

STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN SPEAKING CLASS: AN INVESTIGATION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE LEARNING SYSTEM

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate English Education students speaking anxiety in both online and offline learning contexts. This study did a further investigation about the strategies they use to cope with their anxiety when doing public speaking in both online and offline contexts. Although there is a lot of research regarding speaking anxiety has been done by the researchers both in Indonesia and other countries, there are still limited studies discussing speaking anxiety in education especially in both offline and online learning among English education students in Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative method. The data were collected through interviews with two students from a private university in Indonesia. The findings showed that both participants were less anxious when they do public speaking in the online context than in offline one. Furthermore, it was also found that these participants only used one strategy to overcome their anxiety (i.e., preparation) for online public speaking; and used more strategies (i.e., relaxation, preparation, positive thinking, audience depreciation, concentration, and resignation) to deal with offline speaking anxiety. Therefore, it is implied that through these coping strategies, students feel less anxious in online learning context rather than in offline learning.

Keywords: *speaking anxiety, strategies, overcoming speaking anxiety*

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the most widely-used skills during the academic process (Syarif and Sunubi 2019). As students who later become teachers, the ability to speak in front of others for English Education students is unavoidable. However, becoming a good public speaker has never been easy for them who will later become English teachers. Several challenges might come as obstacles. One of them is the state of being anxious (Sakka and Naim

2019). The anxiety during speaking is a common problem that can happen to anyone including students in English education. Anxiety will have an impact towards the speaker's performance (Yanti Made, Heri Santosa, and Mahendrayana 2022). Sandin (2016, as cited on Nessler, 2018) divides the symptoms of speaking anxiety into three different categories: physiological, cognitive, and emotional symptoms. The physiological symptom covers hard breathing, strong pulse, and sweating a lot. Then,

anxiety may also lead to some problems with the speaker's cognitive ability, such as blankness or forgetting what they wanted to say. Finally, the emotional symptom which is related to how we feel about something and how a situation or someone makes us feel, such as being nervous and afraid. These symptoms may lead to some problems when speaking, for example the listener finds it difficult to grasp the meaning or words that we are trying to explain. For students in English Education who will become teachers, this will be a big problem if their students cannot understand the materials and thus can obstruct our performance as teachers.

In addition, the current situation of COVID-19 pandemic has changed the offline speaking classes into online ones. This means that English Education students face new challenges where they not only have to be able to do public speaking in offline classes, but also have to do it in online classes. This present study also explored students' speaking anxiety level in online learning, and attempts to address issues such as whether speaking in front of people through online learning affects their speaking anxiety, and whether their anxiety levels remain the same or change with offline context when they have to do public speaking online. Compared to speaking in front of colleagues or people, learners feel less nervous when they have to speak in a digital context. Although some people believe that doing public speaking in an online environment will be less anxious than those in offline condition, however research has found several students have more fear of talking in public in an online context. Baralt and Gurzynski-Weiss (2011) concluded that the environment has almost no effect on the anxiousness of English students, if they were

anxious in offline classes, they will also feel the same in online conditions.

Practically, the results of this study will bring benefits for:

1. For other learners in English Education.

The findings will be useful for them to know about strategies on how to overcome their speaking anxiety as a foreign language learners. It also will help them to Self-reflect and improve their awareness related to speaking anxiety.

2. For other researchers.

To provide more data and examples about speaking anxiety that happened in Indonesia and students in English education.

3. For teachers.

This study might also be useful for teachers in Indonesia, they can learn and know the issues that happened in the education world and then they can give tips to new teachers on how to overcome speaking anxiety. Other than that, teachers can also know that their students might have the same problem and the solution that will be given in this study can be an alternative to overcome the issues.

