

## LANGUAGE ANXIETY FOR STUDENTS OF INTERMEDIATE SPEAKING PROFICIENCY LEVEL

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of research on students' anxiety when speaking a foreign language, such as English, has shifted to language learning and education. However, the experience of students who reached the intermediate level remains underexplored, particularly in the context of students in intermediate speaking classes. This study aims to identify the students' reasons for feeling anxious and whether intermediate students also experience language anxiety. This qualitative research involved 20 participants from an intermediate-speaking class of fifth-year English Education Department undergraduate students at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo. Data were collected using an unstructured interview and an observation sheet. Triangulation was used to analyze data by checking the credibility of data from interviews and observations. According to the findings of this study, students were anxious for three reasons: they were afraid of making mistakes, they were shy to speak, and they had lost motivation to speak. The students who joined the intermediate speaking class experienced anxiety as their psychological disorder. Anxiety was identified as the dominant psychological disorder among the students. It supported the previous research that found students of all levels experienced anxiety in their speaking English class. As a result, to alleviate students' anxiety about speaking a foreign language, teachers must consider the students' anxiety when developing teaching materials and media.

Keywords: English speaking, Intermediate Proficiency Level, Language Anxiety

### INTRODUCTION

Language anxiety is one of the psychological phenomena faced by students learning a foreign language, such as English. Because it can obstruct the learning process, anxiety harms language learning. Abundant evidence from the research showed that anxiety in language learning contributed highly to the student's achievement in language learning. The greater the students' anxiety, the lower their performance in public speaking. When they experience language anxiety in class, they lose concentration and perform poorly.

Language anxiety is the state of being afraid, apprehending, doubting, or feeling insecure about one's ability to communicate or produce language in

conversation. (ZHANIBEK, 2001), cited Scovel (1978), who defines anxiety as "a state of apprehension, a vague fear..." (Dyah & Iswari, 2012) et al. cited Howirtz (2001), who stated that anxiety influenced language learning negatively and is one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology and education. (Fahmi Djaguna 1\* & Megawati Basri 2 2020) (2020) quoted Locke (2015) as saying that anxiety is intrusive, causes stress and functional impairment, and often encompasses multiple domains. In language learning, anxiety will disturb students' focus, and they will not perform well in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, Fahmi et al. explained that anxiety is mostly related to foreign language anxiety or FLA. It can be defined as anxiety specifically felt in language-learning situations.

The negative influence of anxiety on learning has urged some researchers to investigate the phenomenon. The research found three types of language anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situational anxiety. (Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, n.d.) et al. (2013) summarized the negative effects of anxiety on language learning by saying that anxiety prevents the productive performance of language learners while learning the target language. They also quoted Na (2007), who said that anxiety can discourage language learners, lose confidence in their abilities, escape from participating in class activities, and even abandon attempts to learn the language well. The researchers also found the factors of language anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Because foreign language learners very often experience this kind of anxiety, research on language anxiety is always carried out by testing the language anxiety experienced by students in certain situations, at certain levels, and in certain learning classes. Although the symptoms of language anxiety are general, it is interesting to know the main factors contributing to the anxiety experienced by foreign language learners. Language anxiety is also casual; for example, research conducted on 127 third-semester students at Ahmad Dahlan University showed that, in general, students had a moderate level of language anxiety; only one person had a very high level of anxiety, and 13 people had a high level of anxiety (Fahmi Djaguna 1\* & Megawati Basri 2, 2020). Meanwhile, research on English department students at Airlangga University showed that, on average, students experienced a moderate level of foreign language anxiety ((Rachmawati & Airlangga, 2020). Other studies have found that foreign language anxiety negatively correlates with students' language achievement, as experienced by 50 students in Sulaiman Yasin Samarinda class VIII ((Dyah & Iswari, 2012).

Therefore, it is interesting to examine cases of foreign language anxiety experienced by students majoring in English Tadris who are categorized as having intermediate proficiency levels in speaking skills. From the existing research, only a few have examined it based on the language fluency level category; for example, (Garau 2009) et al. studied students in Spain but at all

levels. (Pamungkas, 2003) examined the effect of language anxiety on student performance in the academic speaking class in the advanced proficiency level category. Thus, this research is here to fill in the information gap to explain how students at the intermediate proficiency level experience anxiety.

The description in the previous paragraph forms the basis of this research, which aims to explain the condition of students at the intermediate level of proficiency who experience foreign language anxiety when learning speaking skills. Thus, the question answered in this study is, "How is the foreign language anxiety experienced by students of the English Department who are categorized as being at an intermediate level of proficiency in learning language skills?"

