Significant Relationship between Anxiety Level and Oral Communication Performances: The Case of English Education Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to find correlation between students' anxiety level and their relation to speaking performances, a quantitative research design using correlation method was used in conjunction with SPSS software to determine the connection between both variables. The method of anxiety data collection was accomplished through online FLCAS questionnaires with participants from English Education major learners from Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik on fourth semester, all which would be then correlated to their final speaking score provided by the lecturer. The result found that there is a significant correlation between EFL Anxiety and students' speaking performances with r= -.702 and p= .000. Therefore, it can be claimed that N0 was rejected while Na was accepted. When compared to results from previous studies on anxiety from non-English department, this shows that anxiety also negatively affect learners who enrolled in English specialized major, and not limited to learners who need to participate English lesson in compulsory class.

Keywords: *Oral Communication; Anxiety; EFL*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an important aspect to possess and master in order to decipher meaning and convey messages to others, whether it is for personal or professional reason. This is held especially true with EFL learning both in theoretical and practical use, as in the ever-growing international community, we have English as a mean to break through invisible barrier between different language users and enable meaningful interactions to occur within every aspect of our daily life, whether it is to simply convey our opinions during casual conversation, to communicate information with co-workers in our workplace, or even inside the confinement of classroom between foreign exchange students. So, it can be concluded that foreign language education is important in this day and age to better develop our communication competence. With one of the most important communication skills in EFL being oral communication skill, which is our ability to produce and deliver messages through spoken form. According to Huang, (2018) speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts. Another definition of speaking given by Guo et al., (2018)complement the previous definitions by mentioning that speaking could be explained as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. As a productive skill in language, speaking is an interactive process that requires two or more people to work, which is different than writing skill. According to Ann Raimes (1983); Kiliç, (2019) some of the distinctions between speaking and writing is the following:

(1) Speaking is usually spontaneous and unplanned. Most writing takes time. It is planned. We can go back and changed what we have written.

(2) A speaker speaks to a listener who are right there, nodding or frowning, interrupting or questioning. For the writer, the reader's response is delayed or non-existent. The writer has only that one chance to convey information and be interesting and accurate enough to hold the reader's attention.

From the differences between both productive skills, we could eventually see the difficulty that might be experienced in oral production, the fact that in speaking we need to communicate with others, along with the spontaneous and unplanned nature of it could cause some distress to speaker and trigger an affective factor known as anxiety. In general, even though we all know what anxiety is and we all have experienced feelings of anxiousness, anxiety is still not easy to define in a simple sentence. It is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry. While on the other hand, a very common definition of foreign language anxiety is from Leong & Ahmadi, n.d.(2019) who refer to it as an unpleasant emotional condition characterized by feeling of tension and apprehension. Research and investigation have been conducted regarding the nature and relation between speaking anxiety and foreign language oral communication competence had been carried out in the past, one research conducted by Guo et al., (2018)found students with high speech anxiety would prefer those subjects where speaking skills are not the focus when given the option to choose. Another study from Çağatay, (2015)found that speaking activities requiring to stand in front of class and on spot performance produce the most anxiety from the students' perspective and learners experience more anxiety over speaking than other language skills.

More recent studies regarding the connection between anxiety and oral communication, such as one carried out by Faridian, Azizzifar, and Gowhary (2014) to investigate the relationship between anxiety and English-speaking skill among Iranian EFL learners, found that fear of failing a class and lack of preparation is some of the problems found dealing with speaking anxiety. Another study by M. S. Salem' and Abu Al Dyiar' (2014) from the same year found that while there are statistically differences between male and female pupils in oral fluency, there are no statistically significant differences between male and female students in their speaking anxiety when investigating the relationship between speaking anxiety and oral fluency of Arab Intermediate school student. The writer noted from personal observation from 2014 - 2016 of fellow English Education learners throughout the 1st to 4th semester during speaking lesson, or when prompted to speak during other classes that most would be hesitant to do so, especially when told to share their opinion, to forward questions regarding the lesson or volunteer to explain the summary of the lesson. Which is quite similar to McCroskey's (1984) finding that students be hesitant and would choose to avoid speaking. Therefore, The aims of this study is to investigate correlation between students' anxiety level and their relation to speaking performances.

