focus on the learning

process. Furthermore, they will probably ignore the learning processes and objectives. Consequently, it may lead them to academic failure of English.

In the last few decades, various studies in relation to speaking anxiety have been well-documented. A study found that most learners experienced a certain degree of anxiety in their foreign language learning (Marwan, 2007). In addition, it discovered the primary causes of their anxiety, such as lack of confidence, lack of preparation and fear of failing the class. Furthermore, preparation, relaxation, positive thinking and peer seeking are the strategies of how students to manage their anxiety. Another study focused on finding out coping strategies for foreign language speaking anxiety drawing comprehensive data from 302 university students and 30 teachers of English at two universities in different parts of China (He, 2017). It discovered some strategies directed to participants of the study. Additinally, Bashori, van Hout, Strik & Cucchiarini (2020) scrutinized web-based language learning and speaking anxiety in Indonesian EFL context. They reported that students experienced a moderate-to-serious level of FLSA. They argued that website helped them reduced speaking anxiety. In other words, ASR-based websites were more preferred to speaking to peers directly. More recently, Lindner, Dagöö, Hamilton, Miloff, Andersson, Schill, & Carlbring (2021) examined virtual reality exposure therapy for public speaking anxiety in routine. They found that public speaking anxiety lessened drastically during the primary three-hour session. This occurred as similar as the prior trials (Hidayati, Dewi, Nurhaedin, & Rosmala, 2020).

Considering the previous studies along with its findings, there are some limitations. Marwan (2007) suggested explicitly for future research to conduct similar studies involving foreign language learners of junior and high schools since the sample was only a limited number of Indonesian students undertaking degree courses and English programmes at one of universities in Indonesia. In addition, He (2017) recommended further research to be conducted to explore the influence of students' FLSA on their foreign language learning by examining the correlation between their FLSA level and their oral foreign language proficiency. In addition, it is found that some junior high school students experience anxiety when learning English speaking with their teacher. Therefore, this study attempts to fill one of the gaps by investigating what specific learning activities cause the EFL learners' speaking anxiety in English language teaching and how the learners overcome their anxiety during learning English speaking in the classroom (Yundayani, Abdullah, Tandiana, & Sutrisno, 2021).

This study proposes two questions, as follows:

1. What specific learning activities cause EFL learners' speaking anxiety in English language learning in their classroom?
2. How do learners overcome their speaking anxiety during learning English in the classroom?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied classroom research as the research design. The researcher believes that the design is appropriate for examining her classroom phenomenon without providing any pedagogical treatments (Hopkins, 2008; McDonagh, Roche, Sullivan, & Glenn, 2019). The design was chosen since the researcher only attempted to investigate

the phenomenon of EFL learners' speaking anxiety, more particularly about what kind of activities caused the anxiety and how the learners overcame the anxiety, without giving any treatments during the research.

Data Collection and Research Instruments

The researchers implemented semi-structured interviews. Before interviewing, the researcher asked for permission from the school authority. Then, the researcher tried to be familiarized with the environment of the school. Afterwards, the researcher selected participants by implementing purposive sampling (Creswell, 2012). Then, the semi-structured interview was conducted to get richer data. The interview enabled participants of the research to speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings (Berg, 2007; Alshenqeeti, 2014; Apriliyanti, Hidayati, Supriyono, & Abdullah, 2021). The interview was a focus group interview accomplished with a group of three students. The focus group interview was chosen since it helped the research minimize time spent and generate a more relaxed atmosphere for the participants. During the process of the interview, the participants' responses of interview questions were audiotaped. The interview was conducted in a quiet place where distraction was limited. Afterwards, the results of the interviews were transcribed into written form for analysis purpose.

