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The Effects of Anxiety Toward Acehnese Students' English Speaking Ability

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Abstract

In this study, we analyzed the effects of speaking anxiety of Acehnese students in English learning classroom by looking at the causes of students' speaking anxiety and their strategies in coping with it. The researchers used purposive sampling to select the participants of this research. Ten respondents from sophomore students of Department of the English Education at Teacher Training Faculty of Ar-Raniry State Islamic University in Aceh, Indonesia were selected by identifying their answers of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety questionnaires developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). To have in-depth information on the subject matter, a semi-structured interview was employed. The results of this research showed that speaking anxiety caused some negative effects to Acehnese students' speaking ability, which could be observed through the difficulties in constructing sentences and expressing the idea when they spoke in the target language. Low self-confidence, lack of competency, and being afraid of making mistakes were some of the factors considered as the major causes of speaking anxiety that could debilitate students' classroom participation.

Keywords

Speaking Anxiety, Speaking Ability, Foreign Language Learning

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The Effects of Anxiety Toward Acehese Students' English Speaking Ability

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In this study, we analyzed the effects of speaking anxiety of Acehese students in English learning classroom by looking at the causes of students' speaking anxiety and their strategies in coping with it. The researchers used purposive sampling to select the participants of this research. Ten respondents from sophomore students of Department of the English Education at Teacher Training Faculty of Ar-Raniry State Islamic University in Aceh, Indonesia were selected by identifying their answers of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety questionnaires developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). To have in-depth information on the subject matter, a semi-structured interview was employed. The results of this research showed that speaking anxiety caused some negative effects to Acehese students' speaking ability, which could be observed through the difficulties in constructing sentences and expressing the idea when they spoke in the target language. Low self-confidence, lack of competency, and being afraid of making mistakes were some of the factors considered as the major causes of speaking anxiety that could debilitate students' classroom participation. Keywords: Speaking Anxiety, Speaking Ability, Foreign Language Learning

Introduction

In a foreign language context, the target language is rarely used as a communication tool. As such, language learners have a limited opportunity to practice the target language in verbal activities (Brown & Lee, 2015). A research conducted by He (2013) unveils that most of the students in China who took English class at least six years long and passed the language written tests with an excellent achievement faced difficulties in using the language in a real-life situation. These Chinese students could not properly convey their ideas in English due to their fear of making mistakes and limited opportunity to practice the target language. Therefore, creating a communicative language classroom environment is necessary in order to encourage the students to be involved in interactive activities.

Some researchers have found that there are some students who likely prefer to speak flawlessly expressing their proficiency in English almost as easily as a native speaker (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002), yet some others tend to be silent and claim to have a “mental block” against learning English as a foreign language that prevents them from actively engaging (Dwyer, 2000). These two different students' responses show that lack of participation and engagement cannot only be referred to students' competency; feelings of anxiety may also lead the students hesitate to participate in the classroom activities. If this phenomenon is not immediately and properly tackled, it may become an affective filter which works as a barrier to language learning; the learner is not motivated, lack of self-confidence, and being worried about failure. When the learner becomes less anxious and tries to engage in the language acquisition process, this filter is lowering (Du, 2009).

Feelings of anxiety are recognized as a factor of emotional encountered by a person during the process of learning. It draws a condition of exaggerated worry which attacks and

ruins students' self-confidence and makes them hesitate to interact with teachers and classmates in communication activities. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), there are three components of foreign language anxiety that have been identified; communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by being fear of communicating with people. Students who experience communication apprehension tend to withdraw from speaking activities. Anxiety is also defined as a feeling of apprehension about having negative evaluation from their teachers or even classmates. Students who appear with uncomfortable feelings of negative evaluation mostly consider language errors as a treatment that would worsen their image rather than as a process of learning (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). Besides, Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) state that some students who experience test anxiety often assume foreign language learning processes, particularly the oral production, as a test situation rather than as an opportunity to improve their ability in communication. Concerning these issues, we consider that it is necessary to investigate how anxiety disorder affects students' speaking ability and what factors that rely on it.

Review of Literature

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Generally, anxiety refers to unpleasant feelings that attacks human emotion and psychologically leads to negative assumption, apprehension, nervousness, and low self-confidence. Anxiety is often labeled as characteristic/trait or state in the area of educational research (Woodrow as cited in Gopang, Bughio, Umrani, & Lohar, 2015). It is a common phenomenon that occurs in an English classroom and is recognized as distress of the mind encounters a person generated from feelings of uneasiness and fear of specific circumstance (Suleimenova, 2012).