DIFFICULTY IN SPEAKING

Speaking is considered by many as the most challenging productive skill in language to learn, if compared to writing, one of the reasons for this is the lack of exposure to target language in learner's environment and the rare usage of it in daily live, According Numan (2003), the following characteristics of language can make oral performance easy, but also at the same time creating difficulties in it:

1) Clustering Fluent: Speech is phrasal, not word by word. Learners can organize their output both cognitively and physically through such clustering.

2) Redundancy: Sometimes it is used to make meaning clearer.

3) Reduced forms It is including contractions, elisions, reduced vowels, etc. If the learners don't know about this, it will sometimes develop a stilted, bookish quality of their speaking.

4) Colloquial language: The learners should also know about the words, idioms and phrases of colloquial language and that they get practice in producing these forms.

5) Rate of delivery: Another salient characteristic of fluency is rate of delivery. The teacher should help learners to achieve an acceptable speed along with other attributes of fluency.

6) Performance variables: The difference between native and nonnative speakers of language is in their hesitation phenomena. Learners should know when to pause, backtrack or correct the language when they have to speak with it.

7) Stress, rhythm, and intonation: This is the most important characteristic of English pronunciation. The stress-timed rhythm of spoken English and its intonation patterns convey important messages.

8) Interaction: Speaking is about interaction. It is about how you interact and what kind of language that you use that will make the communication goes smoothly.

AFFECTIVE FACTOR TOWARD SPEAKING ANXIENTY

Emotional factor could potentially promote learners' language skill to its full potential. This could be seen from self-esteem in which learners will have full confidence in their ability and thus promote another affective factor which is risk taking (Alrabai, 2017; Pellas, 2014). This statement is difrerent with anxienty. It particular factor is the opposite of self – esteem and risk taking with a negative impact to learners and potentially hinder their progress in learning language.

Therefore, this factors impacted to the term anxiety. It could not really be very well explained into a single sentence, as the definition given by Rajitha & Alamelu, (2020) which explains that anxiety is intertwined with self-esteem, inhibition, and risk taking, the construct of it plays an important affective role in second language acquisition.

Liu, (2006)As the first who to perceive foreign language anxiety as separate component or phenomenon, defined foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perception, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process". Based on data they gathered from empirical evidence, Horwitz (1986), MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991c) manage to identified three components of foreign language anxiety in order to break down the construct of EFL anxiety into a researchable issue, those three components are;

1) Communication apprehension, arising from learners' inability to adequately express mature thoughts ideas;

2) Fear of negative social evaluation, arising from learner's need to make a positive social impression to others; and

3) Test anxiety, or apprehension over negative evaluation.

The three components of foreign language above become model for many studies which conducted to find the relation of EFL anxiety on students' language learning process, one of those study is the one carried by Horwitz (1991). The study was carried out on Spanish and French students which revealed that students with high level of foreign language anxiety will most likely received lower grades than those with lower level.

METHOD

DESIGN

This study was conducted to find the significant correlation between students' anxiety level and their relation to speaking performances, a quantitative research design using correlation method was used in conjunction with SPSS software to determine the connection between both variable. The study tried to retest results from previous studies conducted regarding the negative relation between anxiety and oral communication from different country to the population of Muhammadiyah University of Gresik in Indonesia, with samples taken from fourth semester of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Program – English Department. The method of anxiety data collection was accomplish through online FLCAS questionnaires of English Education major learners from University of Muhammadiyah, Gresik on fourth semester, all which would be then correlated to their final speaking score provided by the lecturer.

