
An Analysis of Students Speaking Anxiety in Learning English at Senior High School: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Analysis of Students' Speaking Anxiety in Learning English in SMA (Case Study at SMAT Darussalam Tasikmalaya). Paper of the Department of English Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training at the University of Perjuangan Tasikmalaya. To speak in a foreign language students will certainly experience various obstacles. One of these obstacles is from the psychological aspect, namely anxiety. This study is intended to determine the level of student anxiety and identify possible factors contributing to anxiety in the EFL classroom. The author takes a class, of third-grade Darussalam High School students for the 2022/2023 academic year. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. That the author uses one type of instrument to collect data. The author uses Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale Questionnaire, developed by Horwitz et Al. (1986). It consists of 13 items with a 5-point Likert Scale. The results of this study indicate that most students are at the level of "Very Anxious". There 8 (40%) students experienced the "Very Anxious" level, 6 (30%) students were at the "Anxious" level. 6 (30%) students have the "Slightly Anxious" level. The results of this study indicate that from the psychological aspects of almost half of the students, 8 (40%) are at a severe level of anxiety, 6 students (30%) were at a moderate level of anxiety, and 6 students (30%) is at a low level of anxiety. This research also shows that speaking up front in class, influenced by one's level of confidence and ability in language, teacher's personality, and lack of preparation are factors that can contribute to students' anxiety in learning English from the 13 selected anxieties.

Keywords: Speaking, English, Anxiety Level, Student Anxiety.

INTRODUCTION

To be able to communicate with people around the world, English speaking skill is considered to be an important skill. Students should have a good command of communication skills in English so as to prepare their future careers and lives. In reality, even though English has been taught for at least six years in school levels in Indonesia, which in Junior High School and Senior High School

level and also in many elementary schools as local content subject, the students still have some difficulties in learning English whether it is the productive or receptive skill, especially speaking.

Speaking anxiety refers to the fear or apprehension experienced by individuals when communicating orally in a foreign language (Lestari et al., 2019). It often manifests as nervousness, self-consciousness, or a lack of confidence during speaking tasks. This anxiety can significantly hinder language learning progress and impede the development of effective communication skills.

Several factors contribute to speaking anxiety among senior high school students learning English. One factor is the fear of making mistakes or being judged negatively by peers or teachers (Male, 2018). The pressure to perform well in front of others can intensify feelings of anxiety and inhibit students from actively participating in speaking activities. Additionally, limited opportunities for authentic practice, such as real-life conversations with native speakers or immersion experiences, can contribute to anxious feelings when faced with unfamiliar linguistic contexts.

Speaking anxiety has negative effects on language acquisition among senior high school students learning English. Firstly, it hinders fluency development as anxious learners may experience difficulty organizing their thoughts coherently while under stress (Male, 2018). Secondly, it limits vocabulary expansion since anxious speakers are more likely to rely on familiar words rather than taking risks with new vocabulary (Aini et al., 2022). Lastly, it can lead to a lack of spontaneity and creativity in oral communication, as students focus more on avoiding errors rather than expressing themselves freely.

Third grade students at Darussalam High School are foreign English learners; they may face anxiety problems when speaking English in front of the class. Dealing with problems faced by students, the researcher is interested in conducting research entitled "An Analysis of Students Speaking Anxiety in Learning English at Senior High School". This study aims to analyze anxiety problems faced by students in the third grade at SMA Darussalam.

A number of previous study have reported language anxiety among Second Language learners. (Al-Saraj, 2011; Heryatun, Y. & Tarihoran, N. 2016; Horwitz, E. K, Horwitz, M.B., & Cope, J.A. 1986; Krashen, 1988) Relating to previous study, found out that students don't feel comfortable to speak in front of the others. This research finding is almost the same as other research that show students are influenced by the other students when they have to speak in front of the class.

