

FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY IN ONLINE LEARNING

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Abstract: The objectives of this study are to investigate the students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and the effect of online courses on the speaking anxiety at the undergraduate level. Online learning is used to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It affects the students' way of learning speaking. In fact, speaking is performed interactively. Most of students get anxious when speaking face-to-face or in front of the class. Online learning creates a new way to perform their skill. A sample of 30 university students majoring English education were chosen. The data were obtained by using two questionnaires (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz (1986) and Unwillingness to Communicate Scale (UCS) by Burgoon's (1976) and interview. It was found that 30% felt high level anxiety, 63.3% felt moderate anxiety and 6.6% felt low anxiety. The number of high level anxiety decreased after using online courses.

Keywords: *foreign language, speaking, anxiety, online learning*

Of 4 skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking), speaking is often used to measure someone's ability and performance in language. Most of people think that one of crucial aspect in learning language is a good speaking ability. The learners are forced to have an active contribution in successful oral communication. People like to highlight others' performance in foreign language by seeing how they speak rather than what they speak. People keep thinking that the more fluently the learners speak English, the more capable they are in language. Therefore, the learners often build a standard in their speaking ability for their success (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019). Moreover, most of the learners tend to rate their language skills and make a comparison to others. It affects their effort to focus on it more seriously rather than other aspects of foreign language learning. Their feeling to be perfect is also related to anxiety of failure (perfectionism) (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). The learners force themselves to reach the achievement and to get more successful that make them feel more anxious especially in oral exams (Karatas et al., 2016). The unrealistic goal that they create makes them uncomfortable in speaking foreign language (Gregersen, 2005).

In addition, many parts of speaking foreign language that need to be learned that consist of spelling, word pronunciation, word recognition, meaning and grammar rules also bring frustrated (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019). Most of them believed that they can have effective speaking when they have the perfect pronunciation. However, Ozturk & Gurbuz (2013) stated that foreign language learning is connected to human psychology. Some personality factors which are self-esteem, risk-taking, motivation and anxiety may bring positive or negative effects in the process of learning foreign language learning. Of all, language anxiety is the most frequently observed obstacle in speaking classes since 1980's (Horwitz, et al, 1986). It is happened since the learners need to proceed the information in their mind while producing it orally in the same time (Harmer, 2004). Speaking becomes the most anxiety-provoking skill that is caused and affected by anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). However, anxiety plays a negative role in foreign language speaking (Luo, 2014). A great number of researchers found that anxiety brings problem to the process of learning speaking and students' achievement and performance (Azher et al., 2010; Horwitz, 2001; Luo, 2014; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014).

Previous researchers related foreign language anxiety to the subjective feeling of an unpleasant emotional condition which is experienced in a language learning classroom (Gregersen, 2005; Horwitz et al., 1986; Yalçın, & İnceçay, 2014). In line with the definition, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is one type of anxiety that is related to an emotional feeling of fear, uneasy and worry while speaking foreign language. The learners who experienced anxiety tend to avoid eye-contact with their teacher and friends (Mohamad & Wahid, 2009) as a typical non-verbal reaction of anxious students (Gregersen, 2003). Tsiplakides & Keramida (2009) found that the students who felt more relaxed after interventions made a change in eye contact patterns. They looked at the teacher directly while speaking in the

classroom. Besides, the learners who feel anxious also like to freeze when they are asked to deliver a speech. Most of the reason is that they be afraid of making mistake and get corrected by the teacher in front of their friends (Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014).

The spread of Covid-19 which increases dramatically brings some effect not only in health and in economic but also in education. The technology is used to decrease people's interaction. Learning by online is chosen as a new way of teaching learning process to prevent the spread of the virus. It makes some changes in teaching speaking. By learning online, the learners are not required to have face-to-face speaking even to have an eye contact. However, Stodel et al. (2006) found that some learners like to self-scrutinize themselves before speaking. In online learning spontaneity and quickness specially in asynchronous learning are missed. The learners are given time to think, to build and to process the information before they speak (Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015). It means performance is being compromised and making error is minimized. Linardopoulos (2010) found that in online learning the students are not forced to perform their speaking in front of audiences that affects them to feel anxiety like a real class does. It shows that the online learning assists the students to improve their oral communication skills without feeling worry about speaking in certain time.