In fact, the phenomenon of speaking anxiety is not only faced by English learners but it is also experienced by many language learners who learn a language as a second or foreign language. Language anxiety is a feeling of tension and apprehension associated with second language contexts including speaking, listening and learning in a particular situation (Gopang et al, 2015). Horwitz et al. (1986) define that foreign language anxiety consists of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors turning up from language classroom and the process of learning; such uncomfortable feelings definitely originate from a person's negative perception toward his/her competence. Also, the negative perception is influenced by their excessive concerns toward other learners' qualification and the learning instructor (Elaldi, 2016). Samuelson (as cited in Hadziosmanovic, 2012) defines speaking anxiety as the difficulty to speak in the group or in front of people that appear in varied situations such as in speech preparation, oral presentations, answering questions or simple presentation among others. Moreover, Udomkit (as cited in Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012) states that communication anxiety in English classroom is caused by insufficient opportunity for students to participate in classroom communication, lack of confidence when speaking English, and also by some other affective factors, such as interpersonal evaluation, classroom activities and methods, as well as self-esteem. In brief, there are six types of anxiety sources in foreign language classroom; personal and interpersonal anxiety, learners' belief about language anxiety, instructors' belief about language learning, instructor-learner interaction, classroom procedure, and testing (Young as cited in Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

A number of studies toward a foreign language anxiety elucidate that unwillingness of anxious learners to participate in speaking activities is related to their tendency to underestimate themselves and perceive that other learners are better. Such perception leads

them to be afraid of poor performance or inappropriate and incorrect responses in front of their classmates to avoid negative evaluation (Suleimenova, 2012). For instance, a research conducted by Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) toward fifteen students in the third grade of lower secondary school in Greece found that two factors leading to English language speaking anxiety are fear of negative evaluation from their peers and lack of confidence toward their ability compared to their peers. In addition, a study by Ozturk and Gurbuz (2014) investigating speaking anxiety among Turkish EFL learners found that most students consider that speaking is an anxiety-provoking factor in English classroom. The participants of the study also reported that they become more anxious when they have to give a speech and are required to answer a question immediately.

Traits of Speaking Anxiety

Leary (as cited in Wilson, 2006) groups the trait of anxiety into three kinds of behavior such as arousal mediated responses, disaffiliation behavior, and image protection behavior. Arousal mediated responses can be seen when students appear to be uncomfortable, play with many objects around them, and generally appear to be nervous and stutter as they talk. Disaffiliation behavior can be recognized in any actions that have a possibility to reduce social interaction, such as learners tend to delimit themselves in conversation. Image protection behavior is appeared by smiling and nodding frequently and seldom interrupting other learners.

In addition, Mandler and Sarason (as cited in Wilson, 2006) rate anxious behavior among learners into five points; perspiration, excessive movement, inappropriate laughter and exclamation, questioning of instruction, and hand movement. Furthermore, VonWorde (as cited in Wilson, 2006) clarifies that some physical reactions of anxious students in foreign language classroom are insignificant to be recognized such as headaches, clammy hands, shaking, sweating, pounding heart, foot tapping, and desk drumming.

Anxiety is also observed in language learners in such symptoms as freezing in the class, going blank before exams, feeling reticence about entering the classroom, being difficult to concentrate, becoming forgetful, sweating, and having palpitation, and typically exhibited avoidance behavior such as missing class and postponing homework (Azarfam & Baki, 2012).

The Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety

Boonkit (2010) through his study toward Thai EFL learners reported that learners' self-confidence is considered to play an important role in speaking performance. For that reason, it is crucial to build up learners' confidence to minimize anxiety. He states that "building up confidence in speaking to an audience was mainly reported as a factor that strengthened speaking performance" (p. 1308). In line with Boonkit, a research by Azarfam and Baki (2012) toward Iranian college students found that negative assumption has minimized learners' participation during the class. Three Iranian learners were taken as informants for the research and reported various negative assumptions that lead to speaking anxiety. The assumptions such as fear of inability to talk properly either with teachers or other learners, fear of on the spot question, fear of making mistake when speaking English, and fear of asking unimportant questions had encouraged those learners to be passive learners during the learning process.

