OVERCOMING FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY BY USING A LANGUAGE EXCHANGE WEBSITE IN ONLINE LEARNING

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Abstract

The use of website in learning Foreign Language helps the students feel comfortable to speak. The objectives of the research is to investigate the Indonesian students' self-rated degrees of their foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) and the effect of using language exchange website in online learning in overcoming the students' FLSA. This study examined 100 undergraduate students of 4th and 6th semester majoring English education. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) was adapted and distributed twice in the beginning of the class to find the state of speaking anxiety and in the end to see whether there is any significance effect after learning speaking by using a language exchange website. Finally, the six participants were chosen for interview. The interview was conducted to get more data about the foreign language speaking anxiety that they feel. It is found that the number of students who felt anxiety decreases after using language exchange website.

Keywords: Foreign Language, Speaking Anxiety, Language Exchange Website

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a productive skill besides writing which uses oral production. Speaking becomes the most important skill since most of foreign language learners are often assessed based on their competence in speaking. Moreover, a person with good English language proficiency skills is the most needed by the potential employers (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019; Singh & Choo, 2012). However, speaking is a process of communicative competence, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary improving (Somdee & Suppasetseree, 2013). It is the ability of someone to communicate orally by using language. Therefore, a number of studies focus on improving students' speaking skill in the classroom.

Previous researchers had found some affective factors on language learning process which are related to personality factors such as, motivation, self-esteem, empathy and anxiety (Noormohamadi, 2009; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Of all them, speaking anxiety becomes the important affective variable beside self-esteem, motivation, extroversion and risk-taking in foreign language learning process (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Speaking anxiety can be one factor that inhibits the improvement of the students' speaking skill. Many researchers had found that foreign language speaking anxiety can affect the speaking performance (Abdurahman & Rizqi, 2020; Arnold & Brown, 1999; Çağatay, 2015; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014; Yang, 2012)**.** Moreover, Abdurahman & Rizqi (2020) stated that foreign language speaking anxiety gives negative effect on speaking performance. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) also believed that anxiety brings serious impediments to the second language fluency and performance. In line

with that, Arnold & Brown (1999) said that anxiety makes learners nervous that creates more anxiety and worse performance. It is because anxiety hinders learners' ability to receive, to process and to bring back the information. In other words, feeling anxious makes speaking become a frightening thing that often makes the anxious students feel stress and start to "freeze".

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is a small part of foreign language anxiety. It is a subjective feeling of apprehension with face symptoms such as sweating, palpitations, forgetfulness, worry, difficulties in language learning (Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014). Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) investigated speaking anxiety as a feeling and behavior that connected with language learning process. However, FLSA is considered as situation specific that is different from general classroom anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Subekti, 2018). The three related situation-specific anxieties were identified as communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension is type of anxiety that is experienced during communicating with people. Fear of negative evaluation is experienced because of students' avoidance of other negative evaluation. Finally, test anxiety is related to the feeling of fear of failure in language performance during the tests and examinations in language learning. However, the three type of anxiety affects the students in performing their foreign language like delivering a public speech or communicating with a foreigner (Pertaub, Slater & Barker, 2001). Although most of students realize the anxiety, they cannot cope with the feeling. It may give them pressure in learning foreign language.

Besides performance, FLSA also gives negative effect on language learning process. According to Yalçın & İnceçay (2014), some factors related to anxiety that affects language learning process are inability to comprehend, negative classroom experiences, fear of negative evaluation, native speakers, pedagogical practices and the teacher themselves. Among all factors, FLSA is experienced most because of the fear of negative of evaluation (Arnold & Brown 1999; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012; Subekti, 2018; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014). Having bearing on the fear of negative evaluation, those researchers stated that the students focused more on the way their mistakes are rectified (i.e., when, what, where, or how often) rather than whether error rectification should be managed in class. This anxiety reaction is experienced gradually since learners try hard to make progress and to be perfect (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). The learners are afraid of making errors as a result of getting corrected by the teacher in front of their classmates. The fear of negative evaluation creates stressful situation that inhibits students to produce their idea through speaking.