METHOD

This current research uses a qualitative descriptive method to obtain the data needed. Qualitative descriptive research generates a descriptive summary of events in everyday terms as they are experienced by people and is an appropriate research design when a straightforward description of a phenomenon is desired. The research site was conducted by students from SMAT Darussalam Tasikmalaya. Twenty students in the second grade were chosen as the respondents of this research. The second graders are chosen as respondents in consideration that they have learned English for several years and are capable to represent their opinion related to the research questions. The data were collected using a questionnaire through the Google Form link and accessed by the learners. The questionnaire of this study was presented using a Likert scale to get information from participants. The responses from the questionnaire were analyzed by perceiving the mostly checked item in the scale. The score of the questionnaire was calculated by using Likert five-point rating scale starting from Strongly disagree = 1 point, Disagree = 2 points, Neutral = 3 points, Agree = 2 points, Strongly Agree = 1 point.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study was conducted to identify what are the levels of anxiety experienced by senior high school students at SMAT Darussalam Tasikmalaya and what factors the students think contribute to their anxiety in learning English. This study involved 20 students of SMAT Darussalam Tasikmalaya. The data for this study was obtained from questionnaires.

The researcher used a close-ended questionnaire as an instrument in this study. This questionnaire consisted of 13 questions regarding how anxious the students were about speaking English in class. The respondents of this study have answered the questionnaire completely. The table below shows the results of the students' responses to the questionnaire.

Table 1.1 The Percentage of Students' Preference

No	Questionnaire	SA	A	N	D	SD	TOTAL
1	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class	10%	55%	25%	5%	5%	100%
2	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class	40%	45%	5%	10%	0%	100%
3	I don't understand why some people get so upset over English language classes	15%	30%	45%	5%	5%	100%

4	In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	30%	45%	20%	0%	5%	100%
5	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class	0%	45%	50%	5%	0%	100%
6	I feel confident when I speak in English language class	30%	30%	10%	25%	5%	100%
7	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get	10%	25%	50%	10%	5%	100%
8	I always feel that other students speak the English language better than I do	40%	30%	25%	5%	0%	100%
9	I feel very self-conscious about the English language in front of other students	30%	25%	30%	10%	5%	100%
10	Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind	25%	30%	30%	0%	15%	100%
11	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class	25%	55%	15%	0%	5%	100%
12	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says	5%	65%	15%	15%	0%	100%
13	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a English language	15%	40%	35%	10%	0%	100%

SA : Strongly Agree

A : Agree

N : Neutral

D : Disagree

SD : Strongly Disagree

Table 1.2 Student's Scoring and Categorizing

No	Respondent	Questionnaire Number													Total Score	Level of Anxiety
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13		
1	HF	3	2	3	4	3	4	3	3	5	3	4	4	3	44	Slightly Anxious
2	NN	4	4	4	4	2	4	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	44	Slightly Anxious
3	PK	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	48	Anxious
4	SA	1	2	5	5	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	2	2	39	Slightly Anxious
5	SAA	4	4	4	3	3	2	2	5	1	1	3	2	2	36	Slightly Anxious
6	TI	5	5	5	1	4	5	4	5	4	1	2	2	3	46	Anxious
7	YF	3	4	2	4	4	3	3	3	5	3	3	4	4	45	Anxious
8	DME	3	5	3	5	4	2	3	5	5	4	5	4	3	51	Very Anxious
9	ES	4	5	3	5	4	1	3	5	5	4	5	4	4	52	Very Anxious
10	HS	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	50	Anxious
11	H	4	3	3	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	49	Anxious
12	AR	4	5	3	4	3	2	4	5	5	4	5	4	3	51	Very Anxious
13	AP	2	5	4	5	3	5	2	2	2	3	4	4	3	44	Slightly Anxious
14	AK	4	5	2	5	3	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	55	Very Anxious
15	AE	3	4	3	5	3	2	1	4	3	1	4	3	5	41	Slightly Anxious
16	SS	5	4	4	3	4	5	4	3	4	5	4	3	4	52	Very Anxious
17	RL	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	3	3	51	Very Anxious
18	SK	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	52	Very Anxious
19	SR	4	3	4	3	3	5	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	48	Anxious
20	NSM	3	5	5	4	4	3	5	5	3	3	5	4	5	54	Very Anxious

