Factors Influencing Speaking Anxiety of FLSP Freshmen

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety is one of the biggest challenges that has harmed language development. Among the four-language skill, speaking is the most anxiety-provoking skill. This present article aims to identify the factors influencing freshmen's speaking anxiety in Foreign Language for Specific Purpose (FLSP) class. The researcher conducted a case study with a descriptive qualitative approach. Moreover, 20 FLSP freshmen in the communication science department participated in this study. The data was collected using a close-ended and open-ended questionnaire of the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS) derived from Horwitz et al. (1986). The result exposed that the primary factor influencing freshmen speaking anxiety is "fear of negative evaluation," followed by "test anxiety" and "communication apprehension." This study ends with implications to assist the educator in fostering speaking and providing students with a positive environment to effectively support them in overcoming anxiety feelings.

Keywords*: anxiety; foreign language anxiety; Foreign Language for Specific Purpose (FLSP); speaking skill*

INTRODUCTION

The significance of English has become a necessity for the country as English has extended over the world and the global community has developed (British Council, 2013). As a result, there is a greater need than ever for professionals who can communicate effectively in English. University students are expected to have a good foundation in English communication abilities to prepare for future careers and global issues. Thus, it is evident that the primary goal of learning the English language is to speak it fluently (Hanifa, 2018). However, motivating students to interact orally and become more mindful of their English language usage takes much work. Becoming communicatively competent is particularly difficult for foreign language learners as several factors influence it. Educators have to provide environments in which students may communicate and speak English with one another.

When it concerns acquiring speaking English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, several researchers have found that it still needs improvement. One of the significant contributors to a lack of English-speaking ability is anxiety (Hanifa, 2018; Male, 2018; Weda & Sakti, 2018). Educators in foreign language classes have contemplated about anxiety, as it is a big barrier that students must conquer.

Anxiety appears to be the crucial factor that has a weakening effect on students' oral performance. Horwitz et al. (1986) defined language anxiety as a distinctive combination of behaviors, perceptions, and feelings related to foreign language acquisition that arise from the process's complexity. They also added that learners might be good at learning other skills but may have a "mental block" when learning to speak a foreign language in public. Similarly, Macintyre & Gardner (1994) viewed anxiety in a foreign language setting as a multidimensional and varied phenomenon that can lower language competency by making the individual unresponsive to language input. Furthermore, Young (1990) explained that although all parts of learning and understanding a language can be stressful, she recognized speaking as the skill that mainly leads to anxiety. It tends to undermine students' self-esteem, confidence, and willingness to participate in class. Throughout unplanned speaking practices, anxious students are prone to experience mental obstacles.

Psychologically, Spielberger (1972) categorized anxiety in general into three aspects: 1) trait anxiety, 2) state anxiety, and 3) situation-specific anxiety. The trait perspective occurs when a person has permanent intent to be anxious. In contrast, the state perspective occurs when an individual perceives a situation as personally dangerous or threatening (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019). The situation-specific occurs at a particular point due to a specific situation (Spielberger, 1972). Macintyre & Gardner (1994) stated that situation-specific anxiety is a unique anxiety form that happens invariably over time within a given situation. Language anxiety and math anxiety are

examples of situation-specific anxieties. Based on the categorization, the current study has focused on situation-specific anxiety in a foreign language class.

Language anxiety could be either debilitating (harmful) anxiety or facilitating (helpful) anxiety (Subekti, 2018). Mulyono et al. (2019) claimed that learners with debilitating anxiety tended to have an avoid attitude and escape from the new learning task. Otherwise, learners with facilitating anxiety tended to have more courage to take a risk and a less avoidance attitude. A consensus of studies concentrated on debilitating anxiety, which harms learners and impacts their performance negatively (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990; Aida, 1994; Macintyre & Gardner, 1994; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Liu & Jackson, 2008). The effect could be direct such as reducing class participation, or indirectly such as fear, frustration, and worry.