As the impact of the spread of corona, face-to-face learning is changed to online learning. Online learning affects the way the teachers teach the students and assess their ability. Using technology like the teacher do in online class can help students in improving their language skills including overcoming their anxiety (Aydin 2018; Martin & Valdivia, 2017; Somdee & Suppasetseree, 2013; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). Internet-based technology is the most popular in academia. It becomes limitless space where people can access everything they need including education. Access to internet is another advantage of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) that is well-known last decades. Website is one of collection of web pages and some documents that are accessed by using the internet. There are many educational websites which offer language learning including speaking. Language exchange website is one of tools that needs access to internet which offers a space for two or more people from different countries to exchange the language they use. The advantages of using language exchange website are that the students get familiar with the internet and the mobile system and that the students can enjoy discussing with the foreigners they can choose. Moreover, the students will

not feel anxious since they and the foreigners will speak in two languages that are Indonesian language and English. The speaking website is chosen to invite the students to be brave to share their idea with foreigners either in virtual life (using a chat software or correspondence/pen-pal) or face to face conversation. In their conversation, they can learn some expressions in giving a comment and getting feedback and learn some studies that can help them to broaden their mind. They can also learn others' culture in expressing their thought. The website that is chosen in this study is conversation exchange mobile.

Conversation exchange mobile is a tool used in this research to encourage the students to be active in speaking English. The website gives a chance to many people around the world to exchange the language they learn or know with others. The people can exchange their language by 3 ways. They are by chat, by correspondence and by face to face conversation. So, by using this website the students not only learn how to speak English but also teach other how to speak Indonesian language. Since they will be a teacher, this website is very useful and helpful for their future. Moreover, teaching their native language to the foreigner lets them see how the foreigner learns a foreign language. This will encourage them not to be anxious in speaking.

Although some researchers focused on Indonesian students' foreign language anxiety (Subekti, 2018), none of the researchers identified Indonesian students' foreign language speaking anxiety and the use of a language exchange website. Therefore, in this present study, the researchers investigate the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and the use of a language website. The purposes of the research is to examine the Indonesian students' self-rated degrees of their foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) and to investigate the effect of using language exchange website in online learning in overcoming the students' FLSA. The participants of this study were the 4th and 6th semester students majoring English education in one of universities in Medan, Indonesia.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used qualitative and quantitative research. The data were collected from questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986). FLCAS consists of 33 items which was used to measure the students' self-rated degrees of their foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA). Since in this study the researcher focused only on FLSA or speaking anxiety, some items were deleted and adapted. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each of items had 1-5 range of score that total shows the range from 33-165. Then, the range was divided into three levels that were 33-66 range indicated low anxiety (LA), 67-99 indicated moderate anxiety (MA), and 100-165 indicated high anxiety (HA) (Subekti, 2018).

To prevent the misconception of the questions, the questionnaire was translated to Indonesian language. Because of pandemic and preventing the spread of COVID-19, the FLCAS was distributed online by Google Form. The informed consent forms were given to let the participants know all relevant information about this research and their role within it before participating in the study. All the procedures were also conducted by online including the interview that was conducted via WhatsApp (Video call) and Skype. Since the data were collected by online, it took longer time.

The procedure of collecting the data was designed as follow. At first, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire was distributed to the students to know the students' categories of foreign language speaking anxiety. Second, the researchers asked the participants to sign up and login to the language exchange website namely conversation exchange mobile. The students opened the website and tried to fulfill the data then found the foreigner who wanted to learn Indonesian language. They were asked to teach the foreigner and discuss one topic with the foreigner in every meeting (chat, correspondence and face to face conversation) for minimum 7 topics or meetings.

