An Analysis of Student's Speaking Anxiety and its Effect on Speaking Performance

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Abstract:
This study was carried out to seek if there is a negative psychological factor known as anxiety could really affect students' speaking performance and to find the difference in speaking performance between students with higher level of anxiety and students with lower level of anxiety and also to seek which of the factors of anxiety is dominant. The participants of this research were the first year students of SMPN 2 Bandar Lampung. There were 27 students in that class. The research design was ex post facto to seek the correlation between the variables. Questionnaire and speaking test were used as data collection and then they were analyzed by using Independent T-Test and Linear Regression to test the hypotheses. The results show that the students' speaking performance significantly differs between the two groups. The mean score of higher level of anxiety students was 62.37 while the mean score for lower level of anxiety students was 83.81. Based on the analysis by using Mann-Whitney U Test, it shows that lower level anxiety students have higher score in speaking performance than those with higher level of anxiety as the computation resulted in p value at 0.005. The next analysis by using Linear Regression resulted in r^2 (0.319). The data show that speaking anxiety may give negative contribution to the overall students' speaking performance achievement. It also found that nervousness is dominant factor followed by worry and tension.
Keywords: speaking anxiety, speaking performance, feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, worry

1. Introduction

In language teaching, anxiety becomes an interesting variable that can influence language learning achievement. The effect can be either negative or positive. However, it has been a matter of considerable interest in language education setting for educators since it is a major obstacle to foreign language learning that the learners need to overcome (Wu, 2010; Zheng, 2008). It is said that one-third of all foreign language learners experience some level of language anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Language anxiety has been a topic of much interest and research in recent years.

Of the language skills, speaking becomes the major effect of language learners' anxiety. Oral communication is two way processes between a listener and speaker (Byrne, 1984:8). Speaking basically involves both productive and receptive skills. As a productive skill, a speaker produces and uses the language by expressing ideas and at the same time he or she tries to get the ideas or the message across, that is, the process of giving message or encoding process.

Within the field of research itself, lots have been done in terms all language skills. Speaking might have its own numerous researches. Among the four language skills, much attention of research on anxiety has been given to speaking skill. This case is also based on the fact that speaking skill is likely more complex compared to other skills. There are some many variables that can influence learners' speaking performance. Among these variables, language anxiety is very common problem that influences students' speaking performance.

Language anxiety, a complex psychological construct, is regarded as an affective variable in the language learning. It means that language anxiety has also become one of the factor involved in the success of language learning, either it is in positive or negative way. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis also states that affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety play a facilitative role in second language acquisition. To be precise, he said that learners with low anxiety have less affective filter to block their language acquisition.

Students feel anxious regardless of their preparation of learning that language; like wondering about what other might think of them when they perform their English, the familiarity of the topic used in English learning, how low their achievement could be, etc. Whatever the cause, whatever the level of anxiety, we can be sure of one thing: anxiety will affect students' performance (Saito and Samimy, 1996). This is why learning other language could be hard for them. One is regarded succeed in learning a language if he could perform that language well enough to be understood by other people. It means that skills like speaking and listening become more important than the other skills.

However, learners' language anxiety might not be eliminated or avoided. It is almost impossible for language learner not to have the feeling of anxious. Feeling anxious is an indication that he or she has courage to be successful language learner. In this sense, anxiety can be considered as positive language learning variable. Foreign language students' positive expectations for their own performance are important predictors of their future success (Daley et al., 1999)

Based on those considerations, this research aimed to find the significant difference in speaking performance between the students with higher level of speaking anxiety and those lower level ones and also to find the significant influence of students' speaking anxiety on speaking performance. Investigating the dominant aspect language anxiety is another aim of the research.

2. Literature Review

It is believed that language anxiety can occur if students are exposed to several negative experiences in a foreign language context (Chen and Chang, 2004; Sparks et al., 2000). Moreover, anxiety can make learners get discouraged, lose faith in their abilities, escape from participating in classroom activities, and even give up the effort to learn a language well (Na, 2007).

Horwitz et al. (1986) classified foreign language anxiety into three components, that is,

1. Communication apprehension, which arises from learners' inability to adequately express mature thoughts and ideas.
2. Fear of negative social evaluation, which arises from a learner's need to make a positive social impression on others.
3. Test anxiety, an apprehension about academic evaluation.

