

Underlying Factors of Speaking Anxiety across Learning Styles

Risvi Uly Rosyidah*, Mirjam Anugerahwati, Anik Nunuk Wulyani

Graduate Program in English Language Teaching, Universitas Negeri Malang
Jl. Semarang No. 5, Indonesia. Email: risvi.ur@gmail.com

Abstract: This study is intended to investigate the underlying factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety across learning styles. This article is a part of a larger study on EFL freshmen speaking anxiety across their learning styles which highlight the main factors that lay behind speaking anxiety. This study was carried out in one of Islamic universities in Malang. The data were collected through students' questionnaires. The results reveal that fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension play the underlying factors of speaking anxiety across learning styles. Further, recommendations for lecturers are provided.

Key words: speaking anxiety, learning styles, factor

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti factor-faktor dasar yang dapat menjadikan kecemasan berbicara pada mahasiswa lintas gaya belajarnya. Artikel ini merupakan bagian dari penelitian utama yaitu kecemasan berbicara mahasiswa baru lintas gaya belajarnya, dimana penelitian ini menekankan pada pembahasan factor-faktor utama dari kecemasan berbicara. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di salah satu perguruan tinggi Islam di Malang. Data didapatkan dari angket mahasiswa. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa ketakutan akan penilaian negative, kecemasan terhadap ujian, and ketakutan dalam berkomunikasi merupakan factor-faktor yang mendasari kecemasan berbicara lintas gaya belajar. Selanjutnya, peneliti memberikan rekomendasi terhadap dosen pengajar.

Kata kunci: kecemasan berbicara, gaya belajar, faktor-faktor

INTRODUCTION

The demand for good communication skills has risen throughout the world (Hashemi, 2011). Therefore, speaking mastery has become the most essential part of foreign language learning relative to other language skills. Through speaking, students transmit their words, feelings and thoughts. However, speaking involves complex skills, not simply verbalizing thoughts so that it is still considered the most challenging skills to be acquired because not all students are able to speak fluently and meaningfully. This problem occurs because they face some obstacles in which one of them is anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) said that anxiety is frequently correlated with learning the language since it becomes the main

obstacle to learning. Anxiety encountered by foreign language learners may lead to their failure to acquire the language they want (Mukminin et al., 2015).

Anxiety is contemplated a normal human emotion caused by any internal or external alterations, stressful situations, or feelings of confusion (Yoon, 2012). When people face a new situation, most of them have the same feeling, that is, nervousness and stress, which can also be known as anxiety. In other words, people will be threatened when they encounter something never happen to them before. People who feel threatened will be anxious and fearful. In general, anxiety is stated as the personal feeling of stress, fear nervousness and discomfort related to an autonomous nervous system arousal (Horwitz et al., 1986). Using Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as the research instrument, they also identified three

main factors of FLCAS communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Communication apprehension is a diffidence resulted in anxiety or fear of communicating with people. An individual who has trouble speaking in groups (oral communication anxiety) or in the public (fear of stage) or in listening to or receiving a verbal message (receiver anxiety) may feel communication apprehension.

As performance is a continuing aspect of most language classes in foreign languages, foreign language anxiety topic also includes test anxiety. Test anxiety relates to a kind of performance anxiety that is triggered by fear of failing. Test-anxious students place unreasonable pressures on themselves and assume that failure is anything less than a perfect test outcome.

The last variety is the fear of negative evaluation. It pertains to a feeling of anxiety about the judgment of others, resisting evaluative assessment, and anticipating others to judge an individual negatively. At a glance, fear of negative evaluation is close to test-anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation, however, has a wider scope as it is not only restricted to test scenarios, it can also occur in any social assessment circumstance like job interviews or foreign language classes.

There have been past studies that have discussed the causes of speaking anxiety in foreign language. Çadırtay (2015) found that students experienced foreign language anxiety when they communicated with native speakers. Another research carried out by Alsowat (2016) indicated that there was moderate level of anxiety among Saudi students majoring in English. The major reasons for the students' anxiety were the effects of failure, missing things they knew and feeling uncomfortable during the evaluation of language. He also showed that gender did not affect foreign language anxiety. Ahmed, Pathan, & Khan (2017) found that the apprehension of engaging with teachers of foreign languages caused concern for learners since they feared doing grammatical mistakes in speaking class. Toubot, Hock Seng, & Binti Atan Abdullah (2018) also did research which his finding showed that the factor of low self-confidence was the highest average, accompanied by fear of negative assessment and communication apprehension. Those previous studies clearly indicate that anxiety has been a major

concern in many educational institutions. Therefore, it is important to examine what factors underlie students' foreign language anxiety.

