

GLOSSOPHOBIA: EVALUATING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY IN ENGLISH ORAL PRESENTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Speaking English in public or in front of peers in a classroom setting alone may create uneasy feelings to the speaker or presenter, especially to those who are not good in using a second language or foreign language. Hence, this particular study was conducted to evaluate university students' speaking anxiety in English oral presentations in relation to their level of speaking anxiety, genders, programs and proficiency. A set of questionnaires that consisted of 33 items was adapted from Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and distributed to 199 students from four different faculties in UiTM Melaka. The data gathered through the questionnaires was then analysed using statistical analysis (SPSS). The results indicated that the participants experienced moderate level of speaking anxiety during English oral presentations due to fear or negative evaluation by their peers. Regarding genders, there was a slightly different level of anxiety where female participants were identified to be more anxious compared to male participants. Moreover, there was no statistically significant difference detected in terms of the students' programs and their level of speaking anxiety; however, the students' English proficiency did affect their level of speaking anxiety. Therefore, the results of this study concluded that the students' levels of speaking anxiety and proficiency were significant in identifying their overall speaking anxiety. Thus, this can assist both the lecturers and students on how to overcome the issue in the future.

Keywords: *speaking anxiety, gender, program, students' grade, language acquisition, ESL classroom, second language learners*

INTRODUCTION

A considerable amount of attention has been continuously given to second language or foreign language anxiety due to its significance to language acquisition. A multitude of studies related to this issue have been conducted and have reported that language anxiety was influential and/or significant to language performance and a predictor of language achievement (Debreli & Demirkan, 2016; Karatas, Alci, Bademcioglu, & Ergin, 2016). Whatever the cause of speaking anxiety may be, it is considered impossible for language learners to eliminate or avoid from experiencing anxiety as it is natural for anyone invested in their learning to feel as such (Sutarsyah, 2017). Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015) added that a necessary amount of anxiety may actually motivate and encourage learners to perform better while excessive level of anxiety may bring about poor achievement instead.

Speaking has long been identified as one of the language skills that can cause anxiety the most (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019). Even though all Malaysian students have been formally introduced to English language since preschool or early school years, many university students still experience high

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level of anxiety when it comes to speaking activities that can eventually influence their speaking performance (Latif, 2015). Such a scenario has also been observed among UiTM students particularly

in their individual English oral presentation. Therefore, it is imperative that their anxiety level be investigated on and evaluated so as to assist both learners and educators in tackling the issue of speaking anxiety.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This particular study aimed to evaluate the speaking anxiety levels among English language learners in UiTM and the relationship between their gender, program, as well as English proficiency with their anxiety levels. These research questions are the focal point of this study:

1. What are the levels of speaking anxiety experienced by the English language learners in UiTM?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference on speaking anxiety level by genders?
3. Is there any statistically significant difference on speaking anxiety level by programs?
4. Is there any statistically significant difference on speaking anxiety level by English proficiency?

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY SCALE (FLCAS)

Numerous studies on foreign language and second language anxiety using Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) have been conducted, where the instrument was applied to measure language anxiety among learners/students. It consists of 3 components (communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation). Students who experience communication apprehension usually have less vocabulary and feel uncomfortable in front of others when they have to communicate using foreign language. Students who faced fear of negative evaluation are concerned about their images and afraid of making mistakes and thus will avoid in participating language activity. Test anxiety on the other hand, is considered as a nerve-wrecking situation for the students when they have to talk rather than seeing the language speaking activity as a platform for them to improve their communication skills.

Nur Aqilah and Aminabibi (2019), in their study among Malaysian undergraduates, revealed that the contributing factor that affects the performance of second language speakers in oral achievement is due to communication apprehension. The speakers are said to start panicking or feel sweaty and unable to converse their thoughts in English especially when they have to speak in front of their peers. Similarly to Firooz and Mehdi (2017) who conducted a study on Iranian English learners and asserted that speaking a foreign language in front of people has increased the anxiety level among them and thus, they will not engage themselves in communication due to fear of making mistakes. They are afraid of being evaluated and due to the little vocabulary knowledge, that they have. Consequently, individual presentation is more stressful compared to a group presentation because individual speaker tends to have a negative mind set and he/she is the sole attention and focus.