POPULATIONS OF THE STUDY

The population of this study includes university students of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Program from Muhammadiyah University of Gresik, fourth semester at the time of this research. They are all from the same major which is English Education Major. The sample which will be taken from participants were their level of English Foreign Language Anxiety using FLCAS developed by Hortwitz et al. (1986).

SAMPLE OF SHE STUDY

One definition of sample according to Cresswell (2012), is a subgroup of the target population that researchers choose to use in their study to as a way to represents the whole population. The sample this study includes 37 university students of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Program, fourth semester at the time of this research. The reason why the writer decided to choose Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Program is to explore the possibility of foreign language anxiety affecting speaking performances of learners who already possess solid understanding of English language and decided to pursue the a foreign language as their major, this is due to the observation made by writers that early semester learners are very reluctant to perform speaking activities and prefer silence when inquire by lecturers using the target language within classroom context.

DATA COLLECTION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY LEVEL

The foreign language speaking anxiety questionnaire is based on Saltan's model of 18 items out of 33 items from the original Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale or FLCAS which is developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The effectiveness and reliability had been proved by various researches in the past, one of them is a study conducted by Saltan (2003), who employ 18 items of FLCAS to examine foreign language anxiety from learners at Turkish state university. Another study using the FLCAS as questionnaires were also conducted by Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013) to investigate the connection between gender to foreign language anxiety and motivation, which use 18 translated items of the original FLCAS adapted by Saltan (2003).

DATA COLLECTION OF LEARNERS' FINAL SCORE

The data collection of the speaking skill score was obtained from participants' final score results of the public speaking courses, which had been provided to the writer by the corresponding lecturer. The total number is 37 scores, which correspondent to the number of learners on this research.

DATA ANALYSIS

After the distribution of the FLCAS questionnaires to participants and they give their statements. The questionnaire and their final test scores for speaking of learners were collected for data analysis using Statistical Package for Social the Sciences (SPSS) software version 16. The data description consists of the mean, the standard deviations and the standard error of means was found to gain the test anxiety level. To find any relationship between the speaking scores and ESL/EFL anxiety level, a Pearson product – moment correlation coefficient and significant levels were computed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The total active students of the fourth semester Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Program is 37. 18 out of the 33 items were used based on Saltan's (2003) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLACS) to investigate participant's level of foreign language anxiety level. When answering, participants have to determine from the scale of 1 to 5 whether they "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree". After participants submit their answers, the results would be analyzed by adding up each answer and wrote the total. To collect response from participants, the questionnaire was accompanied with five scale likert scale to measure the degree of agreeable or disagreeable of participants regarding statements from FLCAS which range from "Strongly Agree" as 5, "Agree" as 4, "Neutral" as 3, "Disagree" as 2, and "Strongly Disagree" as 1.

Table 1. Likert Scale Responses

Response description	Degree
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Since the questionnaire is a 5-graded Likert scale with 18 items, the total score would range from 18 to 90. A total score of more than 72 demonstrated a high level of speaking anxiety; a total score ranged from 54 to 72 presented a moderate level of speaking anxiety, and participants who had a total score less than 54 showed a low level of foreign language speaking anxiety. The following table is constructed by writer based on Saltan (2003), along with Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013) to determined participants' anxiety level.

Table 2. Level of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Interval	Category
> 72	High
54 - 72	Moderate
< 54	Low

The result of descriptive statistic for participants' foreign language anxiety would be the following.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on participants' Foreign Language Anxiety

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
FLCAS	37	39.00	85.00	59.7027	11.78715
Valid N (listwise)	37				

From descriptive statistics of foreign language anxiety, it was found that the total number of participants is 37. The maximum score was (85.00), while the lowest score was (39.00). The mean of foreign language participant was (59.7027), and the standard deviation was (11.78715). It was revealed from the questionnaire that three level of foreign language anxiety were all perceived by the students with different level of intensity. The details will be described on the table below.