After learning English by using website, the students were invited to fulfill the FLSA questionnaire again to see whether there is any significance difference after using language exchange website. Then, 6 students were randomly selected from LA to HA to be interviewed in order to find the students' reactions and comments on language exchange website. The different levels were selected to obtain more dissimilar point of view on FLA in general and contributing factors of FLA. The participants were asked open-ended questions in Indonesian language to make the participant comfortable and to prevent the misunderstanding.

Participants and Recruitment Procedures

The participants of this study were 100 students of 4th and 6th semester majoring English education in one of private universities in Medan, Indonesia. They were selected because in the 7th semester they have a teaching internship in a school. This requirement might cause a high level of anxiety in the students. Therefore, the study was done to make sure they prepare themselves to be a teacher. The name of university and all the participants' name were hidden considering ethical considerations to keep the participants' confidentiality. To show the result in this study, pseudonym was used. The participants were aged from 20-25 years old. They spoke Indonesian language as their native language. Most of them (87%) had learned English for minimal 9 years since they started their education in elementary school. The rest had learned English for 5 to 8 years as they were taught English in grade 5 in elementary school even in junior high school. Only 10% of them had gone abroad either for travelling or some events. All of them had learned English Speaking Course since they were in second semester. All of them also had experiences in speaking in front of the class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Of 100 participants, 60 students were in 6th semester and 40 students were in 4th semester, 73 students were female and 27 were male. After the FLCAS was distributed, the participants were directed to use a language exchange website. At first, they need to find a foreigner who wants to exchange the language with them. Because of pandemic, they could not meet the foreigner directly (face to face conversation). Then, they used video call for practice their speaking skill. Moreover, a few numbers of foreigners were using that website. Most of them (63) even chatted with same foreigner.

From the pretest (the questionnaire distributed before using language exchange website), of all, 67% of the participants did not believe with their ability in speaking English. Only 28.4% believed that they have capability in speaking. Moreover, 68.8% of the participants were afraid of making mistake when speaking English and 9.2% of them were very sure of that feeling. Then, only 20.2% were not afraid of making mistake. This feeling, of course, inhibited them to share their idea orally. It is related to the fear of evaluation feeling. In addition, 66.1% felt

anxious if they did not understand what the teacher said in English while only 25.7% did not feel anxious. This number showed that most of the students experienced anxiety and felt anxious in learning foreign language. While it happened, they tend to be passive and keep quiet (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986).

The FLCAS was distributed in the second time after they had experience in exchanging their language. It was found that there was a significant positive effect on students' foreign language speaking anxiety after using a language exchange website. The number of students who felt anxious in speaking English in front of the class decreased.

Table 1 and table 2 were shown to see the different number of students' English language speaking anxiety before (pretest) and after (posttest) in general based on the level of anxiety. Table 1 below presents that 52 participants (52%) had high level of English language speaking anxiety. 36 participants (36%) had Moderate Anxiety (MA) and another 12 participants (12%) had low level of English language speaking anxiety.

Table 1: Level of English language speaking anxiety before using language exchange website (Pretest)

Level of anxiety	Number of students
High	52
Moderate	36
Low	12
Mean	2.9

However, Table 2 shows that there are differences in three level of English speaking anxiety. The number of students who felt HA decreases. It was from 52 (52%) to 40 (40%). On the other hand, the number of students that felt MA and LA increases. MA increases from 36 participants (36%) to 42 participants (42%) and LA was from 12 participants (12%) to 18 participants (18%). The two tables shown that there is a difference between pretest (before using language exchange website) and post test (after using language exchange website). The result in table 1 and in table 2 also showed that the decrease between the mean of the pretest (2.76) and post test (2.63) that indicates the decrease in the anxiety that the students felt.

Table 2: Level of English language speaking anxiety after using language exchange website (Post test)

Level of anxiety	Number of students
High	40
Moderate	42
Low	18
Mean	2.7

Interview was conducted to get more data about the anxiety that the students felt. Six students were chosen randomly (2 LA, 2 MA and 2 HA). All (6) students feel anxious before using the language exchange website. For deep information about the interview results, it was shown based on the name of the participants (pseudonym).