On the other hand, Gopang et al. (2015) have a notion toward many factors which produce second language anxiety; those are teachers' attitude, their interactions within and outside the classroom, and high expectations of parents as well as of friends. Moreover,

research by Ozturk and Gurbuz (2014) found that three potential factors that can lead to EFL speaking anxiety; individual, environmental, and educational factors. Individual reasons seem likely to be influenced by unfamiliar feelings with the target language, lack of self-confidence and being afraid of making a mistake.

In the case of environmental factors, Trang, Moni, and Baldauf (2012) define that teachers' character and psychological state may influence classroom atmosphere. Thus, to keep a comfortable and friendly classroom atmosphere, teachers are suggested to train themselves to be relaxed during teaching, to evaluate the classroom climate, and try to make improvements toward their performance (teaching skills). Moreover, Ying (as cited in Ozturk and Gurbuz, 2014) found that difficult test also influences classroom atmosphere and increases the level of students' anxiety which results in a negative impact on learners' performance.

Facilitating and Debilitating Anxiety

Language anxiety has both positive and negative effects on EFL learners (Suleimenova, 2012). It does not only debilitate but also facilitate language learning. Facilitating anxiety refers to language learners' willingness to face new tasks in learning. The facilitative effect of EFL speaking anxiety can make students to be aware and careful while speaking (Ozturk & Gurbuz, 2014). In contrast, debilitating anxiety stimulates language learners to avoid and escape from the learning task. The learners tend to develop a facilitating or debilitating anxiety because of the task difficulty (Scovel as cited in Gopang et al., 2015). In this case, the way anxious learners cope with their uncomfortable feelings concerning anxiety determines whether the feelings can be debilitating or facilitating. Research toward Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) mostly discusses only about its negative effects (Horwitz et al., 1986). As a result, many people assume that anxiety is always leading to students' unsatisfied result, especially toward their proficiency in acquiring a new language.

Coping with Students' Speaking Anxiety

In the English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, anxiety has been recognized as one of the main factors that can affect the learning process. Every student experiences a different level of anxiety during their EFL learning. In this case, students' decision to learn English influences their attitude toward the learning process. A research by Trang et al. (2012) points out that students' determination to study English is influenced by two prominent factors; students' awareness of the importance of learning English and their volition control. Their research findings elucidated that the students having high awareness and strong volition to learn EFL were able to keep their motivation and help them to overcome anxiety and pursue their goal to acquire the language. For that reason, informing students about the importance of learning English at the beginning of English class is necessary to maintain students' strong motivation in learning (Trang et al., 2012).

Another factor that may cause learners to suffer from an anxiety disorder is their tendency to underestimate their proficiency in learning English and it has indeed been influenced by a lack of self-confidence (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Hence, in order to reduce anxiety, other than learner own volition that would help them for not being overwhelmed by Foreign Language Anxiety, teachers' responses to enhance learners' self-confidence is expected by creating comfortable atmosphere and encouraging the students to be involved in classroom activities.

Moreover, considering the fact that classroom atmosphere can trigger students' unpleasant feelings toward learning process, a teacher is required to use various activities

such as pair work, game, and role plays (Trang et al., 2013). This is useful to enhance classroom atmosphere by leading the students to be accustomed to a variety of learning activities and feel comfortable with each other. Dörnyei (2001) asserts that “motivation is related to one of the most basic aspects of the human mind, and most teachers and researchers would agree that it has a very important role in determining success or failure in any learning situation” (p. 2). Therefore, in order to stimulate learners’ motivation, appropriate teacher behaviors and a good relationship with the students, a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere, and a cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms are required in language classroom.

It is also interesting to note that in order to enhance students’ self-confidence, having overseas short course experience has indirectly reduced the degree of learners’ lack confidence to speak in English (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Undoubtedly, students who have spent time in other countries where English is majorly spoken have an opportunity to practice the language immediately with native speakers.

In Aceh, Indonesia, students’ anxiety has become a crucial issue in language learning context (Yoestara & Putri, 2018). The hesitancy to produce the language due to afraid of making mistakes leads the students to be a passive participant in the classroom. This condition makes students lack of practice contributing to their speaking proficiency. Thus, there is no surprise that even though English has been learned since junior high school, most Acehnese students still have problems communicating in English. Although some studies in relation to anxiety have been conducted, the matter of anxiety in language learning is still a considerable issue as these symptoms still become one of the biggest problems in Acehnese English speaking classroom until now.

