

INVESTIGATING ESP STUDENTS AND SPEAKING ANXIETY

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the most demanding skills in EFL learning because the speaker needs to immediately access all the necessary information to fast develop the right utterances. This study is aimed at investigating the internal and external factors of English Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) based on the students' experience in ESP classes. The subjects of this study were thirty students from Elementary School Education majors taking ESP classes. The study employed an exploratory case study using questionnaires and interviews as the instruments to collect the data. The findings revealed that stage fright, lack of confidence, and shyness are the three main internal causes of speaking anxiety among students. Anxiety among non-English speaking students is also caused by external factors such as their lack of preparation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Keywords – speaking anxiety, ESP, language learners

Introduction

Speaking is the primary means of interlanguage communication. Speaking enables individuals all over the world to convey information and make their points clear to others, suggesting that speaking is a regular activity and that communicating entails contact between the speaker and the listener. The speaker picks the vocabulary, the structure, and the discourse, and speaking is the result of this creative contraction of linguistic strings. Language structure and word development are necessary for speaking in a language, and the listener must accept and comprehend the speaker's information.

Speaking is regarded as one of the four language abilities that are most crucial in situations when a foreign language is used. Speaking has always been the most difficult talent to master when compared to other abilities like listening, reading, and writing, according to Shabani (2013) and Bailey and Savage (1994). It is a necessary skill for daily living. Speaking a foreign

language in class is a significant barrier for the majority of FL learners, according to Tanveer (2007). Speaking is more difficult than other skills because the speaker must quickly access all the pertinent information needed to produce the appropriate language in a short amount of time, whereas with other skills the learner may have enough time to match the input with the existing knowledge (Shabani, 2013).

EFL speaking classes are one of the most fruitful and rich sources of research. According to recent research (Humphries, 2011; MacIntyre, 1999; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), speaking anxiety is one of the most often seen issues in speaking classes. Students with speaking anxiety struggle to communicate their own opinions and overestimate their talents, according to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994). As a result, Young (1990, p. 539) and Horwitz et al. (1986:126) found that EFL students consistently report speaking as their "most

anxiety-producing experience" and "difficulty in speaking in class" as their most frequent worry. It has been discovered that even college students struggle with FL speaking (Abdullah & Abdul Rahman, 2010). The oral component of speaking training is often taught via reading and reciting exercises. Investigating speaking anxiety and attempting to lessen it is an essential area of research.

In the context of the English teaching and learning process, especially English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in a private university in Semarang regency, many students from various study programs other than the English Department experience difficulties related to speaking anxiety. Hence, this study examined the internal and external factors of the non-English department students which lead to speaking anxiety that might hinder their EFL learning.

Methodology

The study employed an exploratory case study according to Yin (2014) with questionnaire and interview techniques.

Table 1. The students' answers to the question 1 related to internal factors of speaking anxiety

The Interviewee	Students' Answers
Interviewee 1	"My mind kept going blank because I was so anxious that all of my language vanished, making what I intended to say disorganized and cold sweaty."
Interviewee 2	"Afraid that what I say won't be understood by others and will be misunderstood (misinterpreted), the first person lacks confidence, while the second person is extremely apprehensive when speaking in English."
Interviewee 3	"Despite my preparation, if I try to speak English out loud, I will become speechless and anxious. Do you worry that your poor grammar may get you into trouble with the lecturer? Will my pals make fun of me? What I'm thinking is that I'm worried I'll be incorrect, and then my mind just goes blank."
Interviewee 4	"I lost my confidence all of a sudden, but I don't feel uncomfortable if I'm with a tourist since I won't see them again, but I do feel awkward if I'm with a buddy. Fear of being perceived incorrectly."
Interviewee 5	"I experience a range of emotions while speaking in front of a large audience, including anxiety, humiliation if I make a mistake and general anxiousness. Speaking or expressing those thoughts in front of one

The subjects of this study were thirty students taking English for Specific Purposes (ESP) from Elementary School Education major at a private university in Semarang in the academic year 2023/2024. To reveal the internal and external factors of the speaking anxiety experienced by the research subjects, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used as the instruments. Those instruments were adapted from Oktavia (2023) with some adjustments to better answer the research questions.