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language classroom anxiety comprises three related types: 1) Communication Apprehension, 2) Fear of Negative Evaluation, and 3) Test Anxiety. Communication apprehension appears as an individual fear characterized by the shyness of communicating with people, fear of negative evaluation as the belief of receiving negative evaluations from others, and test anxiety appears as a result of students' extensive worry when facing a language test (Russell, 2020). In order to measure language anxiety in instructional settings, Horwitz et al. (1986) created the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Since its development, it has offered researchers a questionnaire to measure the degree of anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Aida, 1994; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Russell, 2020).

Realizing that anxiety can obstruct students from learning a foreign language, several researchers have conducted studies associated with anxiety's involvement in EFL students. Gursoy & Korkmaz (2018) examined speaking anxiety levels between freshmen and senior prospective ELT teachers at a state university in Turkey. The conclusion showed prospective ELT teachers had a moderate level of speaking anxiety, while freshmen had a higher level of anxiety. In addition, it exposed that proficiency levels significantly affected speaking anxiety, and there was a negative correlation between them. Putri & Marlina (2019) studied the types and levels of speaking anxiety the EFL freshmen in the English Department faced. They found that freshmen's speaking anxiety levels were in the middle level. Then the types faced by the respondent were the fear of speaking tests, communication apprehension, and feedback from peers and lecturer.

Ibrahim & Amin (2021) explored the level and critical factor of foreign language speaking anxiety among Kurdish EFL students. The finding illustrated that students experienced a moderate level of EFL speaking anxiety. They also found that fear of making mistakes, negative evaluation, speaking in front of others, and immediate questions were the fundamental causes of

the students' speaking anxiety. Liu (2021) investigated the quasi-causal relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and English performance concerning gender and discipline. Results demonstrated that FLCA negatively correlated with English test performance for all students. Loan (2022) analyzed the effect of anxiety on learning English speaking skill. The outcome revealed that the reasons for posing inhibition among students come from linguistic factors, teacher and classroom-environment-related factors.

However, among the presented studies above, a few researchers pay attention to anxiety in the English for Specific Purpose (ESP) context. Richard & Schmidt (cited in Laborda & Litzler, 2015) stated that the needs of a specific set of students determine the ESP course's content and objectives. In this respect, ESP must be defined in terms of a subject, career, or occupation. One of the Islamic private universities in Malang, East Java, has a "Foreign Language for Specific Purpose" (FLSP) program for freshmen. FLSP is the past revised version of English for Specific Purpose (ESP). FLSP's design is to build up freshmen's skills to enable them to communicate in English to prepare for their future careers. FLSP is taught based on each department's specialization. Hence, freshmen in each department got English subjects as a degree requirement.

Limited studies have surveyed the role of anxiety in the FLSP context. Therefore, the researcher invites FLSP students to embrace and ensure independent, perhaps differing perceptions on similar conditions of speaking anxiety (Cepon, 2016). Nonetheless, based on the previous existing study, there is a lack of studies that discover the factors influencing freshmen's speaking anxiety in FLSP class.

The present study tries to fill the research gap by discovering freshmen speaking anxiety in FLSP class. Precisely, this study constitutes to respond to the following research problem "What are the factors that influence freshmen's speaking anxiety in Foreign Language for Specific Purpose (FLSP) class?"

METHOD

The writer utilized qualitative research with a case study design in this study. Creswell & Creswell (2018) stated that qualitative research concentrates on identifying social phenomena from the perspective of human participants in the study. A case study is also a qualitative method in which the researcher conducts a realistic investigation of an existing phenomenon within its natural context (Yin, 2018).

In determining the participants of this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to gain information about a specific group of individuals. In this case, she did a preliminary online interview with one of the instructors of FLSP class through WhatsApp chatting, then asked about the recommendation of the class with the most anxious freshmen to strengthen the study's phenomenon. Based on some consideration, freshmen

who showed the characteristics of anxious students, such as lack of volunteering in class and low vocal production, were selected as the participants.

This study's participants are FLSP freshmen of the communication science department at Islamic Private University in Malang for the academic year 2021/2022. They consisted of 8 males and 12 females, with ages ranging from 18 to 21.

In collecting the data, the researcher utilized a close-ended questionnaire with Likert scales and multiple-choice types based on the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS) modification by Horwitz et al. (1986). In addition, she also distributed an open-ended questionnaire with several essay questions to accomplish the research objective. In this case, the questionnaire was adapted and translated into Indonesian to suit the participants. Those questionnaires have been applied and validated by many researchers before. It demonstrates a high level of dependability and credibility.