This research is aimed at discovering some causes of anxiety among Acehnese language learners in English speaking class. The discussions will provide useful information for students and language instructors. For the students, the findings may help to identify the cause of their anxiety in speaking English, thus they can find out an appropriate way to deal with these symptoms. For the teachers, in addition, this paper will provide information about the anxious learners which may enrich the insights on how to deal with these students.

As the English lecturers, the inquiry of anxiety in English speaking has been our concern as we often found some students have a problem to communicate in English. Since the psychological aspect of learning a target language is part of our interest, we decide to explore the anxiety symptoms among the learners. We believe that this symptom is one of the crucial factors that lead students to have lack proficiency in English communication.

Method

Research Design

This qualitative research focuses on the effects of Acehnese students’ speaking anxiety toward their English speaking communication; thus, the students’ perspectives about the causes of anxiety in the classroom, its effects and their ways in dealing with the symptoms become the major points of investigations. For this reason, a case study is used for this research to explore students’ responses in the classroom, thus their behaviour as anxious learners can be discovered and later it can be identified the situation that creates anxiety for the learners. Case study is appropriate as it investigates the phenomenon within the real context (Yin, 2018).

Participants

This qualitative research was conducted at the Department of English Language Education of UIN Ar-Raniry Darussalam Banda Aceh, Indonesia to find out more information regarding the effects of Acehese students' speaking anxiety toward their speaking ability in classroom. At the department, both lecturers and students mostly use *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) as the communication language in a teaching and learning process.

The participants were second year students who had finished at least two speaking classes. There were 108 students (77 females and 31 males, with age range around 19-20 years old) from four English speaking classes to be involved in recruitment case study participants; however, only ten students became the primary source of data information. To select the case study participants, the researchers distributed a questionnaire to 108 students in order to find out their level of anxiety. In this light, the researchers used close-ended questionnaires with five predetermined response categories (*Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, or strongly Agree = 5*) on various statements regarding to speaking anxiety. Foreign Language Classroom Scale (FLCS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) was utilized as an instrument to measure students' anxiety level and to identify anxious learners. 15 out of 33 items of FLCS which are directly related to learners' feelings of anxiety were selected. Based on the FLCS score, then, the ten most anxious students (8 females and 2 males) were chosen as the case study participants.

This study did not require a particular third-party approval. However, we needed to ask permission from the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh; we had an approval letter to conduct the research after completing the necessary documents and filling the required form. To protect participants' safety, privacy and confidentiality, anonymous is used in reporting the data.

Data Collection

The main data for this study came from the interview. Interview questions were designed to find out students' feeling when they have to speak English in front of their friends and the teachers. Based on the research participants' preference, the interviews were conducted both in English and Indonesian; if the participants did not know how to express the words or the sentences in English, they would use Indonesian. Nevertheless, the transcripts have been translated into English, and the quotes are presented here based on the translation.

The interviews took approximately thirty to sixty minutes for each student. Semi-structured interview was used in this study in order to obtain deep information by exploring students' answers about the issues at hand. One by one interview approach was used in this research in order to make the interviewee easily and comfortably to convey his/her perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Analysis

The interview data were fully transcribed to find the relevant information. After transcribing process, the data, then, were coded. During the transcribing process, selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting more appropriate information, comments, and suggestions were done carefully (Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2005). The researchers used the coded data to produce a conceptual framework, which included classifying the data into specific group categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Monette et al., 2011; Richards, 2009). The data were analyzed by using open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The researchers initially

identified the common emerging themes from the interview. All central themes and information were broken down and simplified into groups of categories. The researchers classified sub-categories within each category to synthesize the data from the interview.

Findings

This research is aimed to illustrate a significant portrait of the current situation of the Acehnese students' speaking anxiety effects on their speaking ability in a classroom. By interviewing these anxious students, we expect to obtain some credible insights related to the causes of students' anxiety in speaking English, the effects of anxious feeling on their speaking ability, and their efforts to deal with such anxious feeling.

The Causes of Anxiety

Based on the interview, there are several reasons that cause students' anxious feeling in English speaking classroom. Personal self and classroom activities can be considered as two main factors of students' hesitancy to participate in the teaching-learning process.

Personal self. One of the sources of students' anxious feeling is personal self which includes personality traits, low self-confidence, and lack of competency. All of these reasons lead the students to feel nervous when they have to speak in the target language.

