

# Students' Speaking Anxiety in EFL Classroom of Senior High School

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## Abstract

The purposes of this research were to determine levels, causes, and solution of students' speaking anxiety in EFL classroom. This research used a mixed-method research. The researchers chose the class of eleventh grade students of senior high school 5 Makassar. The instruments to collect the data were FLCAS questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The results of this research showed that most of the students at "mildly anxious" level with 16 respondents. There are 3 respondents who have "very anxious" level, 11 respondents have "anxious" level, and the last 5 respondents are in "relaxed" level. The researchers found there are five causes which are found by the researchers in this research, they are: fear of mistakes, lack of self-confidence, limited vocabulary, negative evaluation from teacher or friend, and embarrassment (afraid of being laughed). This research also showed that there are six solutions which are found by the researchers in this research, they are: using English websites, watching English films, speaking with native speakers, positive thinking, memorizing more English vocabulary, and others (calm down and ignoring the people).

Keywords: *English, speaking, EFL classroom, anxiety.*

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, English is the language that has been designated as an international language and one of the important languages that everyone in the world needs to learn and unite their understanding in communicating. In a global communication, English has the important role as a foreign language (Rahayu, 2016:41). In classroom learning, speaking is one of several English skills (speaking, reading, listening, and writing) that students should master.

As one of the skills that have an important role in society, the ability to speak English is the main thing for students who learn

English to be able to communicate and give interaction in the classroom and outside the classroom. "Speaking is a major element that is important as language changes and becomes the basic thing for children to acquire language, daily speaking activities also cause involvement for most people" (Rebecca, 2006:144).

In the current situation, students still experience difficulties and feel obstacles to master the four English skills that students have learned over the years from elementary school to senior high school. One of the difficulties that students experience is

anxiety in speaking. "When the learners come to learn to speak foreign language, these learners may be good in learning other, but in speaking foreign language, they have "mental block". (Horwitz et al, 1986:125).

In Indonesia as a foreign language, English makes many students feel embarrassed and do not have enough self-confidence to speak. The thing that is a big influence for students in speaking foreign language is their anxiety, this is a common problem that students often face when they start to speak English. Meanwhile, the researchers also did an initial observation to the English teacher and found the anxiety in speaking is experienced by students at XI grade of SMAN 5 Makassar. Students reduced their participation in class when the teacher taught. This was because the students felt anxious and had difficulty to speak English in class.

There are some previous studies that researchers had conducted about the speaking anxiety in English experienced by the students in classroom. The first is Santriza in 2018. The study was conducted to identify factors of students' anxiety when they do performance of speaking. The research sample about the data for this research came from SMAN 5 Banda Aceh class XI IPA 1. The exam anxiety, communicative worry, and fear of bad evaluations are three main forms of students' anxiety while speaking English, according to the study, which implemented a questionnaire adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986). The second researcher is Farhan Muhammad in 2019. The goal of this study was to identify the levels of anxiety that contributes to students' speaking anxiety in class. The researcher used a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to collect

data from 2nd grade learners at MAN 2 Pandeglang. The results of this study revealed that 20 students had a moderate degree of anxiety, 10 had a severe level of anxiety, and the last 4 students at the mild level of anxiety. Another previous study was conducted by Roli Asparanita in 2020. The researchers made the research purpose to determine the types of students' anxiety of speaking English in class XI at SMAN 1 Muaro Jambi. The result indicated that the anxiety of students to speak English in class is divided into three types of anxiety, namely state, trait, and last specific-situation anxiety.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2. 1. Concept of Speaking**

Cameron (2001) said speaking is as meaning expression by using the language actively so that people can understand it. Crystal (2003) argued that for most EFL students, the most important language skill and must be mastered is speaking because as an international communication medium, English is in a powerful position.

Based on Haris (1974), speaking skills consist of five elements, there are comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

According to Harmer (2007), there are some examples of activities that teachers can apply in the classroom to encourage the development of students in speaking, there are: communication game, role play and simulation, storytelling, and prepared talks.