Table 4. Results of Students' Foreign Language Anxiety

Interval	Category	Students	Percentage
> 72	High	7	19 %
54 - 72	Moderate	24	65 %
< 54	Low	6	16 %
Total		37	100%

According to the table above, it can be seen that the total majority of learners possess moderate level of anxiety with the total number of (24) correspondence with the total percentage of 65%. Learners with high anxiety on the other hand have the total number of (7) correspondence with 19% of total percentage. Learners with low anxiety accounts for the lowest number with (6) correspondence and the total percentage 16%.

DATA OF LEARNERS' FINAL SCORE

The data collection of the speaking skill score was obtained from participants' final score results of the public speaking courses, which had been provided to the writer by the corresponding lecturer. The total number is 37 scores, which correspondent to the number of participants of this research. The result of descriptive statistic for participants' final score for public speaking would be the following:

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics on participants' final score for public speaking

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Scores	37	9.00	92.00	67.8108	14.96633
Valid N (listwise)	37				

For the descriptive statistics of public speaking final score, it was found that the total number of participants is 37. The maximum score was (92.00), while the lowest score was (9.00). The mean of foreign language participant was (67.8108), and the standard deviation was (14.96633).

NORMALITY TEST

Normality test is a test to determine whether the sample from the population is normally distributed or not. In this study, researchers use the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov to determine whether the data that has been collected by the researcher will be normally distributed or taken from the normal population. If the level of significance (p value> 0.05) the data will be normally distributed. To calculate the normality test, the writer uses Kolmogorov Smirnov.

Table 6. Results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		FLCAS	Scores
N		37	37
Normal Parameters[a]	Mean	59.7027	67.8108
	Std. Deviation	1.17872E1	1.49663E1
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.191	.139
	Positive	.191	.074
	Negative	-.152	-.139
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.161	.844
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.135	.475

a. Test distribution is Normal.

According to Table 6, it was found that the significant of normality test of FLCAS and learner's score is (.135) and (.475) respectively. Since the results is greater than .05, then the data can be concluded as normality distributed.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING: SIMPLE LINEAR REGRESSION TEST

The hypotheses of this study are the following:
- H_0: $\rho = 0$ There is no correlation between foreign language anxiety and oral communication or speech of learners.
- H_a: $\rho \neq 0$ There is a correlation between foreign language anxiety and oral communication or speech of learners.

For the simple linear regression test, if the value of Sig. deviation from linearity table is no greater than 0.05, then there is an effect of predictor (X) to criterion (Y), or a connection exist between independent variables and dependent variables. If the value of Sig. deviation from linearity is greater than 0.05, then there is no linear relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. The following is the results of linearity test using SPSS software:

Table 7. Results on ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6479.993	1	6479.993	143.210	.000[a]
	Residual	1583.683	35	45.248		
	Total	8063.676	36			

a. Predictors: (Constant), FLCAS

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6479.993	1	6479.993	143.210	.000[a]
	Residual	1583.683	35	45.248		
	Total	8063.676	36			

b. Dependent Variable: Scores

According to the result of SPSS' simple linear regression, the F count is at the value of 143.210 with the significant level of 0.000, which is no greater than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there is an effect of foreign language anxiety (X), which is an independent variable, to the foreign language speaking (Y), which is a dependent variable

HYPOTHESIS TEST: PEARSON'S PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION

This section addresses the first research problem, which is whether significant correlation exist between students' anxiety level and their speaking performances. Based on the Pearson Product Moment Correlation the result indicated that a correlation was found between anxiety level and speaking achievements. The result would be described in the following table:

Table 8. Correlation between Students' Anxiety Level and Speaking Performances

		FLCAS	Scores
FLCAS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.702[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	37	37
Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.702[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	37	37