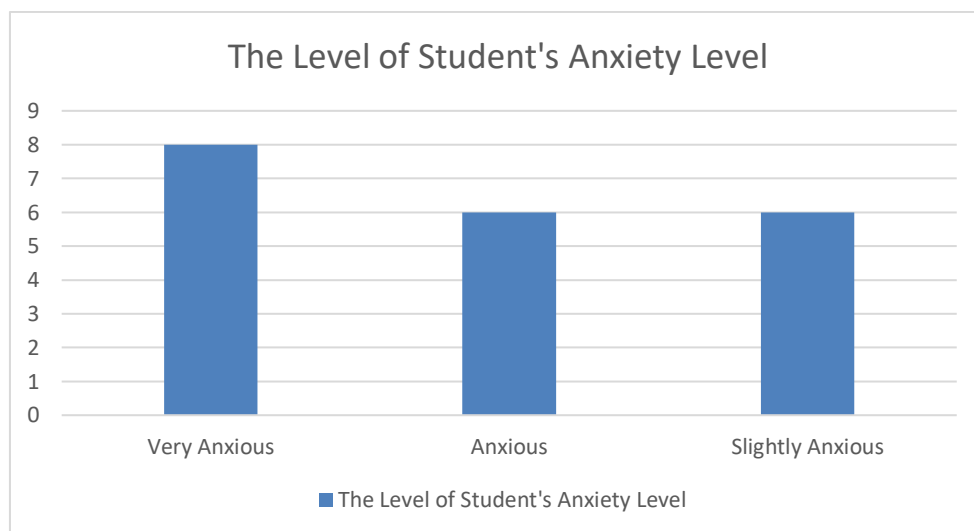
From the 20 students who became the sample of this study, it can be concluded that there are various kinds of speaking problems faced by SMAT Darussalam students. From the data, students mostly experience anxiety at the "very anxious" level (55 points).

Discussion

Based on the 13 questions in this questionnaire, there were various responses from all respondents. The researcher found that there were 20 students who had different levels of anxiety in speaking skills. There were 8 students (40%) who experienced the "very anxious" level and the score range for the "very anxious" level started from 51-65 . There are 6 students (30%) who experience the "anxious" level and the score range for the "anxious" level starts from 42-50 . There are 6 students (30%) who experience the level of "slightly anxious" and the score range for the level of "slightly anxious" starts from 41-25 . The researcher found that more respondents were at the "very anxious" level in this study.

From the graph above, it can be seen that most students have a high level of anxiety (very anxious). This means that many students have problems in reducing anxiety. Then, the researcher also shows the highest and lowest scores in each anxiety level in the following table.

Chart 1.1 The Summary of Student's Anxiety Level



There are also three levels of speaking anxiety, namely severe anxiety, moderate anxiety and low anxiety. Out of a total of 20 respondents, there were 8 students (40%) who experienced the "very anxious" level and most of the respondents were at the normal anxiety level. Severe anxiety is a feeling caused by the belief of something different that makes them feel threatened by their environment. This usually stems from a fear and distress response. The characteristics of people with severe anxiety can be seen from their behavior or feelings that always want to be free, very anxious, restless, confused, poor eye contact, withdrawal, denial, need for more space, trembling, etc. Moderate anxiety is a feeling of restlessness caused by something different that

makes the person with moderate anxiety nervous or agitated. The characteristics of people with moderate anxiety are feelings of discomfort, sensitivity, unconsciousness, voice changes, sweating, headaches, back pain, etc. Then, there are 6 students (30%) at the low anxiety level. This can be a normal condition when many people also feel tense or nervous when they have to do something in front of others.

CONCLUSION

This research on speaking anxiety was carried out using a qualitative descriptive method to obtain data. The research location is at Darussalam High School, Tasikmalaya City with a total of 20 students whose data were obtained from a questionnaire. The researchers chose:

1. Grade 2 students because Grade 2 students have studied English for several years and are able to communicate in English.
2. Collect data using a questionnaire via a Google form link that students can access.
3. The research questionnaire is presented using a Likert scale to obtain information from participants
4. Questionnaire responses were analyzed by observing the most items on a scale
5. Questionnaire scores were calculated using a Likert rating scale of five points (Strongly Disagree = 1 point, Disagree = 2 points, Neutral = 3 points, Agree = 4 points, Strongly Agree = 5 points)

For this study, the researcher used a closed questionnaire that consisted of 13 questions regarding how anxious the students were when speaking English in class. Through research from this questionnaire, it can be concluded that as many as 20 students have different levels of anxiety about speaking skills. The results are as follows:

1. 8 students (40%) experienced a very high level of anxiety
2. 6 students who experience a little anxiety (30%) high anxiety (very anxious)
3. 6 students who experience low levels of anxiety

This means that more students are at a very anxious level. More specifically, most students have high anxiety, which means that many students have difficulty reducing anxiety.

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