Several studies have been conducted in relation to investigating the speaking anxiety among university students. For example, Nash et al. (2015) has explored the anxiety among the first-year students in dealing with public speaking assessment. Nash et al. (2015) found that the assessment task that was undertaken by students had a positive impact. The assessment task increased emotional state of pleasure and also reduced fear, also growth

confidence, growth student's ability usage and preservation of eye contact. Next, Hamzaoglu and Koçoğlu (2016) conducted research toward EFL students in Turkey exploring the use of podcasts to overcome EFL students' anxiety in speaking. The study showed a positive impact. EFL learners said that podcasts help them reduce their anxiety and increase their confidence level, other than that, podcasts also help them improve their performance such as pronunciation and also help them develop more vocabulary. Anxiety is a common problem in language learning. Therefore, it is very important for teachers to understand that every student has a different level of anxiety and that they need to help them to solve it. Other than that, if teachers want to solve speaking anxiety for their students, it has to start from the students themselves, they need to have motivation and strong intention to learn the foreign language (Fitriah & Muna, 2019).

As mentioned earlier, speaking anxiety is a common problem for students, especially for those whose English is their foreign languages. A lot of research regarding speaking anxiety has been done by the researchers both in Indonesia and other countries (e.g., Sandin, 2017; Beatty & Behnke, 1991; Russell, 2020). However, there are still limited studies discussing speaking anxiety in education especially in both offline and online learning among English Education students in Indonesia. Therefore, the present study which investigates learners' experiences in dealing with speaking anxiety is urgent to conduct. This current study is different and not just repeating those research that was already mentioned previously. Most of them did not conduct their research on students in English language

education that will become foreign language teachers in the future. This research also occurs during the COVID-19 pandemic so the researcher can also investigate students in English language speaking anxiety in an online learning environment and answer the question whether or not their state of speaking anxiety remains the same.

The answers or findings from these research questions later will be used to improve both online and offline learning circumstances to reduce student's speaking anxiety and increasing their performances in speaking.

Considering the problems identification, and due to the practical constraints, this present study will only focus on the investigation of speaking anxiety among Students in English education in Indonesia. The target of this study is exploring speaking anxiety, what causes speaking anxiety and what strategies can be used to overcome those problems for English students in Indonesia, especially when those students need to teach foreign language.

2. Literature

a. Public speaking anxiety

Speaking anxiety is the most common problem and the most researched variable in the Second Language Acquisition or in short SLA. The term anxiety in general has been defined as personality traits of a person that are relatively repeated when doing public speaking, Therefore, someone who has this natural anxious state will tend to feel anxious in various situations (Woodrow, 2006). In terms of language learning, anxiety is also connected to foreign language learning in this circumstance

which results in the emergence of the term foreign language anxiety (Karatat et al., 2016). Foreign language anxiety or FLA is a complicated occurrence and is related to several aspects. FLA is an uncomfortable sensation of an individual and worries that are specifically related to the context of a foreign language, which includes speaking, listening, and learning (Young, 1990; Gardner, & MacIntyre, 1993). Foreign language anxiety might also include speaking anxiety (Woodrow, 2006). Spielberger (1983) stated that speaking anxiety is a particular sense of burden, concern, nervousness, and fear related to encouragement of sensory nerves in our body. Similarly, Horwitz (1986) has also described speaking anxiety as a person's subjective experience of tension, uncertainty, restlessness, and anxiety that occurs when the autonomic nervous system is stimulated. In this article, the term public speaking anxiety is defined as a treat that can affect performance during public speaking. Anxiety also will have a negative impact towards the process of learning and teaching in the classroom both for students and the teacher. It will influence their ability to deliver or absorb the material.

b. Factors affecting public speaking anxiety

There are so many factors that can affect public speaking anxiety such as fluency, audience impact, and preparation before doing public speaking. Hanifa (2018) stated that the potential components which lead to speaking anxiety are explained and explored in line with the primary themes that emerge from a review of relevant research. He also explains that the primary themes are: 1) cognitive factors,

