Students' Speaking Anxiety: Ready or Not

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Abstract: Language is the main common field for communication. For that reason, communication skills must take part in learning a language. Speaking is being a part of English lessons in schools today. However, making students speak English is not always easy, and there can be several different reasons it happens. One possible reason is speaking anxiety and its influence on second language acquisition. The study aims to analyze the students' speaking anxiety when they are in the speaking session. The study is based on literature and contains an interview with the teacher. It is stated that speaking anxiety inhibits students from speaking, which hurts their skills. The research shows that speaking is not the main issue at schools. A reason is that speaking anxiety is not seen as a problem concerning language teaching since it can be considered a social difficulty. In order to enrich speaking in a classroom, it is essential to strive for a joyful atmosphere where every student can feel relaxed and motivated to communicate orally.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a second or foreign language is critical for all humankind in every aspect since everyone will undoubtedly utilize the language to interact with one another. It indicates that language has a tremendous impact on human activities, particularly when it comes to expressing feelings. According to Abood and Abu-Melhim (2015), language is an important part of the culture. Members of society demonstrate their abilities via their language via intercultural dialogue and understanding across other populations. Every person has distinct specific features that distinguish them when it comes to learning styles.

Anxiety is one of the personality traits. Anxiety is defined as an unmanageable state that may impact negatively on a language learning setting. Although the learners bring many unique characteristics to the learning process, anxiety will cause stress when they cannot manage it (Sener, 2015). According to Tianjin (2010), learners vary in second or foreign language acquisition can be characterized not only in terms of cognitive aspects such as language attitude and learning style but also in terms of emotional aspects like motivation and anxiety.

Furthermore, Ghonsooly and Amiri (2015) state that learning a foreign language is a multifaceted process that influences non-linguistic aspects such as cognitive, metacognitive, and practical aspects. Anxiety is among the most important emotional elements influencing students' academic success in second language acquisition.

Anxiety occurs in all people in everyday life, everywhere, and all situations. Anxiety has been identified as one of the most important negative elements impacting second language learning, particularly in terms of motivation and confidence. Low and high degrees of motivation and confidence exist. Learners who lack confidence and motivation tend to do poorly in the language learning process. Anxiety, on the other hand, can occasionally be a good component in second language learning. Tanveer (2008) argues that anxiety experienced in English communication may be debilitating, affecting students' adaptability to the target environment and, ultimately, their accomplishment of educational goals.

Speaking is one of the linguistic skills that students need to develop when studying a foreign language. Among the four language talents, it is the most prolific. English speaking abilities are required for productive interactions among individuals worldwide as an international form of communication. Sener (2015) states that communication skills are very demanding, sophisticated, and multifaceted since one cannot communicate successfully unless he or she is equipped with appropriate knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, culture, genre, speech acts, register, discourse, and phonology. Students in this study come from a variety of backgrounds. It indicates that each pupil has their own personality. Students who attempt to speak English in front of the class or their friends have difficulty and anxiety throughout the speaking session. It escalates into a major issue that all pupils and the English instructor must address. As the same way Tanveer (2008) explains:

> *"In today's language learning environment, students must enhance their productive abilities in a variety of methods. They provide oral presentations or participate in group discussions while performing in front of a group. Their instructor may occasionally ask them to talk in the target language. Some difficult speaking assignments may impact the learners and result in the following sentences being stated by the learners: (1) I am constantly apprehensive while speaking English; (2) I feel inadequate in my head because I wonder why I am unable to speak English properly; and (3) My English appears to be poor; I am unable to convey myself adequately. (4) I sometimes feel foolish; some people look at me as a strange man who cannot communicate well."*

Several research studies on public speaking fear have been conducted. ztürk and Gürbüz (2014) discover in their research that for foreign language learners, speaking in front of their peers is a terrifying experience. The students are afraid of making errors in their pronunciation and being ridiculed. The researcher is interested in doing research on speaking anxiety in seventh-grade students at SMP N 1 Babadan based on the background of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Anxiety

Sener (2015) defines anxiety as "an unpleasant affective condition similar to dread or nervousness, with physiological and behavioral manifestations". Anxiety, according to Al-Khasawneh (2018), is a phenomenon characterized by a sense of discomfort, uneasiness, vague dread, and apprehension that is unrelated to a specific scenario or occurrence. Furthermore, Dogan (2016) adds that anxiety, along with unease, irritation, self-doubt, and concern, is a significant element in language acquisition and can harm foreign language learning. In a nutshell, anxiety is described as a person's general and predictable uneasiness.