The current study applies the Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as the research instrument. However, in this study, the researcher has intention to extend the line of the research exploring English-speaking anxiety, but there are limited research concerning the possibility that the way students learn can affect their anxiety level, whereas learning style is one of the determining factors for the quality of language learning. The word "learning style" attributes to how a student learns (Jayakumar, Suresh, Sundaramari, & Puthira Prathap, 2012). Zarei (2017) also said that the term "learning style" is characterized as individual's variation in the interpreting, processing, and keeping information. This present study employs VAK learning styles model by Barbe, Swassing, & Milone (1979) to recognize students' learning styles. The VAK learning style utilizes three key sensory recipients (visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic) to evaluate the dominant or favoured learning style of an individual.

Visual learners are learners who tend to learn through a visual interface (Gilakjani, 2011). They prefer reading the words, graphics and schemes, talking rather quickly, using lots of pictures, memorizing them by repeatedly writing, remembering what they saw, looking around, doodles or watching something when inactive (Gantasala & Gantasala, 2009). While auditory learners are learners who prefer to learn by listening to and understanding information through pitch, stress, and tempo. These learners acquire knowledge by reading out loud in the classroom and might not get a complete comprehension of the written information (Gilakjani, 2011). For kinaesthetic learners, they like to get actively engaged; do hands on activity; use lot of motions; talk about practice and feelings; communicate more slowly and memorize by frequently doing something (Gantasala & Gantasala, 2009).

Many researchers had interested in investigating learning styles. Awla (2014) found that students can perform better if the personalities of their teachers or the way they obtain lessons suits their learning styles. Another study was conducted by Setiowati (2019) in IAIN Metro Lampung found that second semester students used three kinds of learning style in their reading class, but visual learning style is the most prevalent learning style of students.

Therefore, the purpose of this current study is to examine the underlying factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety across learning styles. This small research was carried out as part of the larger research as the prerequisite to obtain the Master's degree. The result of this study is beneficial for lecturers since anxiety tends to be a key factor that has a degrading influence on students' oral results (Hanifa, 2018).

METHOD

This present study employed descriptive quantitative method. The population was sophomores when they were still freshmen from State Islamic University of *Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang* majoring in English Letters in academic year 2018/2019 who took Speaking for Daily Conversation. The sample was 147 students who had passed English Intensive Course (IEC) program so that they had acquired English basic skills. Questionnaires were utilized to run this study. The first questionnaire was Learning Styles Questionnaire to identify whether the students belong to visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic learners. Other instrument was Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) adopted from Horwitz, Horwitz, &

Cope (1986) to investigate three basic factors of anxiety: 11 statements of communication apprehension, 15 statements of test anxiety, and seven statements of fear of negative evaluation. FLCAS comprises of 33 statements originally on a 5-point Likert Scale varying from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The data for each statement in the questionnaire were counted to find the mean score in order to clearly see the difference and interpret every statement to reveal the underlying factors of speaking anxiety across learning styles.

RESULTS

After collecting the data, the researcher evaluated the questionnaire responses. There were 147 students who could properly fill the entire questionnaires. From learning styles questionnaire, there are 91 visual learners (61.9%), 28 auditory learners (19.4%), and 28 kinesthetic learners (19.4%). Basically, the overall finding of this study manifests that there are 77 per cent of students with moderate levels of speech anxiety, which indicate that the anxiety level is not high enough but it can get worse and more frustrating, making the students suffer more anxious and agitated.