which relating with topics, genre, interlocutors, and processing demands; 2) affective factors, which relating with emotions towards the subject and/or audiences, as well as self-consciousness; and 3) performance factors, which having dealt with mode, level of cooperation, discussion regulate, making plans and training session time, pressure, and environmental conditions. Dewaele et al., (2008) emphasizes that, as a psychological independent variable, emotional intelligence was substantially related to FLA. Other than that, Dewaele et al, (2008) also found that the audience and the environment in which verbal language occurs are found to be the elements that cause FLA. They also said that various social identities and communication platforms were also proven to induce varying amounts of anxiety. Furthermore, it was also discovered in a research (i.e. Aydin, 2008) that not preparing for learning in class was one of the reasons that induced speaking anxiety. Another study by Kessler (2010) states that the educational environment has an important influence on the language skills of learners because speaking, especially in a classroom setting, can cause foreign language learners to feel a source of discomfort and anxiety. Mak (2011) discovered when students being corrected by classmates and/or teachers when doing oral performance as well as utilizing student blunders to explain teaching points, also can cause anxiety. Several elements that contributed towards learners' nervousness included lack of emotional preparedness, understanding of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and prior knowledge of class activities, as well as worry over taking tests that can be called anxiety tests (Fitriah & Muna, 2019).

c. Strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety

To deal with speaking anxiety issues, learners must have strategies suitable for their needs. Liu (2018) stated that to be able to reduce speaking anxiety both the lecturer and the student must be aware of the causes of this anxiety. Nervousness, skill in Second language motivation, character, and learning style all influence strategy utilization. There are various strategies that learners can use. Kondo (1994) stated that whenever the concerned presenter is effectively educated to calm even while considering particular things. Kondo (1994) conducted a study to develop strategies to reduce speaking anxiety, the findings show that there are six stages on how to overcome speaking anxiety.

1. Relaxation

The purpose of this step is to relieve the physical stress of nervous speakers.

2. Preparation

In this step, the speaker must prepare everything they need to do public speaking. Such as planning, writing a note, training, etc. The efficacy of this step is determined on how confident the speakers may be in their performance.

3. Positive thinking

Here, the speaker focuses on creating positive thoughts.

4. Audience depreciation

The attendance of the listener, which is accountable for the unpleasant connection, has to be disregarded.

5. Concentration

Preparation and concentration both are cognitive elements of public speaking that are connected to decent performance, thus they can be grouped together as skills training. In this step the speaker must fully concentrate on the goals and speak carefully.

6. Resignation

The public speaking scenario should be maintained out of the speaker's head so that no bad ideas linked with it that may haunt the speaker.

3. Method

This study aims to retell students about their foreign language speaking anxiety. This present study is designed as a qualitative study, specifically, a thematic analysis study. Thematic analysis is a technique for detecting, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) throughout information within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Participants and Setting

In this study, the participants include two students (i.e. Nikki and Nam, pseudonyms) from the English Education Department in one of the universities in Indonesia who have joined both online and offline classes, in which those classes require them to speak English in front of the public. Those students already experienced face to face (FTF) public speaking and online public speaking. These criteria of students are chosen because the researchers believe if the participant is already experiencing both situations, they will be experiencing a new kind of

speaking anxiety. The participants of the study are chosen based on some characteristics for a competent English as foreign language student who will become an English teacher in the future.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data were collected through face-to-face interviews with a tight COVID-19 protocol and through Zoom meetings. Nam was interviewed face-to-face and Niki was interviewed via Zoom meeting due to the different city between the researcher and the participant at that time. The interviews were done in a session which ended around 15 Minutes for each session. There were a lot of statements as transcribed from the audio recording. The interview was conducted in the researcher's boarding house in Yogyakarta. The data were then analyzed by performing lexical coding using the steps of thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke (2006).

4. Result

The data were collected through face-to-face interviews with a tight COVID-19 protocol and through Zoom meetings. Nam was interviewed face-to-face, and Niki was interviewed via Zoom meeting due to the different city between the researcher and the participant at that time. The interviews were done in a session which ended around 15 Minutes for each session. There were a lot of statements as transcribed from the audio recording. The interview was conducted in the researcher's boarding house in Yogyakarta. The data were then analyzed by performing lexical coding.