Personality traits. Personality seems to be one factor that limits students' participation in English speaking classroom. This condition leads to uncomfortable feelings every time the students have to talk or share their ideas with classmates. As stated by one participant, P5:

I always feel nervous. I do not like when people are looking at me, I do not like to be the center of public attention. Sometimes when I talk in Indonesian, I am shaking, freezing. Even when I talk with my family, I feel the same way.
(P5)

This situation is similar to P6. She said: "I am nervous, afraid, and scare when I give a speech in front of the class and my friends look at me. At that time, I assumed that my friends feel poor of me" (P6). This also happens with P7. She mentioned: "Instantly my body shakes when I stand up in front of them (my classmates), and they will stare at me. I got nervous when I speak in front of my friends" (P7). The statements above indicate that all of these participants seem to have an introvert personality that makes them shy to be a center of attention whatever the situation is. As a result, they feel anxious when they have to talk, present or perform in front of the class. This feeling may become worst when they have to speak or perform in other languages, including English.

Low self-confidence. The causes of anxious feeling mostly come from students' lack of confidence. The negative feeling toward self-competency lead these students keep silent in the classroom, as mentioned by P4:

In the speaking class, I choose to be silent, because in my class, all of the friends are very smart, but I am not. This makes me down. Usually, when I want to speak in front of class, I make the script, I read and memorize it. (P4)

Another participant, P3, also has low confidence of her competency. She said: "I am always nervous when I came to English classes. I am always sweating because I cannot speak English fluently" (P3). Their feeling of low competency brings the students to feel inferior in

their speaking class. As a result, their willingness to participate is quite low. The students' confidence may get worse when they think that their friends are always better and smarter than them. P2 stated:

I used to feel nervous when I speak in front of the class; I speak to my lecturers or my friends. I think my friends are better than me when speaking English, because of my weakness in speaking English, I feel bad in all English stuff except writing. Speaking class makes me like I am in danger. (P2)

Another participant, P10, also said that he is difficult to deliver his idea as he doubts his ability in using grammar in English sentences and this feeling makes him anxious to start speaking English. He said: "I feel nervous when speaking English. When I start to speak English, I feel like I am becoming a corpse, I do not have self-confidence to start speaking, and I worry to make some grammar errors" (P10). One of the students' reasons for choosing to be a passive student is their fear of making mistakes. P2 stated:

Actually, I am very nervous when I speak English. When my lecturers ask me to speak up, I try to mix the languages, I try to speak in English and Indonesian. I am afraid of my language competence, of making mistakes in choosing words and constructing sentences. I am very shy when I am wrong. (P2)

The feeling that English is difficult and they have a problem with this target language leads the students uncomfortable to deliver the message in English. P1 stated:

I always feel nervous when I am in front of my class, in front of my friends, and in front of my lecturers, because I have no idea about what I have to speak. I am also poor in memorizing vocabulary. As such, it makes me difficult to deliver the message. I think English always makes me nervous, English is difficult. (P1)

The possibility that their friends may laugh at them when they make mistakes raises their anxious feeling. Thus, these students prefer to be silent in the classroom and voice their idea if the lecturer asks them to do it.

Lack of competency. The ten participants reported that their English is not good, particularly due to their limitation in English vocabulary, so they have problems to express their idea in English and it affects their fluency which then leads them difficult to deliver the message appropriately. One student said: "Lack of vocabulary makes me so hard to speak English. When I want to speak, I do not know how I can speak and I have to translate my Idea word by word" (P8). P8 thinks that her limited vocabulary makes her difficult to deliver her idea in English. She does not know how to start speaking and make her sentences right. This is similar to P9 who stated: "The problem is lack of vocabulary; whenever I want to share my idea and I do not know how to tell it, so it stops me. The difficulty is when arranging the words into a good sentence." P9's words show that lack of vocabulary has led him to become a passive student as it often stops him to say something in English. For him, limited vocabulary affects his ability in arranging a sentence.

The statements above pointed out the learners' perspectives of the cause of their anxious feeling. They perceive to have low ability in speaking due to their problem in acquiring a language. They realize that they often make mistakes in English speaking such as grammatical errors and wrong pronunciation. Besides, having limited vocabulary is also

considered as the main problem that makes anxious learners have difficulty to convey a message from their mind to others. During the interviews, we found that some students took a long time to answer the questions, and some others made many pauses during speaking or even they did not finish the statement.