Findings and Discussion

The Internal Factors of Speaking Anxiety of Non-English Department Students on Learning ESP

In order to collect the data, ten students were purposively chosen as the interviewees. The following table represents the students' answers to question 1 "How do you feel when speaking in front of many people? Have you ever felt scared, worried, and too nervous when speaking in front of many people?"

	person, let alone a large audience, occasionally requires effort. I've had a lot of experience with it and have always felt that way."
Interviewee 6	"It is common for me to converse with visitors and locals. If I converse with Indonesians, though, all is lost. Then I started to lose confidence, but if I'm with a tourist, I won't see them again, so I'm not embarrassed, but if I'm with a buddy, I'm uncomfortable because I'm afraid they'll think the wrong thing."
Interviewee 7	"It can be challenging to talk or express such thoughts at times, not just in front of a large audience but even in front of a single person. I've gone through it numerous times and have always felt that way."
Interviewee 8	"When I first arrived at university, I had the confidence to communicate in English, but after seeing that my friends were fluent in it, I lost that bravery."
Interviewee 9	"What I feel the most is nervous; when I'm speaking in English, I forget all the vocabulary, it's blank, so I can't get the words out (it's hard to speak)."
Interviewee 10	"I am well conscious of my fear of being incorrect, of being laughed at despite the fact that it is absurd, and of receiving a professor reprimand. I'm a failure."

The researcher discovered, based on the aforementioned interview data, that students who were classified as having high anxiety experienced significant dread, anxiousness, lack of confidence, shame, and panic while speaking in English; some even perspired when asked to speak in front of a large audience. It could have a more positive effect on how well they talk. Students' thoughts get clouded by the tension they encounter. Then, when a person is very anxious, their thoughts become blank and out of control; as a result, students find it tough to come up with words and difficult to express what they want to say. These findings corroborate previous studies that ESP students tend to have greater anxiety compared to EFL students (Oktavia, 2023). It is because of the minimum exposure of the ESP students to English which results in the student's greater anxiety.

Question 2: What places, times, and situations do you experience anxiety?

Findings: Students with high anxiety levels suffer anxiety in a variety of circumstances, including when they communicate in English. Some students experience anxiety

and fear when they have to interact even with their peers in English. They occasionally experienced nervousness when taking an oral exam. However, they typically feel anxious when people are paying attention to them, such as when they speak in class, give a presentation, or give a speech. This is in line with the findings by Seuleimenova (2013) that EFL classrooms tend to result in anxiety especially when the students are required to present or speak in front of the class.

Question 3: Do you understand what makes you anxious? Specify it!

Findings: According to the interview, students identified a few things that contribute to their anxiety: According to the first respondent, anxiety is brought on by poor communication skills, a fear of making errors, and a fear of criticism, all of which led to low self-esteem. It is in line with what Leong and Ahmadi (2017) found that fear of making errors and criticism is one of the obstacles a language learner has to develop his or her speaking skills. The second respondent claimed that lack of language, insufficient practice, the inability

to manage one's emotions, and inferiority complexes all contribute to anxiousness. This finding corroborates Hashemi's (2011) findings that the linguistic difficulties L2/FL learners face in using the target language might result in language anxiety. The interviewee added that a sense of self-indulgence developed and led to extreme stress and anxiousness whenever the interviewee encountered someone who had a greater ability. According to the third respondent, nervousness is brought on by emotions of inadequacy, a fear of being incorrect, being laughed at, and being reprimanded by the professor.

According to the fourth interviewee, anxiety is brought on by the dread of making mistakes when speaking, a lack of confidence, and the worry of creating a poor impression on the audience. The respondent also mentioned additional reasons, including the fact that anxiousness results from a lack of practice and education. The final respondent asserted that speaking anxiety is brought on by overthinking, fear of error, fear of scorn from others, and fear of criticism.

It is possible to draw the following conclusions about the causes of anxiety: Some students said that they were hesitant to speak because of their poor command of the language. Students' speaking abilities are highly impacted by their English proficiency, including vocabulary, grammar, etc. It is also in line with the findings from Hashemi (2011) that linguistic difficulties are factors that drive the students to become anxious. When kids don't have a wide enough vocabulary, they struggle to form coherent sentences and struggle to know what to say. Students then feel reluctant to speak and unconfident when they lack the necessary grammatical proficiency or English language proficiency; this is directly connected to the

next issue. That is the worry of making errors.