Research Participants

The researchers selected one of junior high schools located in Pangandaran, West Java, Indonesia as the site of the research. It was chosen because the researcher believed that it was the best one which could help her understand the phenomenon under the research. In addition, in effort of recruiting research participants, the researcher searched for the ones having the similar characteristics and experience related to speaking anxiety. Then, three students were identified. They were invited to be the participants by the researcher. It was done by asking them to fill consent forms provided. They are seventh graders of one of junior high schools located in Pangandaran. Their ages are ranged from 13 to 14 years old. Their first language is all Sundanese. Indonesian is their second language while English is their additional language. They dominantly speak Sundanese in their daily life while Indonesian and English are applied only in certain circumstances, such as formal one. All of them experiencing speaking anxiety participated in semi-structured interview attempting to discover what actually caused their anxiety in speaking English and how they overcame it. They were selected since they had similar experience of anxiety when speaking English during learning English in their classroom.

Technique of Analysing Data

This research analysed research data by using thematic analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since this qualitative research had qualitative data, the technique was considered by the researcher as a suitable technique for analysing the data. As supported by Braun & Clarke (2006), the technique is accessible and flexible approach to identify and analyse qualitative data which will generate codes and themes related to the data.

In order to get valid themes from data related to this research topic, the researchers undertook a step by step guide of doing the thematic analysis, namely familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first research question aimed at exploring learning activities causing EFL learners' speaking anxiety in the classroom. Additionally, the second one focused on exploring how the learners overcome their speaking anxiety. Then, by analysing the research data using the thematic analysis, the researcher made decision to produce themes answering the questions provided below:

Figure 2. Final Generated Themes

Learning Activities Causing Learners' Speaking Anxiety	Learners' Ways of Overcoming Their Speaking Anxiety
Question and Answer activities	Focusing on the learning process
Speaking Performance activities	Ignoring the other learners' disruption

Learning Activities Causing Learners' Speaking Anxiety

Learners' speaking anxiety occurred during this research had some causes. One of them, which was the focus of this research, was that they felt anxious because of the learning activities itself. In the learning process, like common learning process, the teacher began the learning activities by asking the learners their conditions, presences, homework, and so on. When the teacher asked them using Bahasa Indonesia, they did not seem anxious. Then, when the teacher spoke English, learners' speaking anxiety came to surface.

Vignette #1. Teacher's Questions

Researcher:	<i>Berdasarkan pengalaman anda, aktivitas pembelajaran yang berkaitan dengan berbicara bahasa inggris apa yang membuat anda gugup?</i>
Student B :	<i>Saya merasa gerogi saat saya ditanya oleh guru saya, bu.</i>
Researcher:	<i>Kenapa hal itu bisa terjadi pada diri anda?</i>
Student B :	<i>Karena saya kadang tidak mengerti mengenai materi yang guru saya tanyakan. Saya gugup karena saya tidak tahu arti kosa kata bahasa inggris yang sedang dipelajari sehingga saya khawatir saya akan ditanya oleh guru saya mengenai materi tersebut.</i>

The learners, however, did not seem anxious together at the same time. It was because questions from the teacher were asked to all the learners commonly in the classroom. Some of the learners with less of anxiety would be able to answer the questions correctly and loudly, so that the others having anxiety were safe and stayed silent. Ahmed, Pathan & Khan, (2017) explained that learners with anxiety problems preferred remaining silent because they feared losing face in front of their peers when their speaking mistakes were highlighted by the teachers. It was indicated that the students seemed anxious since they had poor comprehension when communicating in English (Andriani & Abdullah, 2017).

Questions from the teacher did not only occur in the beginning of the learning process. The teachers asked questions to the learners whenever necessary even in the

middle of the learning process. It was necessary to do in order that all of the learners could participate actively in the learning process. The teacher decided to ask some questions to the learners with anxiety problem. The teacher asked them about the last teaching materials they had studied together in the previous meetings and the teaching materials being learned. Additionally, the teacher also requested them to read English sentences learned. As a result, the students could not answer the questions and did the teacher's request well. See the following evidence.

Vignette #2. Impact of the Anxiety

Researcher:	<i>Apa akibatnya pada proses pembelajaran berbicara bahasa Inggris tersebut?</i>
Student B :	<i>Saya tidak bisa mengikuti pembelajaran dengan baik, bu.</i>

The impact indicated that the learners could not participate well in the learning process. When the participation was not good enough, they would be able to achieve learning objectives. As a consequence, it may lead them to failure of their learning. As supported by Yalçın & İnceçay (2014) foreign language speaking anxiety may lead to students' poor performance and academic achievement (Rianti, Hidayati, Pertamina, Andriani, & Abdullah, 2020).