To analyze the data, the researcher applied data analysis techniques based on Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consist of data condensing, data display, conclusions formulation, and verification of all steps in the process. The process of choosing, simplifying, arranging, and converting the raw data that occurs in the questionnaire's outcomes is known as data condensation. In the stage of data display, the writer gives the data in the form of figures and comments that explains the analysis of speaking anxiety in FLSP class. In the conclusion formulation and verification, the writer reviews and cross-check the data to get a valid conclusion and measure the research implication.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Several factors can bring about foreign language speaking anxiety in the classroom. The impact of these factors usually leads to the learners' avoidance of speaking the target language. To respond to the research problem, the objective of this paper was to know the factors that influence freshmen's speaking anxiety in FLSP class. This part presents the results and discussion of data obtained from the respondents.

Results From the Closed-Ended Questionnaire Data

The instrument employed in this study was a modified version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986). This questionnaire had 15 items that covered most of the potential factors influencing speaking anxiety and divided into three categories: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used in a variety of surveys to illustrate the anxiety level of EFL students in a certain group and has been demonstrated to be reliable (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990; Aida, 1994; Macintyre & Gardner, 1994; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017).

The FLCAS displays satisfactory validity and reliability in each of these studies.

The questionnaire instruction asked the freshmen to choose the option that best reflected their opinions and graded them on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly.

Both "strongly agree" and "agree" responses were combined to obtain the entire score of the FLSAS agreement and then converted to a percentage. The percentage of the freshmen's replies to questionnaire items was applied to rank the primary contributors of foreign language speaking anxiety.

Table 1. Communication Apprehension

Items of Questionnaire	Freshmen's Agreement	Percentage
I never feel quite sure or confident when I am speaking in my FLSP class of speaking	11 freshmen	55 %
In FLSP of class speaking, I can get so nervous I forget things I want to say	15 freshmen	75 %
I often feel difficult to find the exact word and sentence structure to express my thought when speaking English in FLSP class	17 freshmen	85 %
I often difficult to understand what the lecturer is saying and explaining in the FLSP class of speaking	8 freshmen	40 %
Sometimes I also don't understand what my classmates presented in English	10 freshmen	50 %
Average of freshmen's agreement	**61 %**	

The table above indicated that FLSP freshmen faced Communication Apprehension (CA), with an average of 61 % of the respondents agreeing to items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, categorized as the CA factor. Item 3 was revealed as the highest percentage among other items, with 85% stating that they often find it difficult to attain the exact word and sentence structure to express their thoughts when speaking English in FLSP class. It is similar to Liu's (2013) study, which found that several Chinese students experience trouble speaking English at some communication point called a speaking block. She claims that potential causes for the speaking blocks are fear and anxiety, strangeness in different languages, and lacking opportunities to practice speaking English.

Following the second highest agreement, 75 % of students argued that they forget things they know due to nervousness in item 2. It still correlated with item 3, in which freshmen forget the terms or vocabulary they want to deliver. Sugiyati & Indriani (2021) build connections between the anxiety of learners and the process of learning vocabulary. They underlined that anxious

learners typically forget the foreign language's vocabulary during class activities and oral interactions.

Furthermore, Rafek et al. (2014) discovered that students with greater levels of communicative apprehension are more prone to limit their spoken output and be silent as a favorable reaction during the teaching-learning process. Likewise, the individuals' anxiety may arise from their awareness that others may have problems seeking to understand them or that they may have difficulties comprehending others (Macintyre & Gardner, 1994). Moreover, McCroskey & Bond, cited in Tanveer (2007), mentioned seven characteristics that can lead to a quiet kid or even adult communication fear: (1) a lack of intellectual skills, (2) a lack of verbal skills, (3) personal shyness, (4) interpersonal disengagement, (5) communication anxiety, (6) low self-esteem, and (7) different culture of communication norm. Those factors can lead to communication apprehension.

