The effect of public speaking training on students' speaking anxiety and skill

Hafizhatu Nadia
University of Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin

Yansyah
University of Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin

Corresponding e-mail: hafizhatunadia@gmail.com

Abstract: Regardless its importance, speaking always becomes a demanding task to teach. It is a complex skill since it requires not only the language ability, but also related to psychological conditions, such as confidence, especially when it comes to public speaking. This paper elaborates what happened in the public speaking training classes conducted by Language Development and Service Centers at University of Muhammadiyah Banjaramasin. This research employs pre-experimental research design to measure the effect of the training on students' speaking anxiety and skill. It invites 40 students from the writers' classes to join the research. A Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) questionnaire and speaking test are two main instruments to collect the data. In addition, result observation also becomes additional data collection to enrich the findings. Finally, this research is expected to give a valid statistical data support as well as ideas for teachers who are interested in planning a public speaking training for their students.

Keywords: Public Speaking, Anxiety, Speaking Skill

Introduction

Speaking is one of the basic skills that everyone has, so everyone can communicate and interact with others. However, not everyone can speak well in front of the audiences (public speaking), especially in English. There are some reasons that cause fear to conduct public speaking in English, such as: lack of confidence, fear of misdirection and stage fright. In some cases, it caused them to forget the topic that they should be presenting.

Mandel (2014) said that:

"An important skill to have in business and especially in the public relations arena is the skill of persuasion or the ability to win over the crowd. Inside and outside the workplace, the power of persuasion can carry you far and it all starts by honing those public speaking skills."

Based on the above statement, it is not surprising that the students must have the ability to do good public speaking. Intensive training, habituation in the classroom and student organizations in the campus environment is expected to help the students to master their public speaking skills.

University of Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin (UM Banjarmasin) through Language Development and Service Center (P3B) implement Intensive English Class (IEC) program. This program is implemented every Monday to Thursday, where every Thursday the students are trained to speak English in front of the class on topics they have learned from Monday to Wednesday. This program is followed by all new students in the first year of their study.

Through this activity is expected to measure and to familiarize each student to do public speaking in English. As our current activities as an implementer want to measure the extent to which the program has succeeded in improving public speaking skills and measuring changes in their anxiety levels while speaking in public.

Literature review

Definition of public speaking

In this part we will explain first about the definition of Public Speaking, the important of the public speaking and in the end, we will highlight some of the techniques for teaching public speaking.
Baumeyer (2018) as an instructor in Organizational Leadership and Management and Teaches Business Courses said that:

> "Public speaking is the process of communicating information to an audience. It is usually done before a large audience, like in school, the workplace and even in our personal lives. The benefits of knowing how to communicate to an audience include sharpening critical thinking and verbal/non-verbal communication skill"

Therefore, it can be concluded that public speaking is the process of delivering topics in front of the audiences, whether in the classroom for students or at work for those who are already working. As students, this ability will be very useful when they have to deal with their assignments from their lecturers to be presented or shared in front of the class. The success of a public speaking is if the message delivered can be received by others clearly. That's why it's necessary for teachers to teach some technique for public speaking.

Davies (2011) said in his article that there are four terms might be considered as a speaker.

- First is passion. He said just talk what you like to talk.
- Second, is energy. Energy is infectious. If you are energetic, whether that be through movement of your body or full use of your voice, your audience will detect it and give positive feedback to you.
- Third is voice. Always practice using your voice.
- The last is spontaneity. The ability to be spontaneous re-assures your audience that the presenter knows his/her subject. Answering questions, or dealing with issues that you had not planned to cover, shows tremendous self-confidence.

And in the end of this part he said to take notes even if they are just bullet points on a card. They'll keep you on track if you find yourself wondering too far off the main body of your talk.
In the other hand, Dolan (2016, p. 9) explains that good presentation consists of three key components, as follows:

- Structure that include a clear component (introduction, body and conclusion). The smooth flow from one topic to next topic.
- Body Language and movement (comfort, deliberate gestures, eye contact, and use of visual aids)
- Verbal delivery (pace, volume and use of full vocal range)

Dolan (2016) also gives some of tips to reduce anxiety:

- Organize everything that you need in your speech
- Visualize, imagining your speech
- Practice
- Make contact before your talk with your audience
- Breath
- Release tension
- Move

Becoming a good public speaker in English, there are many things to be considered as follows: the student as the speaker, the audience as the listener and the topic of speech. Furthermore, the regular exercises and extensive insight about the topic of conversation are also very important.

Previous studies

There are some previous studies related to the present research. First, Colbeck (2011) conducted a study on the effect of a speech course on public speaking anxiety. She used McCroskey's Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) questionnaire to record 161 students' speaking anxiety. The result showed that there was significant decrease of speaking anxiety after joining the course. Next, Chollet at al (2014) developed an interactive virtual audience platform for public speaking training. They wanted to

notice which feedbacks during the training has big impact on the speaker. In conclusion they said that there was a correlation between the audience feedback and the speaker performance. Last, Herbein at al (2017) investigated the effect of speech training on elementary students' public speaking competence. The measured both public speaking ability and speaking anxiety on 65 students. They found that the students who participated in the training has better nonverbal and organizational skills, but the training did not affect their speaking anxiety. The present study, then, is mostly inspired by the first and the third previous studies. It measures the effect of public speaking training using both test and PRPSA questionnaire. The participants were the first semester of undergraduate program. The comes from various faculties, but with the same estimated English ability since they took a placement test in the beginning of the intensive English program.