The classroom activities. Anxious feeling originates not only from personal self but also from the learning environment. The results of the interview show that several classroom situations stimulate students' anxiety. These situations include spontaneous performance and direct feedback of the mistakes.

Spontaneous speaking and performance. Spontaneous speaking is considered as the most common situations that make Acehnese students anxious. The students reported that they experience anxiety when a lecturer gives a sudden question or topic and they have to speak without having adequate time to prepare in advance. The following statements demonstrated the issue: "The activity in the classroom sometimes makes me feel nervous, for example; a lecturer gives me a topic and suddenly I have to talk about the topic, even though the topic is familiar but I feel nervous" (P3).

Spontaneous performance makes the students cannot respond the questions properly as they need to think the answers as well as search the appropriate English words to communicate the idea. P4 mentioned:

If suddenly my lecturer asks me a question, I am blank and I do not know how to answer the question. At that time, my mind keeps thinking if I need vocabulary. For me, the biggest problem in speaking is mastering sufficient vocabulary. (P4)

One student said that her nervous in spontaneous speaking is not limited in individual performance but also in group work which consisted of three up to five people within each group. P8 said that:

Sometimes, when I was in a group discussion and the lecturer shared a topic that we (the speaker and her group member) have not prepared it before, it also made me feel nervous. We only have a few minutes to gather the information and I did not know what I want to say. (P8)

P8 added: "I feel nervous when my lecturer suddenly asks me to perform an advertisement in front of the class. It is difficult because I need time to prepare myself" (P8).

In brief, it appears that students' lack of preparation in spontaneous speaking or performance leads to anxious feeling because they have limited time to arrange English sentences properly; thus, they are not sure that they can communicate their ideas or speak their mind correctly in English sentences.

Direct feedback of the mistakes. An interruption from the teacher to directly correct the students' mistakes in saying English words and sentences has potential effects on students' self-confidence. One student mentioned: "It makes me shy when speaking English and my lecturer corrects my mistakes. I want to be able to speak English well, but when my lecturer corrects me it ruins my self-confidence" (P2).

When the teacher corrects the students' sentences or words by interrupting their performance or speaking, the students feel embarrassed because their mistakes are noted by their friends and at the same time they become the center of attention due to their mistakes.

The Effects of Anxious Feeling

Responding to the issue of anxious feeling effects toward speaking ability, the ten research participants claimed that their negative feelings such as being nervous, uncomfortable and uneasiness in English classroom have created some consequences in speaking English.

For one thing, difficulty to express the idea in English is one of the effects of anxious feeling. P5 reported: "I can understand others when they are speaking, but it is difficult for me to express myself in speaking" (P5). Another participant said: "If I have some ideas to share, I am also difficult to express them orally" (P6). One participant noted that even though she can understand the questions offered by the teacher, she still has a problem to answer them as she does not know how to say it in English. She mentioned: "I always feel difficult to answer the question in English, however, I understand what the question is, but it is difficult to answer. Less vocabulary, that is my problem" (P3). Although their lack of vocabulary may be blamed as the source of the problems, actually the students' afraid of making mistakes also takes a particular role here. As a result, they choose to keep silent and avoid to practice their English speaking in the classroom.

Another effect of anxious feeling is that the students often forget the message that they want to deliver as they feel nervous when they realize that all their friends are looking at them. P2 reported: "When I feel nervous, everything that I want to say, I forget it, and it makes me so difficult to explain what I want to say" (P2). Another student also feels the same. She stated:

When I feel nervous, sometimes it is difficult for me to tell something and sometimes I forget the idea I want to tell. I feel my English is bad. When I want to tell something, but I do not know the vocabulary, it is difficult to arrange words when I want to speak. Actually, I am confused about the grammar. (P7)

From the students' responses above, we can conclude that speaking anxiety has affected learners' ability to communicate in English. This is reflected in their words that they have a problem to convey the message due to the difficulty to express the idea in English, thus the communication does not happen and they lose their opportunity to widely practice speaking in the classroom in order to have English proficiency.

The Efforts to Cope with Anxious Feeling

Each student has a different way to deal with his or her problems in the learning process. The ten participants have their own way to deal with anxious feelings in speaking English. These efforts include reject negative feeling, get mental support and have more practice.

