

## EXPLORING THE LOW PROFICIENCY LEVEL STUDENT'S ANXIETY DURING SPEAKING ENGLISH

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### ABSTRACT

Anxiety is a feeling of frustration, being threatened, apprehension, tension, and worry. Anxiety plays role in affecting especially low proficiency level students in learning English particularly speaking skill. This research is aimed to find out factors that cause low proficiency level students' anxiety during speaking English. This research is designed using descriptive qualitative which involved 10 low speaking proficiency students' at English Department Program Faculty of Teachers Training and Education in a private university in Bogor as participants. The data were gathered through questionnaire and interview. The result shows there are 7 factors that lead low proficiency level students to anxiety during speaking English. Lack of vocabulary takes first place admitted by 52.6% respondents, followed by lack of preparation stated by 50.5% respondent in second place. Third place sit by fear of making mistakes confessed by 49.7% of respondents. Fourth, there are 49.6% of respondents who felt anxious because of their low English proficiency. Fear of being attention is another factor causing 49.6% of respondent anxious. Lack of practice makes 48.5% respondents feeling anxious in speaking. And the last is the students' inability to express ideas resulting 45.0% of respondents anxious because they do not know what to say. The finding also shows that the strategy mostly employed by the low proficiency level students to cope with their anxiety in speaking is having better preparation.

**Keyword:** Anxiety, Speaking Skill, Low Speaking Proficiency Level Students.

### INTRODUCTION

Speaking is defined as the active use of language to express meanings, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and opinions in order that people may understand what they talk about (Cameron:2011). Other than writing, mastering speaking as another productive skill in learning a foreign language like English has its own challenges. It deals with not only knowledge about the language but also coping with psychological hampers.

One of the psychological difficulties that may be faced by students is anxiety. It may affect them in learning speaking skill. Woodrow (2006) assumes anxiety is a problem in language learning and has contributing effects toward

speaking English. Similarly, Na (2007) supported that language anxiety is an affective hindrance on second or foreign language acquisition.

Hadziosmanovic (2012) gives the examples of the anxiety in speaking skill such as feeling nervous, worried, and fear when doing presentation or talking in front of the class. They show some of the symptoms of anxiety when they practice English speaking in the classroom, such as sweating, blushing, heart beating faster, dizzying and even moving a lot during the presentation. Those occur because they think their language problems such as their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In addition, they are

worried of making mistakes, fear of being commented and laughed by their teacher and friends, because they think that English is difficult subject. Therefore, they cannot perform maximally and finally, they get poor achievement in learning English speaking skill.

Previous studies in educational research have detailed many issues of foreign language anxiety. It was found that some difficulties in speaking are because of vocabulary, pronunciations, fluency, and grammar. The difficulties which are viewed from psychological aspects are lack of confidence, lack of motivation and the assumption that speaking English. Types of the student's anxiety in English speaking class and focused on finding out the types of anxiety, and the source of anxiety are also investigated. The major finding of the studies showed there are two types of anxiety; trait anxiety and state/situational anxiety. Meanwhile the present research attempts to investigate the factors leading to students anxiety, to describe the dominant factors which perceived by them, and to find out how they cope with anxiety in learning English speaking skill in junior high school. In this occasion, the aim of the study is to explore factors that causing anxiety to low proficiency level students in speaking.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition of Speaking**

Speaking has an important role in life; people use it in order to communicate to teach others. There are some definition and perspective of speaking proposed by many experts. Cameron (2001) assumes that speaking is the active use of language to express meanings in order that people may understand what to talk about. To speak in the foreign language in order to share understandings with other people requires attention to precise details of the language. A speaker needs to find the requires attention to precise details of the

language. A speaker needs to find the most appropriate words and the correct grammar to convey meaning accurately and precisely and needs to organize the discourse so that a listener will understand. Speaking is so demanding, requires careful and plentiful support of various types, not just support for understanding, but also support for production.