Table 1. Students' Communication Apprehension

Item No	Statements of FLCAS	Mean Score of Learning Styles		
		Visual	Auditory	Kinaesthetic
1	If I vocalize in my English class, I never perceive quite sure of myself.	3.40	3.18	3.04
4	It worried if I don't comprehend what the English teacher is saying.	3.33	3.29	3.29
9	I begin to panic if I must speak in language class without any preparation.	3.67	3.43	3.39
14	I would not be anxious to speak with native English speakers.	3.15	2.68	2.57
15	If I don't grasp what the teacher is rectifying, I get frustrated.	3.46	3.04	3.75
18	If I vocalize in my English class, I am comfortable.	3.02	2.57	2.79
24	I'm very mindful of speaking English in front of other people.	3.40	3.25	3.25
27	If I vocalize in my English class, I become anxious and bewildered.	3.35	2.86	3.43
29	If I don't understand every word that the English teacher says, I become anxious.	3.52	3.29	3.50
30	I'm not confused by how many rules I need to learn to speak a foreign language.	3.23	3.04	3.04
32	I am likely relaxed around the native speakers.	2.97	2.64	2.82
	Total Mean Score	3.32	3.02	3.17

Table 2. Students' Test Anxiety

Item No	Statements of FLCAS	Mean Score of Learning Styles		
		Visual	Auditory	Kinaesthetic
3	I am shivering when I realize I will be named in a language class.	3.40	3.04	2.93
5	Having more language classes wouldn't burden me at all.	2.80	2.71	2.39
6	I am figuring out about things that have nothing to do with the course during the English class.	3.12	3.21	3.46
8	Generally I'm at ease in my language class during exams.	2.95	2.64	2.82
10	I'm concerned with the implications of my language class failure	4.02	3.29	3.79
11	I don't know why the foreign language classes are so worried by some people.	2.71	2.43	3.07
12	I can get so anxious in the language class thus I will miss the things I know.	3.52	3.25	3.64
16	Although I'm well-prepared for language class, I'm still worried about it.	3.41	3.29	3.11
17	Sometimes I don't want to attend my language class.	2.64	2.75	3.04
20	When I'm called in the English class, I can feel my heart beating.	3.67	3.21	3.36
21	The more I prepare for a test of language, the more bewildered I am.	2.91	2.96	3.39
22	I don't feel under pressure to be well-prepared for the language class.	2.89	2.61	2.86
25	English class is moving so fast and I'm worried about leaving behind.	3.58	3.14	3.75
26	During my English class, I become more stressful and nervous than in my other classes	3.31	2.96	3.29
28	I am very confident and comfortable when I am on my way to English class.	2.70	2.46	2.54
	Total Mean Score	3.18	2.93	3.16

Table 3. Students' Fear of Negative Evaluation

Item No	Statements of FLCAS	Mean Score of Learning Styles		
		Visual	Auditory	Kinaesthetic
2	I'm not worried about getting wrong in English class .	2.90	2.68	2.86
7	I still assume that in languages, the other students are more superior than I am.	3.88	3.46	4.04
13	In my language class, I find it embarrassing to provide voluntary answers.	3.12	3.00	3.18
19	I fear my language teacher will be willing to rectify any mistake I make.	3.22	3.00	3.21
23	I still believe that the other students verbalize English better than I do.	3.77	3.18	3.61
31	I feel scared that when I speak English, the other students will laugh at me.	3.04	2.75	3.07
33	When the English teacher raises questions I haven't practiced beforehand, I get anxious.	3.78	3.43	3.64
	Total Mean Score	3.39	3.07	3.37

However, in this small study, the researcher only focus on the factors underlie students' speaking anxiety across learning styles.

Table 1 expresses one of basic factors in anxiety, that is communication apprehension. It can be seen from the table that in the visual learning style, the statement that has the highest score is statement number 9 with a value of 3.67. While in the auditory learning style, the statement that gets the highest score is also found in statement number 9 with a value of 3.43. Whereas in the kinesthetic learning style, the statement that gets the highest score is in statement number 15 with a value of 3.75.

Table 2 reports the second underlying factors of anxiety, that is test anxiety consisting of 15 statements. It can be seen from the table that in the visual learning style, the statement that has the highest score is statement number 10 with a value of 4.02. While in the auditory learning style, the statement that gets the highest score is also found in statement number 10 and 16 with the value of 3.29. Whereas in the kinesthetic learning style, the statement that gets the highest score is in statement number 10 with a value of 3.79.