Furthermore, Abood and Abu-Melhim (2015) define anxiety as a condition of aggravation and discomfort accompanied by physiological reactions such as faster heartbeats and irregular breathing. Other behavioral reactions include poor performance and purposeful avoidance of particular situations.

Moreover, as for the classroom or learning environments, Ghonsooly and Amiri (2015) mention that anxiety is defined as a specific set of self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and actions associated with classroom language acquisition that arises from the distinctiveness of the learning process.

According to those theories, anxiety is a negative impact that is so closely connected to fear that the two phrases are sometimes used interchangeably. When a person feels anxious, he or she has difficulties determining the source of the unsettling tension or the nature of the upcoming event or calamity.

The categorization of anxiety has been discussed in the research on foreign language acquisition. Anxiety is classified into different groups based on certain degrees: The first sort of anxiety is trait anxiety, which is described as a person's proclivity to be apprehensive or tense regardless of the circumstances. The second sort of anxiety is situational anxiety, which occurs when people are worried or tense in a certain circumstance. Fear of unfavorable evaluation is the third sort of anxiety, in which people are concerned about what others think of them (Al-Khasawneh, 2018). According to Sener (2015), anxiety can be perceived

"through three lenses." (1) anxiety as a general personality trait (trait anxiety), which has been shown to impair cognitive functioning, disrupt memory, and lead to avoidance behaviors; (2) anxiety as a transitory emotional state (state anxiety), which refers to a transitory emotional state or condition; and (3) anxiety that persists over time within a given situation (situation-specific anxiety), which has been shown to impair cognitive functioning, disrupt memory, and lead to avoidance behaviors.

Moreover, according to Al-Khasawneh (2018), other forms of anxiety may present in the classroom. When learners' expectations disagree with their content, they may experience mental stress. When there is poor contact between learners or between learners and their teachers, they may experience emotional tension. Doğan (2016, p. 56) points out that "two dimensions in the literature are relevant to understand anxiety: *beneficial/facilitating* vs. *inhibitory/debilitating anxiety* and *trait* vs. *state anxiety*. The first question is whether anxiety may be a constructive or negative element in learning. The second pertains to whether anxiety is a component of an individual's nature in general or a reaction to a particular circumstance". Still in line with what Al-Khasawneh (2018, p. 138) says:

> "At the deepest, or global or level, trait anxiety is a more permanent predisposition to be anxious. Some people are predictably and generally anxious about many things. At a more momentary or situational level, state anxiety is experienced concerning some particular event or act."

Based on those theories, anxiety has some types: general anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. All types affect foreign language learning and are closely related to what would today be called phobias, such as intense fears of closed spaces, snakes, crowds. According to Ghonsooly and Amiri (2015), the following as the possible "causes of anxiety at school: (a) learner beliefs about language learning, (b) instructor beliefs about language teaching, (c) instructor-learner interactions, (d) classroom procedures, and (e) language tests."

Therefore, the following possible causes of anxiety come from many factors. The teacher delivers the material in teaching, learning condition, and interaction between student and teacher from the student factor.

Speaking in Brief Explanation

According to Torky (2006), "speaking is defined as the generation of auditory signals intended to elicit varied verbal responses in a listener." It is defined as systematically combining sounds to make meaningful utterances using language-specific concepts. Audio-

linguicism takes this method. In terms of teaching speaking, the bottom-up method says that we begin with minor units - sounds - and progress via mastery of words and sentences to discourse. In a real-life setting, speaking is the ability that will be assessed the most.

Furthermore, Oh (2007) says that communication is a two-way street involving exchanging information or knowledge between two (or more) people using verbal or nonverbal tools. A speaker speaks as a listener understands and then becomes a listener simultaneously, which means speaking skills interact with listening skills.