Another main cause of learners' speaking anxiety was to perform teaching materials in front of the class. Before the performance time, the teacher explained the teaching materials about agreement and disagreement. Then, the teacher continued giving example of dialogue related to the materials. The teacher also gave the learners example how to read the dialogue correctly. In the main activity of teaching and learning process, all of the learners were required to perform the dialogue in front of the class in a group consisting of two learners. The teacher then gave them several minutes to prepare themselves, so that all of them could be ready to perform.

When the preparation time was over, the teacher invited a group of the learners to perform in front of the class. It was to give the same occasion for all of the students to be the first performing the dialogue. Unluckily, no group responded. Then, the teacher pointed a group to begin the performance. The members of the group seemed nervous when coming forward. They looked shy to be the first. It was also because they were shy students. It is understandable since Horwitz et al (1986) said that general personality traits such as quietness and shyness, are some reasons for speaking anxiety.

Vignette #3. Performing in Front of the Class

Researcher:	<i>Berdasarkan pengalaman anda, aktivitas pembelajaran yang berkaitan dengan berbicara bahasa Inggris apa yang membuat anda gugup?</i>
Student A :	<i>Aktivitas pembelajaran speaking dengan praktek di depan kelas, bu.</i>
Researcher:	<i>Kenapa hal itu bisa terjadi pada diri anda?</i>
Student A :	<i>Itu terjadi karena saya malu kalau saya tidak bisa, bu.</i>

Their nervousness occurred since they thought that they would not be able to perform well. It was also because they were watched by the entire class members. It made

their nervousness worse. In addition, being active to participate in the learning process was not their habit because of their anxious problems. As a result, their performance was not done well. As supported by Cui (2011), learners with high anxiety often perform at lower levels than those with lower anxiety.

Learners' Ways of Overcoming Their Speaking Anxiety

Having anxiety problems were not advantageous for the learners. It led them to poor learning participation. To overcome the problems, the learners shared their own ways. See the following evidence.

Vignette #4. Focusing on the Learning Process

Researcher:	<i>Bagaimana anda menghadapi perasaan tersebut agar anda bisa mengikuti pembelajaran berbicara bahasa Inggris dengan baik?</i>
Student C :	<i>Saya mencoba untuk lebih fokus dalam memperhatikan penjelasan guru dan lebih giat dalam belajar, bu.</i>

The learners did not give up on learning with the teacher even they had anxiety problems. They kept trying to learn as good as possible. They tried to focus more on the learning process. They paid a good attention to their teacher's explanation. They asked questions related to the teaching materials they did not understand to the teacher even they used Bahasa Indonesia. In addition, they wrote the learning materials and read it carefully to strengthen their understanding about it. Therefore, they were not left behind with the others in understanding the teaching materials.

When the learners with speaking anxiety problems performed in front of the class, they did some mistakes in pronouncing words. As stated by Azarfam & Baki (2012) that this kind of language anxiety could affect the speaking skills of learners by lowering the quality of oral performance as the anxiety increases. It made the other learners who watched them mocked them. They made the classroom noisy, so that the learners performing in front of the class felt more nervous and disrupted.

Vignette #5. Friends' Disruption

Researcher:	<i>Berdasarkan pengalaman anda, apa yang membuat rasa gugup anda semakin buruk saat pembelajaran berbicara bahasa Inggris sedang berlangsung?</i>
Student A :	<i>Kondisi kelas yang berisik, bu.</i>
Researcher:	<i>Kenapa hal itu bisa terjadi pada anda?</i>
Student A :	<i>Itu terjadi karena banyak yang berbicara tentang penampilan saya di depan kelas, bu.</i>

The learners having their anxiety worse however needed to finish their performance. Even their friends made their performance in front of the class hard, they kept going until it was finished. They overcame their speaking anxiety by ignoring their friends who disturbed them. See the evidence provided below.