Thornbury (2005) mentioned that in nature of speaking, speaker do some important parts to express their intentions. But also support for production. And self – monitoring, articulation of their words, and manage their talk accurately and fluently. In addition, Harmer (2007) also states that when speakers want to be able to speak fluently in English, they need to be able to pronounce phonemes correctly, use appropriate stress and intonation patters and speak in connected speech. They will have to able to speak in a range of different genres and situations, and they will have to be able to use a range of conversational and conversational repair strategies. They will need to be able to survive in typical functional exchanges, too.

According to those theories, speaking means putting someone ideas, opinions, and thought into words to deliver the speaker message to people in order to communicate and get the information.

### **Speaking Competence**

Speaking competence refers to the ability to speak spontaneously, meaningfully, in acceptable grammar, suitable vocabulary and proper pronunciation. In addition, speaking is a complex skill which also involves physical and psychological performance. A competent speaker not only must have knowledge about the language but also must know how to use it (Bygate 1987)

Earlier, Hymes (1972) in Nurmayasari (2017) proposed the term

“communicative competence” which includes linguistic competence and sociocultural dimensions. In addition, Brown (2000) pointed out communicative competence enables learners to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts. Canale and Swain (1980) further develop this notion, identifying four dimensions of communicative competence: grammatical competence (knowledge of what is grammatically correct in a language), sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of what is socially acceptable in a language), discourse competence, and strategic competence (the knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies). In short, communicative competence includes both the use of the linguistic system itself and the functional aspects of communication.

### **Speaking Component**

In order to speak English fluently, students should know some component of speaking and must master them because the component is the aspects influencing how well people speak language. According to Brown (2004) there are five components of language that influence speaking ability. They are fluency, Grammar, Pronunciation, Vocabulary and Comprehension.

#### **1. Fluency**

Fluency is the ability to speak quickly and automatically, to keep going in meaningful Interaction, and to maintain comprehensible communication competence (Richards, 2008, p.8). In this definition, a speaker may be said to be a fluent speaker when he or she can use language structures accurately and can use the language patterns quickly and automatically at the normal conversation speed. A speaker is also required to be able to keep going when speaking spontaneously but he or she does not have

to speak so fast. It is because pausing is sometimes important. The signs of fluency are speed and pause. The signs indicated that the speaker does not spend a lot of time searching for the language items needed (Brown, 2007).

#### **2. Grammar**

According to Brown (2000) grammar is a rules of the conversational arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence.

#### **3. Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is the way speakers produce clear language including the articulation of individual sounds and distinctive features of sounds like voicing and aspiration, setting, features, stresses, and intonation (Nunan, 2003). It means that the speaker has to be able to give clear messages to be listener. Pronunciation has an important role in giving clear message to the listener.

#### **4. Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is related to the appropriate diction which is used in language use. Sufficient vocabulary of common words will provide the students with a lot of advantages, since they include all common questions, forming words, all the common prepositions, the full range of spoken discourses, common expression, common sequencing, and linking words.

#### **5. Comprehension**

Comprehension is an important aspect in speaking in order to avoid misunderstanding to happen between the speaker and the listener what causes communication breakdowns. According to Richards (2008), “Comprehension is viewed as a process of decoding”. Understanding what the other is saying help the listener interpret meaning correctly and comprehension do not depends only on linguistic aspects but also social cultural aspects of the language plus

to the knowledge about participant backgrounds.

### **Anxiety**

Anxiety is a complex phenomenon. It is a human feeling of fear, worry, and nervousness. Anxiety is an emotion that tends to have great effects in many aspects of human being life. According to Brown (2007) anxiety associated with feelings of being uneasy, frustrated, apprehensive, or worried. While according to Ormrod anxiety is a feeling of uneasiness and apprehension concerning a situation with an uncertain outcome. It can be happened to people who doubt with their ability or what they want to do. Anxiety is also a feeling of frustration, being threatened, apprehension, tension, and worry that plays role in affecting students in learning language.