## METHODS

This research used qualitative methods in a study case design to analyze the situation of students experiencing foreign language anxiety, such as communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The subjects of this research were 20 students from the English Education Department of IAIN, Sultan Amai Gorontalo, who joined the Intermediate Speaking Course. This class was taken as a sample because it fulfilled the research aims, namely, to find out the experience of the intermediate class in experiencing foreign language anxiety. This research used an interview sheet to determine why students had language anxiety. Three questions were taken as guidelines for the interview, namely: "Why do you feel afraid to make mistakes?" "Why do you feel shy to speak?" and "Why do you lose motivation to engage in conversation?" Data from interviews were put into coding and arranged into observation sheets. Data analysis used triangulation by confirming the interview and observation data. Interviews and an observation sheet were used to check the data's credibility and transparency. Thus, observing them in the classroom confirmed the students' answers in the interview. Data were concluded after reducing and displaying steps.

## RESULTS

Data analysis showed that the students in the intermediate-speaking class experienced medium-language anxiety, which was categorized as trait anxiety. Data from the observation sheet showed that nine out of 20 students experienced language anxiety. The data showed the reasons for students' language anxiety as follows:

*Table 1. Students' interview results*

No	Foreign Language Anxiety Indicator	Students' Situation in Experiencing Foreign Language Anxiety
1	Feel afraid to make mistakes  The students who felt afraid to make mistakes in intermediate class did so because of their expectations about their	1. Before attending the class, I actually prepared myself to speak." I memorized more than 30 words that concerned the material; I learned the grammar; and I absolutely understand what my friend says. However, in speaking, I think too

competence. They said that actually they have earned many vocabularies, they have known the pronunciation, they understand the grammar, and they comprehend to reply someone utterances. However, they are not able to perform themselves. They were very careful in speaking, and thus it seems that they feel afraid to speak

## 2 Feel Shy to Speak

The students who felt shy to speak in intermediate class, because they were insecure to image his/her friends would laugh when he/she speak. They felt shy to speak, mainly when they were asked to come forward and speak in front of their friends.

## 3 Lose motivation to engage in conversation

The students were lost their motivation to involve in conversation, when they did

much, so it affected my performance. "It looks like I am afraid to speak."

2. "Actually i have many words in my brain, I know how to reply a conversation, but i feel nervous when my turn to speak it is coming to me. I feel afraid and worry too much that my speaking will make someone else laughing. I feel afraid to speak, thus I just kept silent in the class"
3. I prepared myself before attending to the class, i train my tongue to speak in front of the mirror and i listen a music, i also sing the english song. However, i felt shock in the class because i could not talk as fluent as when i am alone. I feel afraid to make mistaken in front of someone else

1. "I feel so shy and could not produce sentences when the lecturer asked me to come forward and speak in front of my classmates. Although I have managed my speech, it lost its impact when I stood in front of my friends.
2. I feel shy and insecure when the lecturer invite me to speak in the class. I worried that my friend laughed on me, because of my pronunciation or my grammar mistaken. the shyness made me nervous and i could not speak well
3. I wanted to involve in the conersation with my classmates during the learning process, but i feel insecure with my pronunciation and my grammar. Eventhough i have enough vocabularies to speak, but i cannot speak, because i feel shy.

1. I could not be active in conversation when I was not interested in the topic." However, I forced myself to be involved, but my tongue was rigid and my idea could not find its meaning.
2. I have to understand the topic well in order to be motivated in converstaion.

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not interest with the topic of speaking.

3. My motivation was lost when the lecturer suddenly give a topic of conversation in the class. I could not prepared myself only for 15 minutes, therefore i couldnot involve in conversation and feel nervous.

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Meanwhile, the result of the observation sheet confirmed that the students feel afraid to speak, shy, and lose motivation. Those types indicated that the students got foreign language anxiety in the intermediate speaking course. The following table shows the types. It is categorized following the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale by Howirtz et al. (1986), quoted by Ardi Marwan ((Marwan, n.d.)

1. never felt quite sure of speaking in the class
2. tremble when the lecturer called on in the class
3. frightens me when not understand what the teacher is saying in class
4. be panic when speaking without preparation in class
5. embarrass to be volunteer answers questions in class
6. felt anxious even if have well preparation
7. felt heart pounding when calling on in class
8. Felt very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students
9. Got nervous when failed to understand every word the English teacher says
10. Got afraid that the other students will laugh when making mistakes
11. Got nervous when coming to class with little preparation
12. Felt embarrassed not saying English words correctly

## DISCUSSION

Data showed that 3 (three) students are the reason for experiencing language anxiety in intermediate speaking classes. They felt afraid to make mistakes because they already have good competence, but they should be very careful in their speaking performance. The students felt shy to speak because they were insecure about speaking in front of the class. The students lost motivation to engage in conversation because the speaking topic was not interesting.