In communication apprehension, most language learners have difficulty not only in speaking but also in listening to comprehend messages from others (Horwitz et al., 1986). Early studies on foreign language anxiety had an obvious focus on the language skill of speaking (e.g., Aida, 1994; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Phillips, 1992; Anandari, 2015) and the foreign language anxiety study related to other language skills such as reading, listening and writing have not drawn researchers' attention until very recently (Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999; Saito et al., 1999; Vogely, 1998). Maybe it is because in speaking, anxiety could be seen clearly at the time the learner performing their speaking.

There are other variables that make learners anxious in learning language. Zhang and Zhong (2012) mention that the main cause of anxiety stems from "learners' unrealistic or erroneous beliefs about language learning". Other learners think they lack the aptitude or gift to learn a new language (Price, 1991). However, some believe that two years or less is sufficient for them to become proficient in another language (Horwitz, 1988) without estimating the difficulty of the language learning task, and therefore, they could possibly experience conflict resulted in anxiety.

Hsu (2004) conducted his research about reading anxiety and speaking performance of 125 junior military college EFL students and found that anxious students tended to recall less content of the text than less anxious students. Similarly, Sellers (2000) also investigated the possible relationship of language anxiety to speaking performance with 89 Spanish as foreign language university students. The results revealed that speaking anxiety was related to, but distinguished from, language anxiety. The students with high speaking anxiety and language anxiety could recall less content of

the article. This is likely the outcome of the research that the writer expected by considering that anxiety is a negative factor rather than positive.

It could be said that those previous studies on anxiety and L2 learning center on the discussion of the relationship between language anxiety and language-skill-specific (i.e., speaking, listening, writing, and reading) anxiety, and also their roles in L2 learning. They suggest that listening, reading and writing anxiety, is related to, but can be distinguished from, language anxiety. Most of them find that there is a negative relationship between language anxiety and L2 performance. Also, language-skill-specific anxiety and performance are negatively correlated, meaning that students with higher listening, speaking, writing, and reading anxiety tend to have lower listening, speaking, writing, and reading performance respectively.

According to Seligman (2001), anxiety (also called angst or worry) is a psychological and physiological state characterized by somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. It is the displeasing feeling of fear and concern. The root meaning of the word anxiety is 'to vex or trouble'; in either presence or absence of psychological stress, anxiety can create feelings of fear, worry, uneasiness, and dread. However, anxiety should not be confused with fear, it is more of a dreaded feeling about something which appears intimidating and can overcome an individual. Anxiety is considered to be a normal reaction to a stressor. It may help an individual to deal with a demanding situation by prompting them to cope with it. However, when anxiety becomes overwhelming, it may fall under the classification of an anxiety disorder.

Along with Seligman's own definition, Spielberg (1983) previously defined anxiety as subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Since it is a subjective feeling of nervousness and worry, individuals will surely experience different levels of anxiety depending on their personal situation.

The studies between language anxiety and language skills have mostly related to the oral performance (Horwitz, et. al., 1986; Aida, 1994). Most anxiety studies in a language learning situation appear to be associated with the oral aspect (Horwitz et. al, 1986; Young, 1991; Daly, 1991; Philips, 1992). This means that, as mentioned earlier, of the fours skills, speaking is probably considered the most stressful for second language learners.

In addition, the study on in Speech production done by Anandari (2015) reveals that foreign language anxiety appeared among the students and that self-reflection activities helped them to realize their strengths, weakness and help them to problem solving in order to enhance their public speaking performance.

3. Research Methodology

There were two things that have been investigated in this research. The level of students speaking anxiety was investigated by using questionnaires. In this research, a set of specific questionnaires developed by Saito (1999), Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale was used to determine who the variables were. To measure students' speaking performance, two sets of speaking performance test as a set of

elicitation test developed based on school syllabus. The participants of this research were the students of the first grade at SMPN 2, Bandar Lampung, and lower secondary school. They were basically considered as beginner of foreign language learners. English is not formally taught in elementary school. Besides that, English is not used in society. Most teachers teach English focusing on grammar; they explain the rule of sentence; how to make good, acceptable sentences. They focus on accuracy rather than fluency by implementing correction on almost every mistake made by the learners. Therefore, the main purpose of the EFL teaching in Indonesia should be based on the development of the four skills rather than instilling strict grammar rules on students.