### **Factors of Anxiety**

Anxiety can come from various factors, it sometimes comes from classroom activities/ for example, in speaking activities, when students do presentation in the class, it can produce students to feel anxious. According to Horwitz, et all (1986) speaking in the foreign language as the most producing anxiety experience.

Meanwhile, Liu (2007) defines some factors of anxiety, as follows:

#### 1. Lack of Vocabulary

Lack of vocabulary is one of the factors of students speaking anxiety. The students may feel anxious because their vocabulary is limited. Kanar (2011) "Vocabulary is a big obstacle for their English learning"

#### 2. Lack of Preparation

This is another important factor for the students' speaking anxiety. Kanar (2011) that "Speaking anxiety is usually the results of not being prepared". She claims that being unprepared when doing a presentation may affect students' anxiety. Therefore, the students should be well

prepared in order that they can speak English appropriately.

#### 3. Lack of Practice

Students' speaking anxiety also can rise from the students' lack of practice in learning English. The students do not have many opportunities to practice the language because they have limited class time, the big class size, and the lack of chances to practice.

#### 4. Fear of Making Mistakes

Fear of making mistakes is considered as another factor of students' speaking anxiety. In some cases, students feel nervous because they are afraid of making mistakes when doing presentation.

#### 5. Fear of Being Focus Attention

Another factor that leads to students' speaking anxiety is their fear of being focus of attention. Many students experienced anxiety when they were singled out to speak the language in front of their classmates. For example they get nervous when speaking English in front of others, because I think too many eyes were gazing at me.

#### 6. Inability to Express Ideas

Foreign language students sometimes find it difficult to express their ideas in the foreign language they are studying. This difficulty tends to be a problem for most foreign language learners as well as it contributes to their anxiety.

#### 7. Low English Proficiency

Student's anxiety may emerge from their low English proficiency. The students are afraid to speak because they are less proficiency, have difficulty understanding what the teacher says in the class as well as they are unable to respond to the teacher questions.

### **Strategies to Cope With Language Anxiety**

According to Kondo & Ying-Ling (2004) wrote in academic journal about strategies for coping with language

anxiety. In their article, there are five strategies as follows:

- a. Preparation  
In this strategy, students attempt to control their own self by improving learning and study strategies such as study hard, trying to obtain good summaries of lecture notes.
- b. Relaxation  
It is another strategy to reduce anxiety symptoms. For example take a deep breath and try to calm down when doing presentation.
- c. Positive Thinking  
It is characterized by cooling down of pressure cognitive processes that underline student's anxiety, think that everything may be okay. For example imagining oneself giving a great performance, trying to enjoy the tension.
- d. Peer Seeking  
This strategy is distinguished by student's willingness to look for other students who seem to have trouble understanding the class and controlling their anxiety in learning language. For example the students try to be calm because their friends also have the same mistakes.
- e. Resignation  
It is characterized by student's unwillingness to do anything to decrease their language anxiety. For example give up and sleeping in the class. This strategy makes damaged students learning speaking skill. They may not have a lot surrender arise from the individual of the students. They may not have a lot of preparation, confident, fear of failure and afraid of making mistakes in grammar and pronunciation.

Some strategies are reasonable and worth to be implemented as efforts to have better speaking competence.

## METHOD

The study is conducted to find out factors that contributed to low speaking proficiency level students' anxiety during speaking English. The strategy in overcoming anxiety itself is to see what students have done in coping with their anxiety.

This research is classified as case study using descriptive qualitative method. Case study is basically an intensive study of an individual or group that is seen having a particular case. A case study is a single instance of some bound system, which can range from one individual to a class, a school, or an entire community. The data gathered can include interview data, narrative accounts, classroom observations, verbal reports, and written documents.