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

From the data above, it can be concluded that the correlation coefficient or (r) value for both FLCA and score is at the value of (-.702). It can also be seen that the level of probability (p) significance (sig 2-tailed) was (.000). It means that (p) (.000) was no greater than 05 while (-.702) value is between (0.610 – 0.800). And therefore, a strong negative correlation exists between learners' foreign language anxiety and their speaking achievement, although with varying degree of anxiety level.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to find the significant correlation between students' anxiety level and their relation to speaking performances. The result showed that there is a significant correlation exists between anxiety level and students' oral communication performances of EFL learners at university level in Gresik from English Department. From SPSS data results, it can be concluded that correlation coefficient or (r) value for both FLCA and score is at the value of (-.702) between (0.610 – 0.800), with the level of probability (p) significance (sig 2-tailed) at (.000). This means a strong negative correlation exists between learners' foreign language anxiety and their speaking achievement, therefore, the higher learners experienced anxiety, then the more their speaking

performances would suffer and vice versa. FLCAS data result shows that majority of learners possess moderate level of anxiety with the total number of (24) correspondence with the total percentage of 65%. Learners with high anxiety on the other hand have the total number of (7) correspondence with 19% of total percentage. Learners with low anxiety accounts for the lowest number with (6) correspondence and the total percentage 16%. This shows that anxiety also negatively affect learners who enrolled in English specialized major, and not limited to learners who need to participate in compulsory class or as a requirement for their major.

The negative relationship between anxiety in general and speaking performances is in line with some previous studies where EFL anxiety could affect speaking performances. One example would be a study by M. S. Salem' and Abu Al Dyiar' (2014) in investigating the relationship between speaking anxiety and oral fluency of Arab Intermediate school student, the investigation also investigates the differences between male and female students in speaking anxiety profile and their oral fluency performance. The result shows that there are no statistically significant differences between male and female students in their speaking anxiety. Negative impact between speaking anxiety and oral fluency to primary students with learning difficulties were also revealed for the participants of this study. Another study highlighting negative correlation between anxiety and oral communication performances is by Batiha, Noor, and Mustaffa (2014), which elaborate from the qualitative side of their findings that negative evaluation, failing the course, vocabulary, instructor – learner interaction and high expectations were some of the factors that extremely contributing to anxiety class in Arab EFL context. In another study, highlighting the negative relationship between anxiety in general and speaking performances was by Faridian, Azizzifar, and Gowhary (2014), who concluded from their investigation on the relationship between anxiety and English speaking skill among Iranian EFL learners, Although qualitative finding reveals that fear of failing a class and lack of preparation are some of the problems found dealing with speaking anxiety, interviewees also mentioned that they feel "stupid" for unable to properly speak in English, especially in public places such as classroom or other crowded places in which they need to interact with other people or initiating small talk.

Although, due to the quantitative nature of this research, this study lacks the ability to provide further insight regarding what the students from low, moderate, to high anxiety would have thought regarding their anxiety. Which could, potentially shed more light regarding the ongoing struggle they faced and how to better provide them with solution and coping mechanism. Especially those with high and moderate level of anxiety. One on one interview from participants could provide knowledge as to whether they have developed a successful or unsuccessful coping mechanism for their anxiety that could be tested or study for their effectiveness. This study found that while quantitative data could be used to determine language anxiety through valid measuring tool such as FLCAS when used in conjunction with SPSS, anxiety itself is still a very emotional and personal problem that everyone experienced in different way, and with varying degree of seriousness, which makes qualitative data from interview to help give the research a more accurate depiction of the subject.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, strong negative correlation exists between learners' foreign language anxiety and their speaking achievement, therefore, the higher learners experienced anxiety, and then the more their speaking performances would suffer drastically. This is regardless whether learners enrolled in English major or simply attend English as a required class. A follow up research regarding ways to mitigate learners' anxiety during speaking should be conducted, one example would be trying to best utilize classroom learning process that better promote their preferred individual learning style. Which could potentially reduce learners' speaking anxiety.

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