In recent years, online language learning is used as an alternative way to conceptualize and deliver education in the process about how learners work, think, and build knowledge (Martin & Valdivia, 2017; Shen & Suwanthep, 2011). Moreover, Rodrigues & Vethamani (2015) found that online learning had positive impact on students' oral skill development. Although the use of online course also makes the students feel comfortable in learning, there is a limited number of studies about online learning and Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) especially in Indonesia context. In this study, the platforms used for speaking class were WhatsApp, Skype and Zoom. Zoom and Skype were used for synchronous learning, while WhatsApp were used for both asynchronous and synchronous learning. Synchronous learning is used to encourage the learners to interact with the teacher/instructor which can be missed. This way of learning forms an online communication and sense of community to improve social interactions and create trust (Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015). However, the asynchronous learning can expand their autonomous learning. The objectives of doing the study are to investigate the speaking anxiety in learning foreign language and to find the effect of online courses on the speaking anxiety at the undergraduate level.

METHOD

The participants in this study were 30 undergraduate students who took English education as their major in one of private universities in Indonesia. All of them were in 4th semester, ages ranging from 20-22. They had already taken speaking class since they were in 2nd semester. In relation to the ethical considerations and to keep the participants' confidentiality, all the information about the participants including name and university were hidden. Although the teacher was not a native speaker, they were invited to speak English during speaking class. Before the spread of COVID-19, the students learned foreign language through face-to-face meeting. Then, it changed to online learning (by WhatsApp (video, audio and text), Zoom and Moodle) during pandemic.

To investigate the speaking anxiety in learning foreign language and to find the effect of online courses on the speaking anxiety at the undergraduate level, both qualitative and quantitative researches were used in this study. The data from two questionnaires and interview were collected. The data from the questionnaires were used to find the percentage of the anxious students in speaking English, while the result of interview was used to find the effect of online courses on the speaking anxiety. Two questionnaires were adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz (1986) and Unwillingness to Communicate Scale (UCS) by Burgoon's (1976). It is a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaires were typed in Indonesian language, the students' native language, in order to avoid any misconception of the questions. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 15.0 was used to compute and analyse the data which provides descriptive and simple regression analysis.

In order to obtain in-depth data about FLSA, 5 students were chosen randomly for semi-structured interview by using 3 open-ended questions. The interview was conducted in Indonesian language. The individual interview was used to let the students express their opinion and feelings about the anxiety that they felt comfortably and freely. Because of pandemic, the questionnaires were distributed online by Google Form. Before filling the data and answering the questionnaires, the informed consent forms were given to let them know about this study. Moreover, the interview was also conducted by online via WhatsApp (Video call) and Skype.

FINDINGS

There were 18 female and 12 male students who participated in this study. The participants got used to learning speaking by face-to-face meeting before participating in this study. Two questionnaires (adapted from FLCAS and UCS) were distributed in the beginning (pre-test) and in the end (post test) of

the online learning. After the questionnaires (pre-test) were distributed, the participants had speaking class by online learning for three weeks. Although the teacher used some applications for teaching online (WhatsApp, Skype and Zoom), Zoom was the most favourite ones. They used both synchronous (video call and video meeting) and asynchronous (video/audio record and chat) for practising their speaking skill. After that, the participants were asked to fill the questionnaires again (post test) to see the effect of using online learning. The different result was found in pre-test and post test that can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Level of anxiety		
			High	Moderate	Low
Pretest	30	2.76	9 (30%)	19 (63.3%)	2 (6.6%)
Post test	30	2.63	4 (13.3%)	19 (63.3%)	7 (23.3%)

The result in table 1 showed that there is a decrease between the mean of the pre-test (2.76) and post test (2.63). It indicates that there is a decrease of anxiety which the students felt. Although there is no difference between the number of students who felt moderate anxiety in pre-test and post test, the differences are found in high and low anxiety. It can be seen that the number of students who had high level of English language speaking anxiety decreases from 9 participants (30%) to 4 participants (13.3%). On the other hand, the number of participants who felt low anxiety increases from 2 (6.6%) to 7 (23.3%). It was found that there is a different result between pre-test and post test.

Interview

Interview was hold in the end on the online learning after the two questionnaires (pre-test and post test) had been distributed. Five students were chosen randomly. To get more vary views on FLA in general and to find more contributing factors of FLA, the different levels of anxiety were selected (2 moderate, 2 low, 1 high). Some of the students' answers in interview were listed as follows (based on the 3 questions asked):

a) Perceptions About Speaking in Online Learning

Speaking English by online was a new thing for all of them. At first, 5 students chosen said that they got problem to use technology in learning online. However, after 2 or 3 meetings, they got familiar in learning by online. Three students said that they felt relaxed in speaking English when they did not see their friends and the teacher face to face. It made them comfortable and not being afraid of getting evaluation. They felt that learning online was just like speaking in front of the mirror. Even, two students believed that their friends did not listen to what they said while speaking in online learning. They were glad that they could evaluate or even delete the video or audio that they recorded. It helped them make self-correction.

b) Online vs. Offline Learning (face-to-face)