Bodgan and Taylor in Setiyadi (2006) explain that qualitative research which produces descriptive data in written or spoken words from the people and their behaviour which can be observe. The researcher uses descriptive design in this research because this research is focus on a certain case study in the school environment. In this case the case study is the activities of teaching and learning English. Therefore, the appropriate design can be used in conducting this research is descriptive research. The design consist two stages. The first is giving the questionnaire for low students. The second stage is doing the interview with the low students. This interview happens after the researcher did the questionnaire.

In doing the research, the participants are needed to gain the information about the factors of students' anxiety in speaking. The participants in this research are the students of junior high school in Bogor. Students come from one class as many as ten low students.

The researcher purposively takes ten low students in terms of speaking score gained from their English teacher because the writer assumes that low

students' more often experience anxiety than children who are high and mid in English learning speaking skill.

The instrument is needed to gain the data; the researcher used two types of instruments; questionnaire and interview

Firstly the researcher used close ended questionnaire which is adapted from Liu (2007) by added with the theory taken from chapter two to find out the factors students anxiety in learning English speaking faced by low students. The questionnaire consist 13 questions with answer response options ranged from 1-5 of each item. The 5-point Likert's scale is ranged from "Strongly Agree" (SA), "Agree" (A), "Neither Agree nor Disagree" (NA), "Disagree" (D), and "Strongly Disagree" (SD) Ary et al., (2002). The questionnaire was adapted and translated to suit the respondents.

Secondly the researcher used interview adapted from Kondo (2004) by added with the theory taken from chapter two to know the strategies to cope with students' anxiety. The interview sheet consisted of 5 questions.

In this study, the interview was given to 7th grade categorized as low proficiency level students as the respondent who have anxiety in learning English. These are students from one state junior high school in Bogor. This will help the researcher to get more enough data about how these students coping with their anxiety in learning English speaking skill.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The following is the result from questionnaire:

No	Factors of Anxiety	Percentage
1	Lack of Vocabulary	52.6%
2	Lack of Preparation	50.5%
3	Fear of making mistakes	49.7%
4	Low English Proficiency	49.6%
5	Fear of being focus of	49.6%

	attention	
6	Lack of Practice	48.5%
7	Inability to express idea	45.0%

Based on the table of questionnaire results above 10 low students' faced several factors causing anxiety in learning English speaking skill. The findings shows that there are seven factors that make the students' feel anxious in learning English speaking skill, therefore they cannot speak up appropriately in front of people. They were 52, 6% in lack of vocabulary, 48, 5% in lack of practice, 50, 5% in lack of preparation, 49, 7% fear of making mistakes, 45, 0% in inability to express ideas, 49, 6% in low English proficiency and 49, 6% in fear of being attention. Therefore, the findings are relevant with the theory which stated by Liu (2007) who tell about the factors caused the students' anxiety.

The data analysis showed that the most affecting factors in speaking skill were lack of vocabulary (52, 6%). The factors happen because they have limited vocabulary, it make them cannot speak well therefore they feel uneasy and anxious when they speak in front of people. It is supported by Kanar (2011) vocabulary is the big obstacle in their learning English. He means vocabulary is plays important role in order to speak appropriately.

To get complete insight, the respondents were also interviewed about strategies they use to overcome their anxiety. And the result is as follow:

No	Strategies to cope with Anxiety	Percentage
1	Preparation	60%
2	Relaxation	40%
3	Positive Thinking	10%
4	Peer Seeking	10%
5	Resignation	20%

Preparation is one of the strategies which used by 60% respondents to reduce their anxiety. Students' attempted to control their own self by improving learning such as study hard. There are 6 out of 10 students' reveal that they reduce their anxiety by using preparation as their strategy.

Respondent 1 said: "*I have to prepare well before speaking English and sometimes, I think for a while that my friends also have problems in English. It a bit reduces my anxiety*".

Respondent 4 said: "*I have to prepare well before speaking English, because if I not prepare to spoke English in front of the class. I do not know what I will say*".

Respondent 5 said: "*I need to prepare myself before speaking in front of class, because if I prepare to spoke English in front of the class. I am very confident to speak English in front of the class.*"

Respondent 8 said: "*I need to prepare myself before speaking in front of class to make me confident in spoken English*".