From the data analysis, the researcher found that the symptoms and strategies that are experienced by

the participants are almost similar. Both participants stated that it is easier to do public speaking in digital context than in face-to-face situations, such as in the classroom. They also said that the audience is also one crucial factor that can cause their anxiety. Following the first analysis, certain expanded remarks were delivered to participants using WhatsApp application to ask for further information and clarification.

Students were less anxious when dealing with public speaking in an online context than in offline context

The result showed that both participants were less anxious when dealing with public speaking in an online context than in offline context. Other than environment and atmosphere, participants do not have to see the audience face to face, so it reduces their anxiety.

“Since we started online learning, it’s actually a bit different. Because I think there’s only me there, so I speak, but the people are virtual and usually when we have to do presentations they are mostly off cam, so I don’t have to see their faces and it’s a bit more relaxed to explain the slides”

(EF/NIKKI/030)

“Well of course it’s different. Because when you’re online like when you’re doing a proposal seminar, it’s a presentation, but you don’t have to see the audience, you don’t see their faces, so you don’t have too much anxiety. But if you’re offline, wow... the anxiety level is really... (I was) like being intimidated, especially in front of the lecturer.”

(EF/NAM/030)

From the transcript above, we can see clearly that both Nam and Niki were less anxious in the online environment than in the offline environment. One of the reasons was the participants cannot see the audiences' faces directly during offline public speaking. Nam was like being intimidated when seeing other people directly, especially when she talked in front of the lecturer. The online environment is also way easier for the participant and the anxiety level they experienced are decreased compared to offline situation learning as already mentioned before. As for the strategies, the participants stated that they need to apply more strategy to overcome their anxiety in offline context.

Strategies to overcome speaking anxiety in online context

From the results of the interview, both participants stated that they were less anxious when dealing with public speaking in an online environment which can also be seen from their ways to overcome the anxiety. When in an online setting, participants were more focused on the preparation of the material, and maybe a little relaxation.

“The strategies I use in online public speaking are more focusing on the presentation and we don't have to see the audience's faces on the screen but still have to look at the camera, so the audience still thinks we are making eye contact with them.”

(SOSA/PREP/NAM/074)

“The online speaking strategies that I use are different from the offline one. In my opinion online speaking is more relaxing so I only prepare the material such as reading and memo-

rizing the material so that the presentation goes well.”

(SOSA/PREP/NIKKI/076)

From the statements above, we can conclude that the participants think online public speaking anxiety are more relaxing since they did not have to see the audience's faces it is easier for them to overcome online speaking anxiety than the offline one. They only needed to focus on the preparation and themselves, such as memorizing and mastering the material.

Strategies to overcome speaking anxiety in offline context

Meanwhile, when they were asked to do public speaking in an offline setting, they were more anxious and considered other strategies to deal with their anxiety such as preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, audience depreciation, and resignation. Other than that, participants also have to be more concentrated than when they are doing public speaking in online circumstances.

Preparation

As already mentioned before, preparation is the basic strategy that a person must do before presenting. Aydin (2008) stated that not preparing for learning in class was one of the reasons that induced speaking anxiety. Same with online strategies, in offline context, participants also have to prepare themselves and the material that they are going to deliver.

“Oh yeah, usually, if I was going to do a presentation it's like the most impor-

tant thing is that it's preparation, practice repeatedly is very important..."
(SOSA/PREP/NAM/041)

"Usually, before speaking in front of the class, I have to prepare notes, so I already memorize what I am going to say."
(SOSA/PREP/NIKKI/042)

The statements above are proven findings from Aydin (2008). Other than that, the statements also proved that whether in online or offline context, participants will always do preparation before speaking in public or presenting something.

Relaxation

The goal of this strategy is to minimize the physical tension experienced by apprehensive speakers. This entails techniques aimed at relieving the worried speaker's body stress. They include deep breathing, stroking the lap, yawning, and snaking the speaker's physique (Kondo, 1994).

"...But when you have already done the presentation, when you're nervous, it's usually like pausing for a second and taking a deep breath."