## **2. 2. Concept of Anxiety**

Horwitz et al. (1986: 125) stated that feeling about nervousness, worry, anxious and tension are the anxiety that comes from subjective feelings. Liu (2006), anxiety can have a negative impact on students in their language learning achievement, especially in learning foreign/second language in the classroom.

Horwitz et al. (1986) created the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a measure for evaluating anxiety. Based on the results of the FLCAS questionnaire analysis, the result scores of each student included several categories of anxiety, ranging from very anxious, anxious, mildly anxious, relaxed, and very relaxed, according to Oetting's scale (1983).

Based on statement Elis (1994:479-480) in Roli Asparanita (2020), there are three types that can be divided in anxiety there are state anxiety, trait anxiety, and specific-situation anxiety.

According to Melough (2013), one of the affective variables that has an important influence and can also cause obstacles to students' oral performance in foreign language learning is speaking anxiety. Lightbown and Spada (2003) discuss about students' speaking anxiety that anxiety is something that can be influenced by special situations and circumstances so the anxiety makes a person feeling uncomfortable, for example, people do an oral presentation with a very large number of audiences.

## **2. 3. Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety**

Horwitz et al. (1986:127) proposed a basic concept of anxiety in foreign language. Based on the suggestion given by Horwitz, foreign language anxiety can be caused by nervousness about communicating, fear of bad evaluations, and exam anxiety. Ziahi Suleimenova (2013) foreign language anxiety is also influenced by a number of social contexts that students face in the classroom. The social contexts can be foreign language anxiety for students such as difficult interactions between students and teachers, competitive classroom atmosphere, and the risk of embarrassment that must be experienced by students. Eda Tasyi (2015) also stated that the anxiety that students get in learning foreign language is caused by lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical.

## **2. 4. Solutions of Foreign Language Anxiety**

Hamzaoglu and Kocoglu (2016) stated that they conduct research on the positive effects obtained from websites or podcast. The research has the result that indicates the role of websites/podcasts for students can reduce students' anxiety in speaking English. Rafada and Madini (2017) revealed that students in Saudi who feel anxious about speaking English as a foreign language in class show some efforts by using English websites, watching English films, and speaking directly with native speakers. Ziahi Suleimenova (2013) also gave an opinion that the solution for the students to reduce their anxiety while speaking English is to create a pleasant classroom situation with positive thinking, students will also feel

comfortable when they get motivation words. They can also think learn more English vocabulary as the solution to reduce their anxiety.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3. 1. Research Design**

The researchers applied an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach in this research. Mixed-method research is a research using two methods, namely quantitative method and qualitative method.

#### **3. 2. Time and Location of Research**

The study was carried out to be conducted in academic year 2021/2022. The research location is at SMAN 5 Makassar which is located on Jl. Taman Makam Pahlawan No.4, Tello Baru, kec. Panakkukang, Makassar, South Sulawesi.

#### **3. 3. Population and Sample of Research**

The population of this study, as determined by the researchers, is all students of SMAN 5 Makassar who study English as a foreign language in the academic year 2021/2022, while the sample is XI grade students of SMAN 5 Makassar in the academic year 2021/2022.

#### **3. 4. Technique of Data Collection**

The researchers collected the data by using some steps in this research. The first step carried out by the researchers was to contact the headmaster as the first person in the school to ask the permission to conduct the research. Second, the researchers met one of the English teachers whose students would

be used as the research sample after getting permission from the headmaster.

Third, the researchers received approval to conduct the research from the school's headmaster and English teacher. and would give first research instrument to the students. Students would be given a questionnaire regarding the degree of students' fear of speaking in a foreign language. Then, the researchers collected all the questionnaires that have been filled out by the students.

The researchers analyzed the data on the questionnaires collected by each student. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the researchers chose students who were very anxious and anxious about the level of anxiety in speaking a foreign language as interview respondents. The researchers analyzed the interview data to determine the causes and also solutions to students' anxiety when speaking a foreign language in class.

#### **3. 5. Research Instrument**

In collecting data, the researchers chose to use two research instruments. The first instrument used by researchers is FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) questionnaire by Horwitz et al. (1986). The second instrument is a semi-structured interview proposed by the researchers to the students as respondents about the students' experiences when they learn English in the classroom.