Fear of misunderstanding or communication anxiety was another issue that made students anxious. It corroborates Azher, Anwar, and Naz's (2010) findings that fear of misunderstanding contributes to the students' Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). In this situation, students are concerned that they won't be able to understand the speaker's message and that they won't transmit it appropriately. Students are concerned that the audience won't understand what they have to say. Students who are anxious about communicating may shy away from certain interactions or speaking tasks to prevent communication misunderstandings. The inability to manage feelings and ideas was the next contributing element. Because all ideas have the potential to dramatically influence behavior, it is crucial to cultivate pleasant thoughts in the mind before speaking. However, the majority of students who experience high levels of anxiety have unfavorable opinions or beliefs about both themselves and others, including the notion that others are mocking, laughing, or looking down on them while they speak. Students also listed fear of making errors, ridicule, and having a negative impression on others around them as causes of worry.

Nearly 80% of students who were asked admitted that they were terrified of making mistakes in public speaking because they would make other students or teachers laugh or condemn them. Fear of assessment is one of the components of linguistic anxiety. This finding was confirmed by Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) that language anxiety was also provoked by the fear of evaluation from others. Before speaking, they frequently dwell on the bad; they are anxious if they are abruptly asked to speak,

respond to queries, etc. They fear that if they don't talk or respond to inquiries appropriately, others will condemn them. Lack of study and practice was a further element that made students anxious. Due to a lack of practice, students are not acclimated to using English and grow restless when they use it, which influences students whose abilities do not improve.

Question 4: Do you feel more at ease speaking in front of the class in English than in your native tongue?

Findings: 87.50% mentioned that the students have problems with anxiety

Table 2. The students' answers on the external factors of speaking anxiety

List of Interviewee	Students' Answers
Interviewee 1	"My speaking performance would suffer from my lack of preparation. Similar to how it was in learning circumstances, I would hesitate to offer my ideas or opinions when I was depressed or in tense situations."
Interviewee 2	"When I was in a scenario where I had not made all the necessary preparations, I frequently felt unhappy and nervous. I added that I would find it extremely difficult, which would make me hesitant to speak what I was going to say."
Interviewee 3	"The element that has had the biggest impact on my English study so far has been vocabulary. I had really learned a lot of language, but it was "easy come, easy go," meaning I would learn it today and forget it tomorrow."
Interviewee 4	"I'm concerned that the spelling and punctuation are incorrect. Basically, it's a lack of confidence. insufficient experience speaking English"
Interviewee 5	"To date, if I wish to speak in front of a large crowd, I am frightened that it will be incorrect or poor, and they will afterward gossip about me behind my back. I'm not really sure why I have those kinds of ideas."
Interviewee 6	"While I was in a scenario when my preparation was lacking. Along with saying it would be difficult for me, I pretended to be stiff as he was about to say anything."
Interviewee 7	"I'll become used to it if I practice frequently since I lack confidence, knowledge, and resources."
Interviewee 8	"When I made mistakes when speaking, I also felt quite nervous, terrified of being teased by my peers and afraid of my professor."
Interviewee 9	"Teachers should also be able to develop into language agents who are constantly intelligent and welcoming to students. It was helpful in enhancing my language abilities; occasionally, the lecturers would wisely correct my speaking errors."

feeling while having English lessons in class. The students revealed that it is because they are not accustomed to using English both in class and in everyday conversation. It results in a high intensity of anxiety when they should speak English. They also revealed that

The External Factors Causing Speaking Anxiety on Non-English Department Students on Learning ESP

The following table represents the students' answers to question 5, "Do you understand what makes you anxious?"

Interviewee 10

“I am well conscious of my fear of being incorrect, of being ridiculed despite the fact that it is absurd, and of receiving a professor reprimand. I am less than. And I’m worried since my instructor gave me unfavorable criticism.”

Lack of preparation is the primary external cause of students' speaking nervousness. It corroborates the findings from Rahman (2021) that students' lack of preparation is the major contributor to language anxiety. On the one hand, some students believe that their passion and drive could have been higher had they done everything beforehand. Student 1, on the other hand, preferred to be quiet and even remained silent in online lectures when she was underprepared; she freely stated that her idleness was the cause of her poor preparation. The participants' nervousness about speaking was impacted by this aspect. It became the main element affecting them and gave him nervousness while speaking in English. He was vocal in other areas but not in English, as the researcher noted, making their situation special.

The second external component originated from one important factor, a vocabulary that had caused them problems ever since he began studying English in elementary school. He had learned the vast majority of the fundamental English vocabulary and grammar that their teachers had taught him since they first started learning the language. Sadly, it is because he seldom ever used it in casual conversation.