The result of the research reflected the phenomenon that students' language anxiety in speaking was not only caused by state anxiety (Hardanti, 2016) (Dyah & Iswari, 2012) or they were lack of language aspects such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar but also caused by their psychological problems. For example, feel afraid, shy, and lose motivation. These indicators are categorized as communication apprehension. As quoted

by Setya et al. (2016), Tanveer states that a specific type of situation or event, such as public speaking, examinations, or class participation, arouses the situation-specific anxiety.

Horwitz et.al., (AIDA, 1994) argued that the disturbing emotional reactions of being anxious, nervous or tense the learners experience in learning a foreign language differed from those similar reactions they encounter in other situations. Part, it was regarded to be related to performance evaluation within academic and social contexts as foreign language learning activities generally involve many communicative tasks, interpersonal interactions, and error correction anxiety.

In numerous studies concerning language anxiety, the students frequently addressed speaking activities as anxiety-provoking. The students reported speaking to raise anxiety as they encountered negative emotional experiences during speaking activities. They feared for not being able to convey messages well, felt shy for not being used to speak in front of others, felt uncomfortable with their appearance as they became the center of attention, and thought to have lack of information about the topic ((Wahyudi, 2016), (PAPPAMIHIEL, 2002), ((Maisarah, 2019), and ((Hardanti, 2016)

Young (1991) identified that language anxiety may originate from three main sources: the learner, the teacher, and the learning process. Of these origins, the causes can further be classified into six specifications: 1) personal and interpersonal anxieties, 2) learner belief about language learning, 3) instructor belief in language teaching, 4) instructor-learner interactions, 5) Classroom procedures, and 6) Language testing. Meanwhile, (Turula, n.d.) considered factors behind the learners' anxiety to be within two classifications: the classroom and social context. Classroom-related factors include individual sense of self, self-related cognitions, and insufficient commands and instructions.

In many cases, the way students view the language learning process was justified to provoke anxiety. As reported concerning speaking activities, the students considered speaking problematic not only due to psychological factors of having a lack of self-confidence, being afraid of making mistakes, nervousness, and shyness toward others but also because of the thought that speaking requires good mastery of several linguistic elements covering pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and idea comprehension (Sayuri, 2016). Similarly, the strict classroom environment and how the instructor managed the class were also blamed for the tension and uneasiness the students experienced during foreign language learning. Capan and Simsek (2012) noted that one student particularly attributed his language anxiety to the teacher for having an unpleasant experience with mistake correction. Other students pointed out that they were reluctant to speak in front of the classroom because they feared being humiliated by their peers when making mistakes.

The result of this research implied that lecturer/teacher should ensure that students who are mistaken in learning foreign language learning, mainly in speaking skill, is normal. Therefore, Chomsky's theory states that language production is often difficult because language competence does not always align with performance. Mistakens are generally caused by performance factors. Limitations in remembering something or forgetfulness cause errors in pronouncing language sounds, words, word order, word stress or sentences (Reni Supriani, Ida Rahmadani Siregar, 2019, p. 69). This error is random, meaning it can occur at various linguistic levels. Students themselves can usually correct errors if they are concerned when they are more reflective, more aware or focused.

The lecturer/teacher should put the students in small groups to minimize their shyness in speaking. Small group gives students many benefits, such as they have many opportunities to speak or to express their ideas. In addition, small groups can improve students' vocabulary mastery (Sumiatun & Nugroho, 2019) and (Andi & Aji, 2020). The students will be more secure when they speak in small groups.

To anticipate students losing motivation to be involved in a conversation, the lecturer/teacher should facilitate them with speaking material according to their interests. Therefore, the lecturer/teacher should discuss or brainstorm to determine the material of speaking in the learning process. The brainstorming method is a technique to explore as many opinions or ideas as possible on a problem. Brainstorming is a combination of question and answer or discussion, which refers to extracting ideas based on the creativity of human thinking. Students are free to express opinions without criticism and assessment because, at the stage of collecting ideas, all opinions or ideas are accommodated and recorded without exception (Hanny, 2020.).

## **CONCLUSION**

This result of the research has answered the questions of 3 (three) reasons for students' language anxiety who joined intermediate speaking classes, namely they felt afraid to make mistakes because they have good competence but were very careful in performance. They felt too shy to speak because they had to come forward and speak in front of the class, lecturer and other students. They lost the motivation to be involved in conversations because the topic of speaking was not interesting to them. Therefore, the lecturer/the teacher should pay attention to students' language anxiety, which relates to the language aspect (state anxiety), and language anxiety is related to psychological factors (trait anxiety). Both become barriers to the success of the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the lecturer/the teacher should arrange the strategies to minimize the students' language anxiety in class.

This research recommended further research to examine the good method of teaching English as a foreign language, which is very effective in escaping students' language anxiety.

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