Table 3 shows the last underlying factors of anxiety, that is fear of negative evaluation which consist of 7 statements. It can be seen from the table that in the visual learning style, the statement that has the highest score is statement number 9 with a value of 3.67. While in the auditory learning style, the statement that gets the highest score is also found in statement number 9 with a value of 3.43. Whereas in the kinesthetic learning style, the statement that gets the highest score is in statement number 15 with a value of 3.75.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this current study was to recognize factors that could induce speaking anxiety across learning styles. From the results, some big patterns can be seen. For visual learners, the biggest mean score is coming from test anxiety factor (Table 2) in statement number 10 which states "I'm concerned with the implications of my language class failure". Then the second one is coming from fear of negative evaluation factor (Table 3) in statement number 7 which states "I still assume that in languages, the other students are more superior than I am". The last one is coming from communication apprehension factor (Table 1) in statement number 9 which states "I begin

to panic if I must speak in language class without any preparation". In this study, visual learners tend to worried of language class failure. This source of anxiety is in line with Alsowat (2016) and Messadh (2017) who revealed that the cause of anxiety expressed by classroom students was afraid of failing to speak English to teachers because they were concerned about the negative reactions of the teacher. Moreover, this visual learners' negative attitude towards their teacher might be occur because they are afraid when they realize that they will be tested, especially for verbal competences. Testing appears frustrating to some students because it is assumed that the scores earned are reflective of the learners' overall knowledge. This is similar to the findings by Sadeghi, Mohammadi, & Sedaghatghofar (2013) and Yalçın & Ynceçay (2014) who found that anxiety often emerges as a fear of failure in their performance. It can get more serious if students like to compete with other student (Gkonou, 2011). Therefore, students must be made aware of the parameters used to evaluate their results so that it can help them to be well-prepared and reduce their test anxiety.

For auditory learners, the biggest mean score comes from fear of negative evaluation factor (Table 3) in statement number 7 which states "I still assume that in languages, the other students are more superior than I am". Then the second one is coming from communication apprehension factor (Table 1) in statement number 9 which states "I begin to panic if I must speak in language class without any preparation". The last one is coming from test anxiety factor (Table 2) in statement number 10 which states "I'm concerned with the implications of my language class failure". In this study, auditory learners tend to be affected by fear of negative evaluation. Generally, students experience anxiety when they believe they feel bad in other people's eyes (Messadh, 2017; Mukminin et al., 2015; Rahman, 2017). Potentially negative reactions from others make students nervous and reluctant to speak; for example, when they attempt to communicate in English with their peers or teachers, fear of being laughed or insulted or judged as superior by others. These nervous students could see the practice of public speaking as a threat rather than a chance to establish their language competences (Hanifa, 2018).

For kinesthetic learners, like the auditory ones, the biggest mean score comes from fear of negative evaluation factor (Table 3) in statement number 7 which states "I still assume that in languages, the other

students are more superior than I am". Then the second one is coming from communication apprehension factor (Table 1) in statement number 15 which states "If I don't grasp what the teacher is rectifying, I get frustrated.".The last one is coming from test anxiety factor (Table 2) in statement number 10 which expresses "I'm concerned with the implications of my language class failure". Kinesthetic learners almost have the same underlying factors with auditory learners. However, in communication apprehension factor, kinesthetic learners tend to be easily frustrated if they can not understand what the teacher is correcting for them. Learners with communication apprehension usually have difficulty speaking to others so that highly anxious students from this type may feel great discomfort under any EFL communication. Other researchers (e.g. Anandari, 2015; Rahman, 2017) also noted that, when they had to speak in public, speaking anxiety arose more. As the result, when speaking in public, many students seemed to perceive uncomfortable, nervous, frustrated powerless and ashamed.

CONCLUSION

A particular study has identified some factors associated with freshmen speaking anxiety. Several factors that some researchers have established previously also exist in this current study. Lack of preparation in speaking and inability in grasping the teacher's correction are the points in communication apprehension factor. In test anxiety factor, fear of failure in language class has become the biggest reason why students experience anxiety. The last, in fear of negative evaluation factor, assumption about other students' superiority is able to trigger the speaking anxiety.

SUGGESTION

First, this study is intended to give sense and comprehension to lecturers so that by focusing on the causes of FLA, they can build and provide a learning environment that helps their learners less nervous when they speak in public. In addition, lecturers should be able to recognize the students' learning styles and adapt lecturer's teaching styles to suit the learning styles of their students. This article also highlights the importance of ongoing research on how FLA affects language learning and how it can be handled.

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