Reject negative feeling by continuing to participate in the classroom. One student tries to fight her anxiety by continuing to participate in the classroom although she may make mistakes. P2 reported:

I always try to practice my speaking; I try to reject my feelings from being embarrassed to speak English. Besides, I also have a friend who always supports me to practice my speaking and she asks me to forget about the grammar. That what motivates me a lot. (P2)

The statement above may be a kind of facilitating anxiety in which it influences the learner positively. In this case, being embarrassed to speak English is considered as one factor for being anxiety. The student tries to reject the embarrassed feeling and keep practice. In other words, the student's awareness of her weaknesses was able to encourage her to improve her language proficiency. It appeared through her eagerness to practice her language in real life situations.

Have mental support from friends. Mental support from surrounding helps the students to deal with anxious feelings. P6 stated: "My confidence increases when my friends keep supporting me. It makes me not being afraid of making a mistake when I speak English" (P6). This claim has also been supported by other participants, P10, who said: "I feel nervous usually at the beginning of my speech, but if my friends support me, then I feel more confident" (P10). Both statements show that support from surrounding becomes a motivation for the students to practice English speaking although they may still make some mistakes; they feel that their friends will not laugh at them.

Have more practice outside the class. To cope with anxious feelings, some participants try to practice their English outside the classroom as they can talk English informally and without being afraid of making mistakes. One participant reported that she tries to practice English by standing in front of the mirror and another one said that she often practices talking to herself in English while she is riding her motorcycle. However, these students claimed that they have no bravery to practice their language in real-life situations except in the English classroom and the lecturer invites them to speak up during the class.

In addition, not all participants can act like their plan as the surrounding may not support their desire to practice, as mentioned by P6: "I have planned to practice my speaking ability, but the environment does not support me. I am not often practicing my English. Outside the campus, I have no friends to practice speaking."

Participant 6 admitted that she rarely practices her English due to unsupported condition around her. However, she has planned to practice her English in daily conversation, yet she has no partners to practice her English with. Different case was reported by P5 and P8:

At home-stay I live together with my classmates at the college. So, I planned to start to use English in my daily conversation, but the fact is I cannot do it. My friends are better at speaking English. Because of that, I feel not confident with my language ability. (P5)

"I have planned to practice my English, but I still feel not confident to try it" (P8). Participant 5 actually has an opportunity to use English in her daily life as she is staying together with her friends who are also studying at the Department of English Education. However, both respondents claimed that their lack of confidence has limited their opportunity to improve speaking proficiency.

Do nothing. On the contrary to the responses that were demonstrated above, the other 6 participants convey that they did not take any effort to improve their language proficiency, especially in terms of speaking skills. P7 stated that:

I have no motivation to improve my language ability; I mean I want to improve my English, but so far it is nothing, I only prepare myself before coming to the class. I am confused about how I can improve. Most of the students in the classroom have no motivation to improve their language ability. My friends also do not frequently practice speaking English in the classroom. (P7)

P9 stated: “I think to improve my English; I do not take any serious effort to cope with my problem in speaking English unless sometimes I practice to speak English with my friends at dormitory.”

The perception that English is difficult to learn seems to make the participants think that there is nothing they can do to improve their ability. The results revealed that almost all of the ten research participants considered English as a difficult subject to be learned. The difficulty is due to many language aspects that should be acquired, including vocabulary, grammar use, and proper pronunciation. At this point, a student stated that: “I learned English since Elementary school. I like to learn English and I often talk to myself in English. Learning English is easy but to make a good sentence is difficult”.

In addition, some students seem to have no desire to improve their English proficiency as their passion for learning English is quite low. P4 claimed that: “If you ask me, ‘Do I like to learn English?’ my answer is ‘no,’ because learning language is difficult. My mother forced me to come to this department (English Department), but I do not like English.”

Another interviewee stated that: “First time I learned English was in senior high school, I do not like to learn English. Learning English is difficult.” The lack of passion to learn English may have become one of the factors that lead the students unmotivated to practice the language. Eight of ten participants confessed that they rarely practice the language (English) verbally. They remarked that they only use the language for communication purposes in language classroom for various reasons. The first reason is the difficulty to find a partner to communicate using the target language outside the classroom. Second, low self-confidence makes learner feels uncomfortable to speak up either in the classroom or outside the classroom. Another reason is being afraid of the consequences that other students will mock them if there is a mistake on uttered remarks. All these reasons are used as justification for their passive efforts in improving their language proficiency.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the findings, various reasons have caused the participants’ anxious feelings in English speaking classroom which includes self and environmental factors. Self-confidence and self-perception of personal competency may take a bigger portion, but the role of classroom activities cannot also be ignored in stimulating students’ anxious feeling. These findings are coherent with previous research which mention that both individual and environment are responsible for students’ anxiety in language learning classroom; lack of confidence, self-negative assumption, being afraid of making mistake are some factors that raise students’ anxiety (Azarfam & Baki, 2012; Boonkit, 2010; Liu, 2007; Liu & Huang, 2011; Ozturk & Gurbuz, 2014).