#### **3. 6. Data Analysis Technique**

To answer the research questions, the researchers needed to use data analysis techniques. The level of anxiety experienced by students when speaking English in the

classroom, the causes of students' anxiety, and students' solutions to speaking anxiety in the EFL classroom are all part of the data analysis.

a. The level of students' anxiety

The researchers applied the steps below to determine the level of anxiety among students.

- Arranging the data
- Calculating the data
- Categorizing the data

b. The cause and solution of students' speaking anxiety

Miles and Huberman (1994:10) stated that the data analysis process is divided into three main phases following the qualitative analysis framework, such as reduction, display, and the last, conclusion drawing or verification.

## **4. Findings**

### **4. 1. The Level of Students' Speaking Anxiety**

Table 1. Students' Speaking Anxiety Level

Range	Level	F	Percentage	Mean
124-165	Very Anxious	3	9%	133
108-123	Anxious	11	31%	115
87-107	Mildly Anxious	16	46%	97,94
66-86	Relaxed	5	14%	80,2
33-65	Very Relaxed	-	-	-
Total		35	100%	106,54

Based on the categories, it can be observed in the table 1 that the majority of students had a score between 87-107, the percentage is 46 percent, and a mean score of 97,94, indicating that the students' speaking anxiety is generally "Mildly Anxious."

### **4. 2. Causes of Students' Speaking Anxiety**

The result showed that almost all students said when they spoke English, they felt anxious because they were fearful. Students also responded that they felt anxious because of limited vocabulary when they wanted to speak in English.

On the other hand, the negative evaluation from teacher and friend made some

respondents felt anxious, they thought that when they did not know what the teacher and other friends said in English, it would give negative evaluation of them. In addition, the lack of self-confidence and the embarrassment from being laughed are also the reason why students in EFL classroom felt anxious when they spoke.

### **4. 3. Solutions of Students' Speaking Anxiety**

Besides the categories about the causes of anxiety, the researchers also identified the categories about students' solutions to handle their anxiety. Based on the categories of students' solution for speaking anxiety in English, the researchers can conclude that

most students responded in the form of positive thinking and remembering more vocabulary. According to the students, these can help them to handle their anxiety in speaking English in classroom.

Using English websites, watching English films and talking to the native speakers are also considered by some students as solution to their anxiety. In addition, some students also said other ways to handle their anxiety, students thought that by ignoring the people in the class and trying to calm down, it could help them to handle the anxiety.

## **5. Discussions**

### **5. 1. The Level of Students' Speaking Anxiety**

After the researchers calculated the data of questionnaire, there were 3 respondents (9%) with mean (133) who had "Very Anxious" level of speaking anxiety in the EFL classroom. Lilis Ristanti (2020) in her research found that there is one student who had very anxious level. The student had score 124 in range of anxiety when speaking English, so the very anxious level is not the dominant level that felt by students in the classroom when they speak English.

The researchers also got that there were 11 respondents (31%) with mean (115) who had "Anxious" level of speaking anxiety in EFL classroom. Farhan Muhammad (2019) stated in his research, the "Anxious" category as the highest level of anxiety. The feeling of anxious usually came from the response of distress and fear. It happened because they believed that there is something different that made them felt that they were being threaten by their surroundings.

Further, there were 16 respondents (46%) with mean (97,94) who had "Mildly Anxious" level of speaking anxiety in EFL classroom. Farhan Muhammad (2019) also said that based on the result, when someone is feeling nervous or tense when they perform about something in front of many people especially their teacher, it can be a normal condition or include in the level of mildly anxious.

The last, there were 5 respondents (14%) with mean (80,2) who had "Relaxed" level of speaking anxiety in EFL classroom. The last result of Farhan Muhammad's research revealed that the level of relaxed means the students' English productions are good in performing speaking because the students have low level of stress. They also don't have problem about their anxiety level. The researchers also obtained that in level "Very Relaxed" of speaking anxiety there were not respondents.