Table 2. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Items of Questionnaire	Freshmen's Agreement	Percentage
It embarrasses me to voluntarily raise my hand and answer the lecturer's question in FLSP class of speaking	12 freshmen	60 %
I commonly feel that some other classmates are performing better at speaking English than I am	18 freshmen	90 %
When the FLSP lecturer asks me a topic for which I have not known before, I get panicked and distressed	17 freshmen	85 %
I am scared that the FLSP speaking lecturer is ready to fix any errors I make	13 freshmen	65 %
When it comes to speaking English, I'm worried that the other classmates will judge me badly	11 freshmen	55 %
Average of freshmen's agreement		**71 %**

Table 2 displays that the average rate of Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) encountered among communication freshmen is 71 %. By analyzing the components contained in this particular aspect, the data indicates that 90% of freshmen often think that their classmates are better at speaking English, item 7. It provides the most significant number of anxiety-inducing variables in Fear of Negative Evaluation. In this case, Occhipinti (2009) reported students' sense of competition during EFL lessons. They found it tough to compete with their more fluent peers since they considered themselves incapable and were one of the less proficient learners in the classroom.

Next, 85 % of the freshmen responded that they get panicked and distressed when the FLSP lecturer asks about a topic they have not known before. It might due to unpreparedness to answer

the lecturer's question, whereas they do not have adequate knowledge of the topic, leading to fear of making mistakes. Like Gregersen & Horwitz (2002) reports that FNE impacts students' behavior while reacting to the teacher's probe, they confirmed that viewed educator evaluation is an emotion that bothered learners. The fear of appearing incompetent is a prime source of anxiety for stressed language learners.

Moreover, Young (1990) claims that the risk of making an oral mistake is the cause of why students do not contribute to active learning. Hanifa's (2018) research shows that students are terrified of making errors in their

pronunciation during class activities. Additionally, Macintyre & Gardner (1994) imply that learners who are unsure of what they are talking about being scared of losing their self-image image in public and start doubting their capacity to make a good impression. Learners may behave silently due to this insecurity, refusing to participate in any task that might impede their verbal growth. In brief, fear of negative evaluation occurs when EFL students believe they cannot make the right social impression, face classroom competitiveness, fear of making mistakes, suffer from negative beliefs, and feel distressed over others' evaluation.

Table 3. Test Anxiety (TA)

Items of Questionnaire	Freshmen's Agreement	Percentage
I feel overwhelmed by the variety of rules like pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and so on that, I need to learn to communicate in English	15 freshmen	75 %
I was nervous and tremble while waiting my turn to be called to speak and present in the FLSP class speaking	17 freshmen	85 %
Although I have been studying and preparing for the FLSP speaking test, I still feel anxious	16 freshmen	80 %
I worry to get a bad score and fail in the FLSP Speaking class	15 freshmen	75 %
I once thought about not attending the FLSP Speaking class when there was a heavy task or after experiencing unpleasant things before	5 freshmen	25 %
Average of freshmen's agreement		**68 %**

Table 3 demonstrates that 68 % of freshmen suffered test anxiety in speaking class. They agree that most sources of test anxiety happen when waiting their turn to be called to speak and present in the FLSP class of speaking; see item 12 with the percentage of 85 %.

Closely following, the response on item 13 shows that 80 % of freshmen feel anxious to face speaking tests even when they have studied. It exposes that those factors are linked to fear of failing tests. Horwitz et al. (1986) confirm that test anxiety is a form of performance anxiety

triggered by the fear of not getting good grades. Likewise, Zeidner (1998) explains that test anxiety refers to the individual's disposition to respond to extensive worry, unpleasant thoughts, tension, mental disorganization, and psychological provocation when facing a test. Since there are numerous tests and quizzes, learners who are test anxious in foreign language class may experience frequent stress and anxiety.

On the other hand, Musch & Broder (1999) proposed that test anxiety is simply an emotional reaction to the realization that you seem to be underprepared for the test. Inconsistency in studying has led to complexities in the acquisition stage of test-anxious learners; they are more susceptible to procrastination, resulting in less knowledge of the relevant material during test-taking. In addition, Tsai & Li (2012) stated that students with higher test anxiety are easily distracted and spend more time preparing for a test than those with lower test anxiety.