Vignette #6. Ignoring Friends' Disruption

Researcher:	<i>Bagaimana anda menghadapi perasaan tersebut agar anda bisa mengikuti pembelajaran speaking dengan baik?</i>
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Student A :	<i>Saya berusaha untuk lebih fokus terhadap penampilan saya dan diam. Saya tidak membalas pembicaraan siswa-siswa yang lain.</i>
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Instead of mocking their friends back, they tried to focus more on performing the dialogue even some mistakes were done. They also tried to be relaxed and enjoyed their performance even it was difficult. As a result, by doing so, they could still participate in the learning process.

Discussion

Exploring specific learning activities causing EFL learners' speaking anxiety when learning English speaking in their classroom and how they overcome it are the focus of this research. The overall results indicate activities causing the learners to have anxiety are the ones demanding them to speak English with the teacher and the others. As shared by one of the participants, being asked by the teacher using English made him anxious. The anxiety itself appeared since the learner felt fear of answering the questions incorrectly. It was explained that the fear of communicating with foreign language instructors causes anxiety among learners since they are afraid of committing errors (Ahmed, Pathan & Khan, 2017; Tandiana, Abdullah & Komara, 2018; Jabar, Hidayati & Supriyono, 2018)

When the learners were asked to perform the learning materials in front of the class, they did that in doubt and fright. The performance itself functioned as the practice for their comprehension of the learning material. The feelings led their anxiety worse. It makes sense since Zhiping & Paramasivam (2013) explain that learners suffering from communication comprehension usually do not feel easy communicate in a foreign language among other people, especially if they are needed to use their listening and speaking skills. When they could not perform well, they were afraid of being highlighted by the teacher in front of the class which can make them embarrassed. Mak (2011) asserts that fear of negative evaluation make many foreign language learners experience anxiety. The students with the anxiety problems could not perform as good as the teacher's expectation. Cui (2011) supports that learners with high anxiety often perform at lower levels than those with lower anxiety. As a consequence, the teacher has poor learners' performances (Jabar, Hidayati & Supriyono, 2018).

Overcoming anxiety when learning English speaking was necessary for the learners in order that they could participate in the learning well and achieve good learning objectives. Since students with higher level of foreign language anxiety receive lower grades than the others with less of the anxiety (Horwitz, 2001), the learners needed to keep their focus on learning process, so that they could avoid the poor learning participation and objectives. It was done by paying good attention to the teacher's explanation, studying harder and asking the teacher about the leaning materials they did not understand yet. By doing so, they still could understand the teaching materials.

When it was necessary for them to perform the teaching materials in front of the class, their speaking anxiety appeared caused by their friends' disruption. The fear of negative evaluation from their peers is one of the causes of their speaking anxiety (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009;). Such learning difficulty made them feel anxious. As supported by scholars that students' anxiety about foreign language learning is likely to

be a consequence of their foreign language learning difficulties (Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky, 2000; Tandiana, Abdullah, Komara, 2018). The disruption was overcome by being ignorant to it. The learners attempted to focus on their own performance. As a result, the learners still could still finish their performance.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study aims at exploring what learning activities cause EFL learners' speaking anxiety and how they overcome it. Reading all the findings of this research, the learners are anxious due to teachers' questions using English and teacher's request to perform the teaching materials in front of the class. It makes their participation in learning process decreased and their performance quality poor. To overcome the anxiety, the learners try to focus more on the learning process by paying more attention to the teacher's explanation and ignoring disruption from the others, so that they can still participate in the learning activities.

Although the present study offers valuable insights of expanding the investigative attempts in speaking anxiety, it is limited by some factors. Firstly, this study is absent from conducting classroom observation to collect the data due to time constraints. Additionally, it is also absent of psychological and sociological perspectives to view the phenomena of speaking anxiety. Furthermore, it only focuses partially on the learners. This study does not scrutinize how the English teacher's teaching techniques affect the students speaking anxiety. By considering the limitations, future researchers are recommended to fill one of the gaps as their future investigative attempts

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