Respondent 9 said: "*I have to prepare well before speaking English, because if I not prepare to spoke English in front of the class. I do not know what I will say*".

Respondent 10 said: "*I have to prepare well before speaking English, because if I not prepare to spoke English in front of the class. I do not know what I will say*".

As the report above, study hard and make a good preparation before speak were the important strategies which might decrease their language anxiety during they did presentation in front of class.

Relaxation is the second strategies employed to reduce students' anxiety in learning English speaking skill for example take a breath and try to calm down doing presentation.

Respondent 2 confirmed: "Sometimes, I don't want to speak, felt quite, and *sometimes, I look around to take a breath for a while.*"

Respondent 3 confirmed: "*I try relax myself.*" so that what I will say is not messy.

Respondent 5 confirmed: I am nervous if friends look at me and "*sometimes, I look around to take a breath for a while.*"

The other respondent 7 confirmed: "*sometimes, I look around to take a breath for a while.*" to reduce my nerves.

In short, the respondents are overcoming their language anxiety by trying to relax themselves and taking a breath.

Positive Thinking is chosen by 20% respondent by cooling down themselves and thinks everything may be okay, for example, trying to enjoy the tension. There was only one respondent who used this strategy to cope with his anxiety as follows:

Respondent 4 said: "I have to study hard before speak and *try to be calm that I can do it.*"

Trying to make sure himself that he can do it is a way for facing to language anxiety. It meant that it might help them to encourage himself to do better than before and try not to worry about frightened to make some mistakes in learning speaking skill.

Peer-Seeking strategy is distinguished by students' willingness to look for other students who seem to have trouble understanding the class and controlling their anxiety in speaking skill. There was a respondent who used this strategy coping with his anxiety as follow:

Respondent 1 said: "I have to prepare well before speak and "*Sometimes, I think for a while that my*

*friends also have problems in English. It a bit reduces my anxiety."*

Resignation is characterized by students' unwillingness to do anything to decrease their anxiety. For example give up and sleeping in the class. There were 2 out of 10 respondents reducing their anxiety by using this strategy as follows:

Participant 1 said: "Sometimes, I don't want to speak, *felt quite, and sometimes, I look around to take a breath for a while.*"

Participant 6 said: "Sometimes, if I forget want to speak English, *sometimes, I look around to take a breath for a while.*"

Based on finding above, the results showed that student were most likely to use preparation strategies when anxiety arose in the speaking skill. For example they have to make a good preparation before they wanted to speak in front of class.

Furthermore, the students' frequently reported using relaxation strategy in order to reduce their language anxiety in learning English speaking skill.

In addition, the students' they used resignation strategy such as they surrendered to speak up, they felt quite or silent, and did not want to speak at all. Even though this strategy did not evaluate efficacy of these strategies, this resignation strategy could play an important role in reducing their anxiety in learning English speaking skill for them.

## CONCLUSION

The students admitted 7 factors that lead them to anxiety during speaking English. Lack of vocabulary takes first place admitted by 52.6% respondents, followed by lack of preparation stated by 50.5% respondent in second place. Third place sit by fear of making mistakes confessed by 49.7% of respondents. Fourth, there are 49.6% of respondents who felt anxious because of their low English proficiency. Fear of being attention is another factor causing 49.6% of respondent anxious.

Lack of practice makes 48.5% respondents feeling anxious in speaking. And the last is the students' inability to express ideas resulting 45.0% of respondents anxious because they do not know what to say.

The strategy mostly employed by the low proficiency level students to cope with their anxiety in speaking is having better preparation. Another strategies also used are relaxation, peer seeking, positive thinking and resignation.

Students are expected to employ strategies that could help them improve their speaking skill like having more preparation before speaking class and continually develop their knowledge about the language and leave the strategy that demotivate them like resignation. While, Teachers are hoped to give these low proficiency level students more attention on their anxiety issues during speaking English.

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