Moreover, speaking is a useful skill in the oral method. Like the other skills, it is more difficult than it appears at first and entails more than merely pronouncing words. (Bashir et al., 2011). In the same way, Nazara (2012) says that speaking is a multisensory activity because it contains paralinguistic elements such as eye contact, facial emotions, body language, pace, pauses, voice quality variations, and pitch modulation, all of which influence conversational flow. Culture influences how people talk, which has ramifications for how English is taught and learned. Speaking is defined as an interactive process of meaning construction that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Its shape and meaning are determined by the situation, the participants, and the objectives of speaking (Torky, 2006).

In conclusion, speaking is a crucial part of daily activity interaction because speaking involves paralinguistic features like eye contact, facial expressions, body language, tempo, pauses, voice quality changes, also receiving, repetition, memorizing, producing, processing information, and responding to other people.

Bekti (2016) states four-part learning oral communication skills: the teaching, accuracy and fluency, affective factors, and the interaction effect.

1. **Pronunciation** is one of the aspects of speaking skills. The learners should master. Pronunciation is one of the ways used by the students to other English well. It deals with phonology; phonology refers to the component of grammar elements and principles that determine how sound is in a language.

2. **Diction** refers to the proper choice of vocabulary in the conversation. Without an adequate vocabulary, one cannot successfully communicate or convey spoken and written concepts gained from studying a language.

3. **Grammar** concerns arranging a correct sentence in a conversation.

4. **Fluency and Accuracy**. Fluency is described as the ability to speak accurately in a professional setting. It indicates two things: mistake correction policies, particularly in

speaking, should reflect this focus. The second is the activities of the teacher in presenting the reflection of fluency.

5. **Comprehension** refers to verbal comprehension, which includes commending what the speaker says. Speakers and hearses must understand what they talk about in a specific topic. If they can comprehend speech, there will be a response from them. Comprehension is essential knowledge to understand the meaning of speech.

According to Juhana (2012), some factors "hinder students from practicing speaking in English class." Each of them is explained below:

1. **Fear of mistake** is one of the main problems of students' reluctance to speak English in the classroom. The primary reason for mistake anxiety is that pupils are terrified of being seen as incompetent in front of others. As a result, they are anxious about how others will see them.

2. **Shyness**. Nature drives some shy students to be reluctant. In this case, the pupils are insecure and shy since most of them find it difficult when speaking English in front of their peers and teacher.

3. **Anxiety** is a state of stress, apprehension, and uneasiness linked with the study of a foreign language. The three most prevalent causes of student anxiety are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of unfavorable assessment. The pupils' capacity to speak in the target language is referred to as communication apprehension. Many students experience anxiety as a result of their lack of aptitude in these areas. The second factor, test anxiety, addresses students' fear of being tested. The final argument has to do with the opinions of other pupils. As previously stated, in this circumstance, other students' evaluations frequently induce concern among students themselves.

4. **Lack of confidence** frequently happens when students realize their discussion partners have not yet comprehended them or do not comprehend another speaker. The main source of learners' insecurity is their inability to communicate in English. Many students believe that they are unable to communicate effectively in English.

5. **Lack of motivation** is the result of boredom, a lack of perceived relevance of contents, and a lack of awareness of the instructional program's objectives. Students hesitate to speak English in class because they are unmotivated to learn. He mentions the basis of this issue is that the teacher does not push the pupils to communicate in English. Students' learning success is dependent on their motivation.

Moreover, Al-Wossabi (2016) writes four problems with speaking activities. They are:

1. **Inhibition.** Speaking, unlike reading and listening, requires some degree of real-time exposure to an audience. Learners are frequently apprehensive about speaking in a foreign language in the classroom, whether they are concerned about making mistakes, frightened of criticism or losing face, or simply frightened of the attention that their speech attracts.

2. **Nothing to Say.** Even if they are not inhibited, the teacher frequently hears students claim that they are unable to think of anything. For example, they have no reason to express themselves other than a guilty feeling that they should be speaking.

3. **Lower or Uneven Participation.** In a big group, only one member may speak at a time if he or she is to be heard. It means that each person will only have a limited amount of time. This difficulty is exacerbated by certain students' proclivity to dominate, while others communicate very little or not at all.

4. **Mother-tongue Use.** In classes where all learners share some mother tongue, they may use it because it looks more accessible. It feels unnatural to speak to one another in a foreign language when they feel less "exposed" if they speak in their own tongue. When speaking in a small group, it might be difficult to get certain classes—especially the less disciplined or motivated ones—to stick to the target language.