The procedure of this research was implementing speaking test involving two raters to get reliable score of speaking. The elicitation test is in form of describing the objects. The participants were asked to talk based on their experience by giving additional opinion and critics. The next procedure was administrating anxiety test to the students. The real test consisted questionnaires test to see their level of anxiety and to seek the dominant factor of anxiety that influences speaking performance. The data were then gathered and analyzed.

4. Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine foreign language anxiety levels of students studying English Language focusing on speaking skill, when they were in lower secondary school of the first class. As it has been mentioned, the data were collected during they performed speaking activity. The questionnaire test was done to classify the sample into groups based on their level of speaking anxiety. The test consisted of 20 items and was administered in 20 minutes. The reliability of the questionnaire itself is 0.766 as it is a good number of alpha for reliability.

Based on the result of the test, the writer analyzed the score then grouping the sample into three groups. The upper group consisted of the 27% who make the highest scores, the lower group consisted 27% who make the lowest score, and the middle group consisted the remaining 46%. The total score of the questionnaire is 1665 with the mean 61.67. The highest score is 79, while the lowest score was 47. Among 27 students who followed the test, 7 students are classified into higher level speaking anxiety group, 7 students are classified into lower level speaking anxiety group, and the other 13 are put into medium group.

Figure 1. Mann-Whitney U Test result of Higher and Lower SA

Test Statistic

	Speaking performance
Mann-Whitney U	3.000
Wilcoxon W	31.000
Z	-2.784
Asymp Sig (2-tailed)	005
Exact Sig [2*(1-tailed Sig)]	.004a

a not corrected for ties

Table 1. Result of the Speaking performance Test

Higher Level SA			Lower Level SA	
No.	SA Score	SC Score	SA Score	SC Score
1	79	80	49	80
2	77	53.3	48	86.7
3	77	56.7	47	93.3
4	74	53.3	50	86.7
5	70	53.3	49	90
6	68	80	55	63.3
7	67	60	54	86.7
Total	512	436.6	352	586.7
Mean	73.14	62.37	50.29	83.81

The result of the computation showed that *p* value is 0.004 with the level of significance 3.000 (in Mann-Whitney U test, it is that *U* value). From this data, we knew that there is a statistically significant difference of speaking performance between the students with higher level of anxiety and the students with lower level of anxiety. By looking at the means of the data above itself, we also found that students with lower of anxiety have a better speaking performance. As for the second question, the writer used *Linear Regression* to measure the effect of speaking anxiety.

Figure 4. Linear Regression of Speaking Anxiety on Speaking performance

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.565[a]	.319	.292	10.63684

a. Predictors: (Constant), Speaking anxiety

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	122.266	14.576		8.388	.000
	Speaking anxiety	-.802	.234	-.565	-3.426	.002

a. Dependent Variable: : Speaking performance

From the result of the computation above, we know that speaking anxiety gave an influence on speaking performance, as the r^2 is 0.319.

The first finding of this research showed that students with lower level of anxiety gave a better result with their speaking test than those who have higher level of anxiety. In other words, the students with good speaking performance tend to have less anxiety; they feel confidence with their performance

The mean of speaking performance score between the two groups itself gave quite a wide gap for the writer to make a generalization of their achievement. Since the *p* value (0.005) was largely less than *U* value (3.000), and then the two groups had an overall more than enough significant difference of speaking performance.

When the writer administered the test, most students of the higher level of anxiety seemed restless. They changed their sitting often more than those with lower level of anxiety. And some of them could not help themselves from looking at their surrounding, searching for an inspiration as they said so when the writer asked them why. Actually, these are the symptoms of anxiety; precisely behavioral and somatically symptoms. Different condition was showed by the less anxious students. They seemed calm and quiet when they speak. Most of the students with less anxiety also got higher score than those with higher level of anxiety.

Another finding of this research derived from the second hypothesis was that anxiety gave quite contribution to the students' speaking performance. Students with medium level of anxiety were quite adequate level to perform speaking task as their score in speaking performance itself was satisfied enough for their level. Medium level of anxiety could only affect a little to their speaking performance.