Friends or classmates make up the third external component. Almost all of the participants—1, 5, and 7—felt anxious because of this aspect, believing that their friends who were fluent in English were to blame. They were uneasy due to their impressive skill. They said that they lacked a companion with whom to practice speaking English, and for this reason, they blamed "friends" for their feelings of public speaking nervousness. A similar issue

plagued Participant 8, who was uneasy about his friend making fun of him anytime he made a speech error.

Teacher traits make up the fourth external component. According to Cheng (2019), the qualities of the teacher had an impact on the anxiousness of the students. Participants 7 and 8 agreed that teachers play a crucial role in inspiring and boosting students' self-confidence, particularly while speaking. According to Participant 10, the instructor should be able to set up a relaxing environment for learning and utilize a strategy that takes into account and facilitates the variety of all students in order to prevent the students from feeling stressed. Participant 6 also thought about how crucial it is for the instructor to support the students in overcoming their fear of speaking in front of an audience. According to participant number 10, the language instructor needs to be friendlier and more sensible.

The Students' Questionnaire

In order to get thorough and complete data, both interviews and questionnaires were conducted. The questionnaires were distributed to 30 students attending Speaking for Informal in the academic year 2023/2024.

Question 1: Finding out where students feel most at ease speaking English

Findings: The researcher looks at the fact that there are several settings where students might feel at home speaking English. The greatest environment for students to practice their English is one where they feel at home. They believe that if they speak English at home, no one will correct their speaking style, vocabulary, or grammar. so that their English-speaking

style won't be judged. It is related to the fear of evaluation given by the people around the language learners (Cheng et al. 1999). Despite this, students may practice their English with friends and have a community to do so at the campus park. They can also make use of the park while practicing their English at the institutions. They discover the same buddies at the same time who must enhance their English proficiency in class while having English class.

Question 2: Asking the students how often they speak English in their classroom

Findings: The students revealed that they rarely speak in their classrooms. They only have a chance to practice their English in English classrooms. In classes, they are often forced to speak in English. However, because of the inconsistency of the English-speaking practice, the students still feel anxious.

EFL students speak English in a different way when they practice. When they enrol in English lessons, they speak English and do their best. They also speak English when the professor requests that they respond to the quizzes in English. The students like taking turns with friends and conversing in English. While English is being taught and learned, some students are hesitant or sometimes never speak English. The teaching and study of foreign languages cannot take place in this environment.

Question 3: Asking students how fluent they speak English

Findings: There are several responses to students' proficiency in speaking English, including the conviction that their proficiency is bad, the perception that their proficiency is fair, and the assertion that their proficiency is not fluent. It might not be absolutely necessary for students from Elementary School Education majors to speak English. Although they commonly

acquire reading and writing abilities, they nevertheless struggle to produce whole sentences when speaking. Furthermore, the students lack the incentive to use English throughout a class. They are required to study English-language books and provide relevant responses to the lecturer's queries.

Question 4: Asking how well they understand people speaking English

Findings: The non-English speaking students are in their ability to comprehend persons speaking to them in English. Based on the findings, students can understand that their professors and peers are communicating with them in English, but they find it difficult to react in the language. This finding was confirmed by Aziz and Kashinathan (2021) that most EFL students are still at the level of passive speakers of the target language. It means that most language learners are able to understand people speaking English, but they find difficulties when required to respond using the target language. When individuals speak English, they understand what is being said. They typically make motions in response, such as nodding or making facial expressions. Some students even think that they have a weaker knowledge of English speakers. These kids are unable to comprehend a single sentence that their professors and peers generate. Even yet, they have expressionless faces.

Question 5: Identifying what makes students more at ease while speaking English in class.

Findings: some factors that help students become more comfortable in speaking English lessons; are: students claim that they need a tutor to help them improve their English speaking; guidance from the lecturer to help master English, vocabulary,

and grammar; need to get the knowledge of grammar to support their English mastery and practice English speaking. Besides, students need guidance from lecturers in building confidence in producing English in any single action.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, stage fright, lack of confidence, and shyness are the three main internal causes of speaking anxiety among students. Since English is not their major subject and they still believe that it is difficult, the stage causes students to become anxious while they are participating in the English session. The students were concerned that if they made mistakes, other classmates would respond negatively, laugh, and assume the incorrect thing. Despite receiving training and theory, students still struggle with communicating in English. Anxiety among non-English speaking students is also caused by external factors such as their lack of preparation, grammar, and vocabulary. The participants' experience of external influences is by far the most predominant. The demand to have a tutor to practice the target language and support from the lecturer to alleviate their confidence is one revealed solution from the students.

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