Methodology

Research design

The present study used pre-experimental or single-subject design. This design allows the researchers to observe the effect of certain intervention on single individuals (Creswell, 2012). In this research, the subjects will get a pre-test before the experimentation begins and will have a post-test after the treatment to measure the outcome (Latief, 2012). The pre-test was conducted in the beginning of the program when the students wanted to join the intensive program. It was in form of an interview with the subjects to better understand their speaking ability. Their score, then, was ranked and grouped into a class. After a half of the semester, they got their middle test and it was used as the posttest to measure the effect of public speaking training intervention.The instrument for the posttest was interview with the same scoring rubric to make sure that there was no difference for measurement.

The next instrumentation is questionnaire. A Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) questionnaire designed by Jim McCroskey (1970) was utilized the measure the effect of the training on the subjects' anxiety. This questionnaire was handed to the students in the first day of the program and before the middle test.

Treatment

The treatment in the present study was public speaking training. It was conducted for two semesters (one academic year), but for the sake of this study we only measured the effect for a half of the semester.

The public speaking training is one of the programs designed by the Language Service and Development Center at University of Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin. This program was intended to develop the students' ability and confidence in speaking. The students got this training once a week, every Thursday. The activities offered were designed as fun as possible to encourage the students to actively speak. Speaking games and short speech competitions were two main activities offered with some different variations in each week. Once in a month, the Language Development Center also invited a native speaker to trigger the students to talk.

Picture 1 A Speaking Game

Picture 2 A Short Speech Competition

Picture 3 Inviting a Native Speaker

Result and discussion

Demographic information

There were 20 participants from two classes of intensive program joined in this research. Figure 1 clearly describes that the female students (n=11) has higher percentage than the male students (n=9). Meanwhile, for the faculty they come from, we can see that they come from Faculty of Engineering (n=7), Faculty of Psychology (n=7), and Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (6). The age of the participants were not recorded because most of them were in the same age (between 17-20 years old).
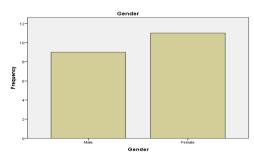

Figure 1 Frequency of Gender

Table 1 Faculty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Engineering	7	35,0	35,0	35,0
	Physchology	7	35,0	35,0	70,0
	Education	6	30,0	30,0	100,0
	Total	20	100,0	100,0	

The students' speaking ability

The research hypothesis assumed in the present study was there would be significant difference in the students' speaking ability after they were immersed in a public speaking training. To test this hypothesis, a spoken test in form of an interview was designed. The interview asked some questions about self-introduction, their hobbies, and family. The questions used for posttest were almost same with the questions for the posttest. The descriptive statistic of pretest and posttest can be seen in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Pretest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking Score Pretest	20	60	80	66,45	6,724
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Posttest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking Score Posttest	20	70	87	77,20	4,686
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Based on those two tables above, we can notice that there were differences between the means of the two scores. In the pretest, the mean score was 66,45 and it was 77,20. However, we cannot say that there is significant difference before finishing the statistic computation. Table 4 tells us the result of paired t-test.

Table 4 Paired Samples Test of the Speaking Score

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Speaking Score Pretest - Speaking Score Posttest	-10,750	8,284	1,852	-14,627	-6,873	-5,804	19	,000

The data revealed that the was significant difference in students speaking ability before and after they got the public speaking training (.00 <. 05). Thus, we can conclude that the students have better speaking ability after they were trained in a public speaking class. Since the activities in the public speaking are frequently arranged in form of a competition and interaction (games), the present findings, then, match the sociocultural theory that people will gain better competence when they are in a social activity (Savilla-Troike, 2006). When the students in a speaking game, they usually will help each other to win the games. This condition encourages them to assist each other in speaking.

The speech competition helped the students to be a better speaker by training themselves to be brave to speak in front of others. The presence of natives speaker also made them able to apply what they have learnt when the native speakers invite them to talk.

The students' speaking anxiety

It was hypothesized that there would be significant difference in the students' speaking anxiety after they got public speaking training. The hypothesis was tested by giving them a PRPSA questionnaire before and after the intervention. The result of the questionnaire can be seen in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5 Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Speaking Anxiety Pretest	106,15	20	9,659	2,160
	Speaking Anxiety Posttest	99,80	20	12,203	2,729

Table 6 Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Speaking Anxiety Pretest - Speaking Anxiety Posttest	6,350	8,934	1,998	2,169	10,531	3,179	19	,005

Table 5 shows that the result of PRPSA in the posttest was lower than the result in the pretest (99.80<106.15). If we compute the means difference, we will find that the decrease was 6.35 points. However, these points were not big which can be seen in the result of paired samples test (Table 6). The Sig. value was only .005 which was same with the significance level. Therefore, we cannot say that there was significant difference in students' speaking anxiety between before and after training. It also means that the training does not make the students able to reduce their anxiety in speaking. This finding was in contrast with Colbeck (2011) finding, which found that the public speaking class had positive impact on lowering the anxiety of the students to speak. The reasons for this finding may vary. The short duration of the class may become one of them. Compared to Colbeck, which was a full speech course, the present study only measures the effect in a once-a-week public speaking class in about two months (half of a semester). As we know that anxiety is a psychological matter which cannot be handled in a short time.

Conclusion

Public speaking is an important skills need to be mastered by students. This skill can be trained in a fun way in form of speaking games, speech competition, and taking with native speakers. The present research showed that once-a-week public speaking training had successfully made the students have better speaking ability. Although, the training did not have a significant effect on the students' speaking anxiety, this kind of training is still recommended. It is better for every teacher, especially in a speaking class, to let the students have interaction or competition to show up their speaking ability. A fun atmosphere should be built to make each of them have lower speaking anxiety so they can bravely express their idea.

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