Clara
Clara was 4th semester student who had high level anxiety. She never used any website or application to learn English except Google to find some references. When she was asked about

what she felt during speaking with the foreigner, she explained her difficulties to understand what the foreigner said. That was the first time for her to talk with foreigner. She got nervous and tended to keep silent at first. She made some errors in pronouncing some words. However, the foreigner to whom she talked had never blamed her. She learned how the foreigner made effort in learning Indonesian language. Overall, she likes to use conversation exchange mobile though it is not familiar to her.

Meitha

Meitha chatted with foreigner from Philippines. She was surprised that the foreigner was so talkative. He liked to make a joke and laugh. It made Meitha enjoy the conversation.

> Meitha said that "At first, I thought I could not answer his questions and I was afraid that he might get boring when talking with me. I make some mistakes in pronunciation and did not use some appropriate words to express my idea but honestly, he tried to understand the situation."

Moreover, she thought that the foreigner was diligent who like to repeat the Indonesian words that she taught. It, of course, encouraged her to memorize some English words.

Ethan

Ethan was one of students whose level of LA. He spoke confidently and clearly. He had some experiences to talk with foreigners and joined English course since he was in elementary school. However, he never had chance to teach Indonesian language to foreigners. He is also familiar in using technology in language learning. It makes him comfortable to use conversation exchange mobile. The foreigner that he chose to talk was a male who was 20 years old from Worcester, United Kingdom. As their age was not ranged far, they had some topics to discuss. Using conversation mobile exchange helped him to make friends. He promised to keep in touch with the foreigner.

Juan

When this study was conducted, Juan did a part time job. Though he was an active student, he realized that doing a part time job was time-consuming. Sometimes, he did not have time to study and practice speaking English. This brought him to have MA. Also, because the time matter, he could not get connected with the foreigners regularly. He did not get idea about the character of the foreigner. He uttered that they only chatted two or three times. Though it happened, he was happy that he could practice his English with foreigner as this was the first time for him. He thought conversation exchange mobile was useful to help him to make a friend with foreigner.

Franda

She was one of the students who has HA. She tends to be silent during foreign language learning. She often feels uncomfortable during speaking class. She believed that learning foreign language was difficult. She had learned English since she was in junior high school. When invited to use the language exchange website, she thought that she would find difficulties and problems with her English. She chose Philippines female to exchange the language because of her fear of speaking English. However, after using conversation exchange mobile, she found that her anxiety was decreased. She chatted and had video call for some times and she got used to using it.

James

James was 6th semester student who would have teaching internship in the next semester. He thought it was difficult to express the idea in front of the class. He often finds difficulty in speaking English. Nevertheless, James was familiar in using technology. Therefore, he was excited when he was asked to use conversation exchange mobile. It was interesting for him that he could choose the country and foreigner to whom he wanted to chat. However, he found that it was different to talk with foreigner compared with speaking in front of the class. When talking to the foreigner, he needed to pay attention with the foreigner's culture and habit. Before choosing the foreigner, he admitted that he searched the foreigner's lifestyle based on the country he lived in. Then, he chose foreigner who lived Hong Kong because he thought that his culture did not have many differences with Indonesian. He believed that using technology helped him enjoy the conversation.

Discussion

Of all students interviewed (6), 5 were anxious at first that they could not speak in English with the foreigner fluently. They were afraid that the foreigner would not understand with what they said. Four students had never practiced speaking English with foreigner before. One student had ever practiced his English with native speaker but he worked in group that he only had a little chance to speak. Only one person had an experience to talk with foreigner individually. Four students were afraid that they could not answer the foreigner's question and felt that they were not a good teacher. However, after using the language exchange website, five students found the foreigner whom they chat were friendly and nice. After seeing the foreigner learned Indonesian language, they felt confidence to practice their English. All of them agreed that using a Language Exchange website made them feel comfortable and helped them in learning foreign language. Four of them thought they felt better after spending time with the foreigner. Though, at first, they found some difficulties in using conversation mobile exchange, they got familiar in using it. The more the students use the language exchange website, the more they decrease their anxiety in speaking English.