All of them believed each of way either online or offline had strength and weakness. In comparison of online and offline learning, of 5, 4 students thought they felt more confident to speak during online learning. They had space to think and prepare what they want to say. Nevertheless, 3 students preferred offline learning than online ones. They liked to interact and spend their time with their friends. In other words, though online learning made them feel comfortable in speaking class but overall, offline learning was much more fun and interactive.

c) Lack of Online Learning

Four students agreed that online learning brought a positive effect in speaking class. However, one participant lived in remote area which provided lack connection to access the internet. That made him not familiar in using technology in online learning. However, he attended all the classes. One of them said that most of the students in online learning were not active during speaking class. They tended to wait the teacher's questions and their own turn. When they used Zoom, the teacher controlled their time in speaking; she only gave a chance to the students who want to speak. Moreover, not all the teaching methods that the teacher used during online learning invited them to get interact with their peers.

Overall, all (5) students agreed that they did not feel stressful and scared during online learning. They felt more relaxed and enjoyable. It made them be able to complete the activities successfully. Most of them preferred the online asynchronous learning that invited them to record video or audio. It gave space to them to edit, think and process the information that they wanted to utter. Online synchronous learning helped them express their opinion without feeling nervous to speak in front of their friends and teacher.

Discussion

The first objective of this study was to investigate the students' FLSA. The result from the two questionnaires (pre-test) showed that most of the students (63.3%) felt moderate level of anxiety. This is similar to the findings by Miskam & Saidalvi (2019) and Karatas, et al. (2016). Though it showed that the students have a little worries on speaking, a moderate level of foreign language anxiety is experienced at least one-third of learners (Horwitz, 2001). However, this level of anxiety can bring negative effect on speaking performance even on their ability to speak English (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019) and to express their opinion (Çağatay, 2015).

The second objective of this study is to identify the effect of online courses on the speaking anxiety at the undergraduate level. The finding from the pretest and post test showed that there is a decrease of anxiety on the students who felt high and low anxiety. It indicates that online speaking learning makes the students feel more relaxed to express their idea. Moreover, based on the interview, five students said that they enjoyed speaking in online learning. This is in line with the finding by Rodrigues & Vethamani, (2015). The learners felt more comfortable in speaking while online learning even when they make error because they found their friends are not around to pass judgment (Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The purposes of doing this study were to examine the speaking anxiety in learning foreign language and to find the effect of online courses on the speaking anxiety at the undergraduate level. It is found that most of students (63.3%) experienced moderate level of foreign language anxiety during speaking class followed by high (30%) and low (6.6%) anxiety. However, it is also found that there is a significant effect of using online courses on FLSA at the undergraduate level. The number of students who had high English language speaking anxiety decreases while those who felt low anxiety increases. Most of the students feel relaxed when they did not face their friends. Based on the interview, the dominant reason is the fear of evaluation which affects the students' speaking performance. The result is relevant for EFL teachers as they have an important role to motivate students to learn how to give and receive evaluation. The teacher can provide a comfortable classroom and positive feedback during teaching a foreign language. In addition, the teacher can create more fun and interactive activities that support positive feelings during learning a foreign language. Next, online learning can be mixed with the face-to-face class to create a comfortable environment. However, the teachers need to consider the technical problem caused by the internet connection that sometimes arises during the online learning (Linardopoulos, 2010). It may affect the students' feeling in learning online. It is also found that the consistent attendance affected the students' progress and feeling in learning English. They get used to and enjoy using the technology then improving the quality of the discussion (Stodel et al., 2006).

However, some obstacles arise since the data are collected by online and only a few studies investigate the FLSA and online learning. Online learning have been used in some foreign countries but it is still a new thing for Indonesian case. Because of those limitations, recommendations are given to the future researchers who wants to conduct a similar study. Firstly, online learning is a good way that can be an alternative for EFL teachers to decrease their students' foreign language anxiety. However, physical presence that relates to social presence, the idea of participation and belonging are often missed during online learning (Stodel et al., 2006). Therefore, future researchers may need to take them into account.

Next, the gender matter is not discussed in this study. The further study may find the different result between the two genders by seeing some previous studies that have found the difference between the male and female's level of anxiety (Azher et al., 2010; Çağatay, 2015; Öztürk, & Gürbüz, 2013). Then, this study focuses on the Indonesian case which the students never have an experience in learning language by online.

The results cannot be counted as a wide population. Moreover, this study does not differ the online asynchronous learning and online synchronous ones. Of course, they bring differences. Finally, only questionnaires and interview are used to collect the data in this study. Using various instruments to collect the data like writing journal, observation and students' essays can be considered. The findings may be deeper and clearer.

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