(SOSA/REL/NAM/043)

"Then before starting to do public speaking in front of the class, I will be controlling my breath or listen to music first so it will help me relax"

(SOSA/REL/NIKKI/048)

Those statements proved that relaxation is an important step to overcome anxiety. Controlling their breath also relax themselves in their own unique

way are helping the participants to successfully overcome their speaking anxiety and deliver the presentation.

Positive Thinking

There are two types of positive thinking. The first entails focusing on good features of the public speaking circumstance, while the second involves thinking on something enjoyable that has nothing to do with public speaking. In both circumstances, the speaker seeks to divert their attention away from unpleasant ideas that may be impeding performance (Kondo, 1994). Students who believe they have poor skills compared to other students in terms of performance do not have a positive self-image, and this perception may lead to language pressure (Fitriah & Muna, 2019). That is why positive thinking is needed to helping students cope with their anxiety.

"Yes, and the most important thing is positive thinking, uhm not positive thinking, it's like you're really ignorant, you know, because I really am an overthinking person, if I want to do presentation, I'm afraid, I'm worried, but in the end I'm like I'm really ignorant again..."

(SOSA/POST/NAM/046)

From Nam's Transcription we know that for a someone who have high anxiety and intend to overthink, her own mind sometimes caused her own speaking anxiety. That is why she said she needed to have positive thought and ignore her worry, so it won't disturb her focus while doing public speaking.

Audience Depreciation

The statement below shows that the audience and their perceptions towards the speaker also have an impact towards anxiousness level.

“If it’s just making conversation with people, I don’t feel anxious, but if presenting in front of a lot of people, I will be nervous. Because I was like... thinking about the way people look at me, I’m afraid it’s like what if I make a mistake or something like that. especially if there are a lot of people who watch me, it feels like... I’m afraid to be judged by them.”

(SOSA/AUD/NIKKI/020)

“When it’s offline, wow... so much anxiety is like being intimidated, especially in front of lecturers”

(SOSA/AUD/NAM/036)

The transcribed interview from both participants stated that audiences are really having a big impact towards their anxiety and public speaking presentation. The idea of presenting in front of a lot of people itself already caused an anxiety for Nikki, she is afraid of what those people think of her or she will be making mistake and they will be judged her. The same thing goes for Nam, she feels that doing face to face public speaking especially in front of lecturer are too intimidating for her.

Resignation

Resignation is the strategy which makes the public speaking scenario should be kept out of the speaker’s mind so that no negative thoughts are associated with it that may come back to haunt the speaker. One of the most popular strategies to

overcome speaking anxiety are trying to change the negative and unconscious relationship among an aversive stimulus (e.g., public speaking) and anxiety.

“...It’s really like...I became ignorant, Ah, whatsoever how it will be in the end. what’s important is that I got to do the presentation first.”

(SOSA/RES/NAM/050)

“The day before, I will do a little research about what kind of people in the class I am, so I can choose what language is right when it’s delivered later.”

(SOSA/RES/NIKKI/044)

Nam and Nikki have a difference in their resignation strategies. Nam stated that she will be ignorant about whatever the result or whatever will happen when she doing presentation, the most important thing she have to do the presentation first. Meanwhile Nikki, she has to observe what kind of audience and language and/or word choices she has to use to deliver the material so it will reduce her anxiety and negative thought because she already knew and prepared for it.

Students were less anxious when dealing with public speaking in an online context than in offline context

Various social identities and communication platforms have also been shown to cause varied levels of anxiety (Dewaele et al., 2008). However, in this study, the researcher found that both participants were less anxious when dealing with public speaking in an online context than in offline context. This finding confirms a statement from Bashori et al.