Most of the students admitted that they felt comfortable because the foreigner had never blamed them while making some errors. This proved that the students tried hard not to make a mistake to prevent having a negative evaluation from the foreigner. It was line with some previous research found (Arnold & Brown 1999; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012; Subekti, 2018; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014). It makes them to concern on making progress and being perfect (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

However, the two LA students found the weakness of using the online conversation. They said that they could not have a deep interaction with the foreigners. They believed if they had chance to see the foreigners face to face, it would help them in improving their speaking skill. Because of the time differences, one of the participants could not practice his English well. He just connected with the foreigner by using chat. Of 100 students, there were 52 participants (52%) whose HA level, 36 participants (36%) whose MA and another 12 participants (12%) whose low level of English language speaking anxiety. The second research question could be seen from the two different tables that showed the result of pretest and posttest (before and after using the language exchange website). The number of students who felt HA decreases while the number of students who felt MA and LA increases. The result also was supported from the data collected by interview. It showed that most of students felt more comfortable after using conversation exchange mobile. This proved that there is a positive significant effect of using language exchange website in overcoming the students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety.

Moreover, most of students found that speaking in front of the class makes a difference compared to speaking with a native speaker. When speaking in front of the class, they can prepare what they want to say. Also, they can predict the question that may come during speaking. Even, they can change the language to Indonesian language without any hesitation. However, speaking with a native speaker gives a challenge to them to pay attention to the words they say. It may relate to the foreigner's country, culture or lifestyle. In line with this, Çağatay (2015) stated that the students felt more doubt in speaking with foreigner compared with speaking in front of the class. It was because they see the native speakers of English is perfect, more critical and ideal compared to speaking with peers or speaking in front of them (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986).

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the students' FLSA by using language exchange website namely conversation exchange mobile. Limited study that investigated the FLSA and the language exchange website created obstacle to conduct this study. Because this research had some limitations, so recommendations are presented for the future researchers who are interested in conducting a similar study in the future. Firstly, using a language exchange website is a good tool that can help the students to decrease their anxiety. However, using some kinds of language exchange websites can be an alternative besides using only conversation exchange mobile that is used in this study. However, some lacks of using conversation exchange mobile are found. First, only a few foreigner especially native speakers used it. Of course, it could not be used for a great number of students. In addition, the website does not provide any options for video call, so if the students want to have video call, they need to use other application like Skype, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, etc. The different language exchange website may have different features that may help the future researchers to conduct their study.

Second, this study does not focus on the gender matter. Some studies had found that there were a difference between the male and female's level of anxiety (Aida, 1994; Azher, Anwar & Naz, 2010; Çağatay, 2015; Elaldi, 2016). The further study may take in account to see whether there is a significant different among the two genders. Third, the study investigates the Indonesian students. Of course, the results of this study may not be generalized to wider population. Forth, the data in this study were only collected by using questionnaire and interview. Some other recommendations for collecting the data can be considered like writing journal, observation and students' essays. It may show a clear finding about how FLSA grows. The more instruments are used, the deeper findings will be found.

Although anxiety had been observed since 1980s (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986), it could not be avoided. Most of learners are afraid of expressing their idea by using foreign language because of their anxiety. Using website in learning speaking can be one alternative to help the students to enjoy and be familiar with the internet use. Then, it may overcome their anxiety in speaking English.

However, the further research is needed especially in the other stages of education like elementary and high school students since most previous studies still focused on university students (Subekti, 2018). The different level and background of education may show various results. In conclusion, it suggests conducting further empirical research that examines the effect of using language exchange website and the students' FLSA.

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