So, speaking also has some problems students face using or learning the skill as productive and oral communication skills. The problems commonly happen to the students, like fear of mistake, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, inhibition, nothing to say, lower or uneven participation, and mother-tongue use.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is conducted based on a descriptive qualitative research method. The data are analyzed by using grounded theories. The research participant is seventh-grade students of SMP N 1 Babadan, which consists of 23 students.

Instruments

The research instrument used in this research are:

1. **Interview.** In this research, the researcher uses the interview technique to gain some basic information needs. The interviewees were the teacher and the students of the seventh grade of SMP N 1 Babadan. Then, the interview guide used by the researcher in conducting this research was a structured interview.

2. **Questionnaire.** In this research, the questionnaire used was the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) questionnaire designed by selecting 18 items from 33 items of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). After a detailed literature review, these 18 items were directly related to foreign language speaking anxiety.

   The researcher aims to use a questionnaire to get preliminary information about students' opinions, attitudes, and motivation in English, especially speaking subjects, from anxiety. Then, the kinds of the questionnaire used in this research are close questionnaires using the Likert scale (Strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

On the 26th of August 2019 and the 19th of September 2019, the researcher distributed some questionnaires to the seventh-grade students of SMP N 1 Babadan. There are 23 students as the research participants. The researcher gave five questions to gain in-depth information about students' anxiety. Moreover, the result of the questionnaire is as follows:

a. *Question 1: Do you always speak English with your family or friends, or partner?*

   Averagely, the students always tried to use the English language although they used it when they were in English class and just with their friends or partner. But, when they were at home, the students seldom practiced speaking with their families. Lack of English, especially in speaking, is being the most common reason. Moreover, the students can actually practice their speaking when they are at school with their friends. The school facilitates the students to have a speaking session only when they have English class.

b. *Question 2: How long have you studied English?*

   All of them started to learn English from elementary school. The students have studied the English language for more than three years. Some of the students also took an English course after class.

c. *Question 3: When did you first start learning English?*

Averagely, most of the students started to learn English at least since they were in elementary school. The curriculum of elementary school did not support having a formal English class. An English subject was only taught as an extracurricular.

d. *Question 4: Did you practise your English?*

Some of the students tried to practice their English at home or in their courses. They practiced their English at school when they had an English subject.

e. *Question 5: How many hours do you spend studying English?*

The researcher found that the students averagely spent their time studying English at least one hour per day and 5-7 hours per week.

Based on the interview results, it is possible to conclude that the kids are afraid to speak in front of their peers. They are uncomfortable, worried, and afraid to speak. The teaching-learning process demonstrates that pupils always remain silent when their teacher asks them to read a phrase or just say words. The survey also reveals that speaking is not an issue that is prioritized in schools. Another explanation is that speaking anxiety is not seen as an issue in language education since it might be regarded as a social challenge in the teaching-learning process. It suggests that it takes a concerted effort to encourage pupils to improve their speaking abilities. The researcher, then, concludes that most of the students have high anxiety. Their anxiety has more effect on their speaking skill. They feel shy to speak. They are afraid to answer their teacher's questions orally. So, they prefer to keep silent than speak up. Less practice speaking is being the background reason for the student's anxiety. The school only serves the English practice especially speaking skills in the English subject schedule. In order to create speaking in a classroom, it is essential to create a pleasant situation where each student feels relaxed and motivated to communicate orally.

Furthermore, the students think that speaking is not the most important in learning English. It is because the most activities used in class is doing the students' worksheet and guiding book. The teacher also supports the students' thoughts. She says that the curriculum used does not include concern more on speaking. The target of the learning process is only finishing the book guidance and students' worksheet.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is that speaking anxiety inhibits students from speaking, which harms their oral skills. They have to be pushed to speak up more. For the curriculum, the speaking content should be revised to get a better result. The instruction of the oral speaking task should have more part in the class. The teacher takes more creative and innovative teaching media and methods in the learning process. The media is used by the students individually or in groups effectively. The students are also given some chances to deliver their ideas, so they feel free to speak up. So hopefully, the class activities will be more active and attractive, especially to master the speaking skill.

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