### **5. 2. Causes of Students' Speaking Anxiety**

Based on the result of interview, 11 of 14 respondents said that one of the most frequent causes of students feeling anxious was the fear of mistakes. Horwitz et al. (1986:128) gave their statements according to what they believe that the anxiety caused by foreign language is not simply a result of the combined performance anxiety connected with foreign language learning situations. They revealed that feelings of anxiety about the foreign languages are complex things that are different from each person's self-perception, fear of mistake, self-confidence, and behaviours.

As stated by Horwitz et al. (1986), manifestation of communication

apprehension is caused by having problem in learning a spoken message or listening. Worde (2003) also claimed that the main factor that can cause students to feel anxious when they speak English is their understanding of English. The students realized that the anxiety that arose when they spoke English was not only caused by fear of mistakes but also due to the lack of self-confidence.

The researchers found that it was not only fear of mistakes that caused students to feel anxious but also limited vocabulary. The statement is also supported by Haris (1974) that without vocabulary nothing can be said and when students have limited vocabulary, it can also cause difficulties for students and hinder them from learning foreign language.

Students also considered that the evaluation given teacher or friend in the classroom especially negative evaluation could cause students to feel anxious. As a quote from Horwitz et al. (1986:128) where they explain that fear or negative evaluation is a form of apprehension about the evaluation given by others, the thought of others that they will give an evaluation with a negative result, and avoidance of situations related to evaluation.

The last cause found by the researchers based on the responses of the students was embarrassment especially when they spoke English but their friends laughed at the respondents' way of speaking English. Ziash Suleimenova (2013:1862) stated that foreign language anxiety is also influenced by a number of social contexts that students face in the classroom.

### **5. 3. Solutions of Students' Speaking Anxiety**

One of the learning media that students use to learn English apart from books is an English website such as podcast or google translate. The use of the website or podcast can indirectly improve students' ability to speak English and reduce the fear of mistakes that feeling by the students because from the website they get more knowledge about English. Hamzaoglu and Kocoglu (2016) stated that they conduct research on the positive effects obtained from websites or podcast. The study showed and indicated about the role of websites/podcasts for students can reduce students' anxiety in speaking English.

Watching English film can make students to learn more about the pronunciation. Rafada and Madini (2017:317) revealed their opinion that the students in Saudi who feel anxious about speaking in English as a foreign language in classroom show their efforts to increase their ability in English speaking skills. The students make some efforts by using English websites, watching English films, and speaking directly with native speakers.

The researchers found the things that could increase self-confidence and prevented anxiety when students spoke English was to try talking to native speakers. This is considered to be able to train students' ability to speak in the classroom.

Most of the students as respondents in the interview also mentioned that positive thinking was able to make them handle the anxiety when they spoke English in class.

Ziash Suleimenova (2013:1867) gave an opinion that the solution to overcome students' speaking anxiety in English is to create a pleasant classroom situation with positive thinking, students will also feel comfortable when they get motivation words.

Some students mentioned that memorizing more English vocabulary can handle their speaking anxiety. On the other side, Ziash Suleimenova (2013:1867) also gave an opinion that the solutions to handle the students' anxiety in speaking English is learning more English vocabulary as the solution to reduce their anxiety.

## 6. Conclusions

- a. Based on the FLCAS questionnaire result, it shows most of students are at "Mildly Anxious" level with 16 respondents, 3 respondents who have "Very Anxious" level, 11 respondents have "Anxious" level, and the last, 5 respondents are in "Relaxed" level.
- b. Based on the data obtained from the interview, there are some causes that may contribute to their anxiety. There are five causes which are found by the researchers in this research, they are: fear of mistakes, lack of self-confidence, limited vocabulary, negative evaluation from teacher or friend, and embarrassment (afraid of being laughed).
- c. Based on the data obtained from the interview, there are also some solutions that may contribute to handle the anxiety. There are six solutions which are found by the researchers in this research, they are: using English websites, watching English films, speaking with native speakers, positive thinking, memorizing more English vocabulary, and others (calm down and ignoring the people).

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