In relation with the result of speaking performance test, the questionnaire of speaking anxiety showed that item number 14 was getting the highest score among all items. This item deals with the feeling of nervousness. All members of students with higher level of anxiety scored it high while only 5 members of lower level anxiety students scored it high. This particular item itself belongs to behavioral aspect. It means that most students agreed that in order to do speaking task, one should getting used to do it. The other behavioral aspect items (items number 5, 9, 12) were also getting higher scoring from the students compare to other items on other aspects. On the other hand, items of cognitive aspect of anxiety were getting lower score than other aspects even though most of the questionnaire items were part of it. It might be suggested that though members of higher level anxiety students scored it high, but most of the students in class 7.3 were having a quite medium and low anxiety of how intriguing English could be for them.

The investigations have indicated that speaking anxiety is negatively associated with the quality of the message encoded (Burgoon and Hale, 1983) and with individuals actual speaking behavior. It was found that the effects of speaking anxiety on speaking quality can be observed when they talk in front of the class. Speakers speak about personal topics that require disclosure of personal feelings, experiences and attitudes. Speaking anxiety has been found to influence willingness to speak or to take advanced speaking courses.

Anxiety, which sometimes regarded as the being behind their reluctance should not take all the blame. It is just one of it. It might be good to say that anxiety is not as annoying as it seems. As a matter of fact, knowing your own level of anxiety might be useful for yourself. Scovel (1978) also pointed out that it has quite facilitative effect on language learning. Some certain level of discomfort and unpleasant feeling would keep the students alert. Thus, we could say that anxiety could be radar for someone to

act more careful, paying more attention to anything that could trigger their anxiety. If anxiety arises repeatedly around a certain problem, it is often a sign that we need to take a closer look. Students that could overcome their anxiety will surely be able to learn anything, as he has nothing to block his comprehensible input from being used for acquisition (Krashen, 1981). When speaking as a skill is considered, learners thought that they lack appropriate strategies like organizing ideas, gathering information, transferring ideas. Moreover they thought that their English is not enough to express themselves clearly. This makes them feeling anxius.

5. Conclusions

This study has concluded that a half year period, students studying English Language, especially speaking skill. The present case study was carried out to investigate second language learners reasons of anxiety and their level in the speaking courses. Students were asked to orally describe things, like picture. They talked based on their experience by giving additional opinion and critics. They experienced moderate level of anxiety. It was observed that language anxiety levels of the students did not decrease during this period. The level of anxiety increase especially when they are asked to speak in front of the class, but not when they speak in a small group.

Based on the data analysis and result discussion, some conclusions can be drawn.

1. There is a significant difference of speaking performance between higher level anxiety students and lower level anxiety students. This difference also means that students with lower level of anxiety have higher score in speaking performance than students with higher level of anxiety. It is clear that learners with lower level of anxiety have better performance in their speaking.
2. Since *p* value (0.002) is less than α (0.05) in Linear Regression and, it can be concluded that anxiety could really influence students' speaking performance. R^2 shows that its influence about 30% of the overall score on speaking performance. This is due to the fact that foreign language anxiety influences communicative performance.
3. It also found that nervousness is dominant factor followed by worry and tension. Nervousness can occur when learners do not have self-reliance in their performance. This happens if they do not have linguistic competence to produce their language performance. On the other hand, the language teacher should encourage learners to communicate and create situation to have a real language use in the classroom.

The results in this investigation may not be sufficient to provide in-depth insights into students' foreign anxiety levels. The result might different with different learners and different contact. Therefore, further both qualitative and quantitative research with large samples using participants who study EFL departments of different universities may be conducted concurrently.

With this regards, the main purpose of the English Language teaching in Indonesia should be focused on the priority of communicative function and the development of the four skills rather than instilling strict grammar rules on students, focused on

fluency rather than accuracy. In this case, interviewing students about their sources of concerns is recommended in order to reveal whether it is related to their professional expectations or not. The result of the research can used in development of foreign language education, including material development, and language teaching techniques as well. By introducing level of second language speaking anxiety, the present study intends to help speaking teachers identify their learners' reasons of failure in speaking classes and help their learners in overcoming this anxiety.

Further research can be done on their anxiety levels may also be recommended whether students who gained more skills in L2 are still anxious, or whether they are more or less anxious compared to other students. The result of this study can be different in different subject and situation.

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