Personality traits, low self-confidence, and lack of competency are the sources of anxiety noted from the students’ answers in the interview. These causes have led them to feel uncomfortable every time they have to stand in front of the class to give a speech or oral presentations. The participants in this study admitted that spontaneous performance and direct feedback of the mistakes are the situations that often generate anxiety to speak the target language. Spontaneous performance or speaking will put the students on unsecured situation as they have to speak or perform without enough time to think the idea and create the right sentences in order to communicate their opinions. The possibility of making a mistake and losing the words during their speaking brings about the anxious feeling; mostly, the students are afraid of their friends’ responses toward their mistakes. Besides, the direct feedback from the teacher may also create unsecured feeling for the students, particularly, when the teacher directly interrupt their performance to correct their sentences or words; for this reason, a

constructive feedback, such as private note or indirect comment, is more recommended rather than directly interrupting the students when they are making mistakes (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

From the interview, students' anxious feeling has some consequences for students' learning speaking English. Most of students have difficulty to express their idea in English. The negative feeling that they do not have enough competencies in the target language influences their confidence to easily share their opinions in English. Anxious learners are usually afraid of peer's responses toward their poor performance (Suleimenova, 2012). Another consequence of anxiety in the classroom is that the students often forget the idea that they want to share just by looking at their friends' eyes. This is no surprise as forgetful is one of the typical anxiety symptoms for language learners (Azarfam & Baki, 2012). In brief, the consequences of anxiety symptoms as mentioned above have led the students have lack of practice as they choose to keep silent rather than speak their idea in the target language; thus, they lose the opportunity to practice their English speaking skills in the classroom environment.

Some students try to deal with their anxiety by doing some efforts, such as reject negative feelings by continuing to participate in the classroom, have mental support from friends, and have more practice outside the class by talking with friends or with themselves in English. However, some other students choose not to do anything. They appeared to have no willingness and confidence to move from their difficult stage; their reasons vary such as lack of self-confidence, unsupported environment, confusion, and lack of motivation and passion to learn English. In this case, anxiety becomes a debilitating factor that provokes anxious learners to withdraw from speaking activities which may result in negative learners' performance. In line with this, the researchers concluded that students' decision to cope with their anxiety was affected by their motivation and eagerness to learn English. Strong motivation has an important role in encouraging students to deal with their anxiety problems in order to acquire the language (Trang et al., 2012).

All the discussions above portray the Acehnese anxious learners' perspectives of their learning experience in English speaking class. Although the results are in line with previous studies, they cannot be generalized to other settings as Acehnese students have different background and circumstances with others which make them unique.

Based on the findings, some implications for future research and practice can be revealed. The findings may encourage teachers to be aware that students' anxiety is not caused by only one factor. There are many aspects that lead to anxious feeling including self, classroom activities, and peers and teacher. Thus, creating a conducive classroom environment is a must for a teacher in order to reduce students' anxiety in speaking the target language. A supportive classroom is possible if the teacher is wise in choosing activities, presenting materials, and interacting with the students. In addition, it should be noted that the students' passive responses during English speaking class may not be considered as only due to low competency but also possibly because of their anxiety; in other words, the teacher should be aware whether excessive anxiety makes them unable to speak English or their limited language skill has become a barrier to respond the teacher's questions or to share the idea in English. Furthermore, a passion to learn English has a great impact on students' effort to deal with anxiety symptoms; the task of the teacher is, then, to encourage the students to have more positive feeling toward English speaking proficiency; thus, they can be more enthusiasm to learn English and cope with their anxious feeling.

This study provides rich information for teachers as it discovers the anxiety matters which are not easy to be observed in the classroom. Although limited by data collection technique which only used interviews in collecting information, the findings contribute a rich insight into the anxiety issues in language learning classroom through students' perspectives.

The limitation of this study may become a consideration for further studies by including observation techniques in collecting data, thus, the real phenomena related to their expressions, participations, and nervousness in English speaking classroom can be discovered comprehensively.

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