(2020) that stated people who speak in digital contexts are less anxious when compared to face-to-face contexts. The findings confirm those studies because there are similarities in the research results. As already mentioned earlier both participants agree that they are less anxious when doing public speaking in an online context. There are many factors they have to consider when doing public speaking offline such as audience, negative thought, symptoms, etc. Meanwhile, in online public speaking they can be more focused on themselves and the material that they deliver. The most likely reason for this is that these students do not need to face real people when doing online public speaking. The moment when they get eye contact with people in offline environments puts them in more nervousness and leads them to anxiety as they feel intimidated by those eyes. Meanwhile, they only need to look at the camera when speaking in online environments.

Strategies to overcome speaking anxiety in online context

Bashori et al. (2020) proves that compared to speaking in front of colleagues or people, learners feel less nervous when they have to speak in a digital context. This proved the findings in this thesis. When it comes to online speaking anxiety, the strategy that is used by the participants in this study was only preparation where participants can be more focused on themselves than any other factors. Preparation is the most basic and important thing before we do any presentation. Actually, preparation would always be done by participants both in online and offline public speaking, however in an online context they can be more focused on doing this step than in the offline

context. This statement is supported by Fitriah and Muna (2019) who said that solving public speaking anxiety has to start from the speakers themselves first. They have to know themselves and what can cause their speaking anxiety in order to overcome it. It is proven in Menzel and Carrell (1994) finding that time spent preparing for speaking in all aspects, such as visual support for the speech, was shown to be substantially connected with speech delivery, thought content, and speech and thought total score. More preparation time is also said to contribute to improved speaking delivery.

Strategies to overcome speaking anxiety in offline context

Meanwhile, the offline speaking situation is more complicated to overcome, and both participants agree they need more strategies to overcome their speaking anxiety in offline context, such as: 1) preparation, 2) relaxation, 3) positive thinking, 4) audience depreciation, and 5) resignation. Therefore, this state of participants can be said to be normal because as already mentioned before, people with a natural anxious state will tend to feel anxious in various situations (Woodrow, 2006). Martin and Valdivia (2017) advise that educators should pay close attention to their learners' needs in order to decrease learner's anxiety and make them feel more at ease when speaking a foreign language in virtual settings. Furthermore, participants felt more anxious and burdened by many factors when doing offline speaking anxiety, that's why they need more strategies to overcome their anxiety. This finding justified by Dewaele et al. (2008) that said the audience and the environment in which verbal language occurs are

found to be the elements that cause FLA. Students usually feel afraid that they will be laughed at by the audience or their performance did not go as planned (Beatty and Behnke, 1991). Fitriah and Muna (2019) support this statement by saying that to cope with students' anxiety of public speaking, it must begin with each individual learner themselves. Learners should have strong motivation to increase their speaking ability and try the best strategies they think work for them to overcome their foreign language public speaking anxiety.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research problem on how to overcome speaking anxiety in both online and offline context, this study highlights the strategies that students use to overcome their public speaking anxiety in both offline and online contexts. The finding showed that students felt less anxious and used less strategies while doing public speaking in the online context. Both participants agreed that they were more anxious when they had to speak in public in the offline context. When it comes to offline context, they are concerned about a lot of factors that can cause their speaking anxiety such as audience and their perception, their fluency, etc. Both participants used more strategies such as relaxation, preparation, positive thinking, audience depreciation, and resignation to overcome their speaking anxiety in offline settings, while in online settings they only focused on the preparations and themselves. This proved that online learning environment are make students less anxious and online public speaking are easier to do than offline.

Due to limitations of this study, future research is necessary to be conducted to investigate the symptoms that are experiences in online and offline context, what lectures can do to help students overcome their anxiety, and online learning issues such as problem related to device to find out is it influences students' anxiety, confidence, and their way to face their speaking anxiety.

Suggestions and Recommendations

For the students, it is suggested to increase their speaking ability and mastery of the material that is going to be delivered. Strategies that are recommended to use based on the findings are preparation and relaxation.

Due to limitations of this study, future research is necessary to be conducted to investigate the symptoms that are experiences in online and offline context, what lectures can do to help students overcome their anxiety, and online learning issues such as problem related to device to find out is it influences students' anxiety, confidence, and their way to face their speaking anxiety.

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