Furthermore, McDonald (2001) contended that an optimal level of anxiety is when a certain degree of test anxiety helps students stay focused on the task and keeps them feeling challenged. However, too many tests may create stress or pressure and have no inspiring effect.

Results From the Open-Ended Questionnaire Data

The researcher also arranged an open-ended questionnaire to explore the factors contributing to the anxiety of speaking a foreign language. She utilized freshmen's answers from the essay questions to support the data. When asked about the kind of situations in speaking class cause more anxiety, several participants responded as follows:

"When the speaking examination is face to face with the lecturer, we have to convey sentences directly." (Freshman 5, 08/05/22)

"When the lecturer asks, and no one answers, the class situation becomes silent." (Freshman 2, 07/05/22)

"When the material is delivered in full English and does not understand it." (Freshman 1, 07/05/22)

Additionally, when asked about the reasons for their anxiety and nervousness in speaking class, some of the freshmen answered:

"Afraid of being wrong with what is said, shyness, fear of being underestimated, scared of being laughed." (Freshman 4, 08/05/22)

"Lack of confidence and insecurity leads to fear of interaction or communication anxiety." (Freshman 6, 08/05/22)

"Afraid when facing a final test, fear of failing in test." (Freshman 3, 07/05/22)

Various sources can cause anxiety over speaking a foreign language in the classroom. Because of the impact perceived, learners frequently avoid speaking the target language. As a result, educators are supposed to assist their students in reducing unpleasant emotions. Identifying the factors that trigger students' stress is the first step toward reducing their anxiety.

Among all of the findings, the leading cause of speaking anxiety discovered in this study was fear of

negative evaluation. Similar to Rita & Dalila's study (2018), who found that many of their survey participants prefer to hide eye contact with lecturers because they are frightened about being called upon to tell things around other students, even if they are knowledgeable in the subject at hand. They feared being humiliated and critiqued in front of their peers.

Moreover, Shabani's study (2012) also revealed that most learners were worried about various evaluative situations in which those around them would assess their English comprehension and performance. They are considerate of their peers' facial traits and the lecturer. They are ashamed that their audiences will become confused, bored, and unwilling to appreciate the ideas they are trying to express. Liu & Jackson (2008) add that this sensation is generated by a complex mentality that promotes flawless performance; students are scared of failure and ridicule, making them hesitant to speak English.

In such circumstances, limited exposure to English and few opportunities to experience speaking also prevent foreign language learners from developing their communication capacities, eventually leading to discomfort or tension when asked to speak both inside and outside the classroom (Tanveer, 2007). As educators, we must use positive behaviors and set realistic classroom standards to support students' attitudes and practices about learning.

CONCLUSION

Foreign language speaking anxiety is an enormous issue that severely impacts students' communication skills. It links to a sense of unease which drives students to avoid speaking the new language.

This study aimed to determine the factors that make FLSP freshmen feel anxious in speaking class. It concludes that among three categorizations of speaking anxiety, namely communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, the most dominant type of speaking anxiety encountered by FLSP freshmen was fear of negative evaluation. Moreover, the answer from the open-ended questionnaire showed that all types of factors influencing speaking anxiety were interrelated.

Educators are supposed to assist learners in facing this sensation of tension and unease by understanding the causes of EFL speaking anxiety and providing appropriate strategies. It is essential for educators to consistently guide their students in coping with anxiety and providing a supportive atmosphere for them, such as by creating a comfortable ambiance, decreasing competitiveness and perfection, and often using jokes or humor. Educators could also allow students to have discussions in smaller groups rather than in front of the entire class. Additionally, introducing games that students enjoy in the classroom can be one of the options for reducing anxiety.

It expects that these insights would drive educators to acknowledge students with high anxiety rates. They should be placed in a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere where they will be encouraged to speak freely and develop their English.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors, WA, AA, and SS, conceived and designed the study. WA devised the main conceptual idea and wrote the manuscript. AA and SS helped supervise the study. Then WA collected and analyzed the data with input from AA and SS. WA discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript. AA and SS provided critical feedback and helped shape the study, analysis, and manuscript.

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