Sutarsyah (2017) in his study mentioned among the four skills (writing, listening, reading, and speaking), speaking is seen as a debilitating effect that affects students' performance. He observed the secondary school students during their speaking activity where the students need to describe a picture orally. The result revealed that students who are good in speaking will have less anxiety and thus performed better, while students who have medium and low level of anxiety are satisfied with their speaking performance. It is also shown that students who speak individually in front of the class tend to experience high level of anxiety. After all, language anxiety particularly in speaking does influence students' performance.

Additionally, ten from thirty students from higher secondary level aged between 17 to 19-year-old are afraid of getting negative evaluation from their friends, usually when it comes to speaking (Mohammad, 2015). They believed they are not good in speaking English or using foreign language and this has made them withdraw themselves and try not to participate in any speaking activity. They are reluctant and afraid that their peers will judge them negatively when they make mistakes while

speaking. Therefore, language anxiety is seen as unpleasant feeling to students, especially to those who are engaging with speaking activity.

Looking at few instances of research in language learning anxiety, speaking activity seems to be intimidating to most students of non-native speakers that could affect the students' performance physically and mentally. In sum, FLCAS is found to be reliable and valid in investigating language anxiety in second or foreign language learning (Aling, 2016).

FACTORS OF SPEAKING ANXIETY IN ESL CLASSROOMS

In the process of acquiring a second language, including English, learners have to master all language skills. In relation to this, speaking is generally one of the most challenging skills to be mastered by most ESL learners, thus leading to the sentiments of fear among them whenever speaking activities are carried out in classroom. Furthermore, they tend to feel uneasy, pressured, dreadful, nervous, and worried which consequently affect their language learning. If these feelings are consistently experienced by learners, they will subsequently associate the process of learning English negatively. Therefore, it is crucial for language researchers to identify the factors that may affect ESL learners to have speaking anxiety in ESL classrooms.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) recognized three significant parts of language anxiety namely communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. They accept that learners have anxiety when speaking with others, talking in a group, and talking in front of others. In addition, it was also discovered that learners are anxious about the possibility that they will not have the option to comprehend other's discourse. In relation to this, Ansari (2015) expressed that this might be because of their restricted information on the second language. Learners hold negative judgments and low confidence as to learning English, for example, restricted vocabulary, being ungrammatical, pronunciation, absence of familiarity, and so on. The second component is the place where learners are alarmed by judgments made by individuals around them especially by educators and peers. Besides, Bailey (1983) likewise referenced that anxiety stems from students' competitive nature whereby they tend to contrast themselves with their companions and want to secure their mental self-image. The last component of language anxiety is when learners fear that they will fail to perform as a result of them placing certain expectations on themselves to master the language. Consequently, they will be reluctant to talk until they are persuaded and sure that the language, they produce is error-free.

Young (1991) and Gregersen (2013) additionally incorporated another factor which is the educator's part in the language classroom. In relation to this, students generally feel that their teachers do not recognize the presence of anxious students in the classroom. All things considered, teachers generally associate students' reluctance to partake in speaking activities to absence of motivation and poor attitude. Kráľová and Sorádová (2015) expressed that few language teachers neglect to clarify the subject unmistakably, over-remediating the students' errors and practice bias, which can additionally trigger anxiety among ESL students. This is additionally upheld by Kasap and Power (2019) in which students believe that educators concentrate on the individuals who were unable to converse competently and feel that they are insufficient to be focused on. As a conclusion, recognizing these components presents explanations for speaking anxiety among ESL students and these have to be addressed right away.

EFFECTS OF SPEAKING ANXIETY

Without a doubt, speaking anxiety is one of the major factors that may impact a student's performance in learning a second language. Generally, speaking anxiety among students is fairly clear where some previous researchers announced that speaking anxiety by and large influences students' academic performance (Saito and Samimy, 1996; Wu, 2010; and Zheng, 2008). Accordingly, the way learning a second language could be hard for this kind of students who face speaking anxiety (Sutarsyah, 2017). Aside from that, speaking anxiety among ESL learners would likewise prompt demoralization where they will have the tendency to lose their trust in their personal abilities which subsequently will lead them toward declining any form of participation in classroom (Na, 2007; Ansari 2015). At the same

time, students that face speaking anxiety would surrender their work in learning a language appropriately in this way which consequently may influence their academic performance and language mastery.

In relation to this, in his study, Ansari (2015) found that students' reluctance to partake in classroom activities was not because of their observation or absence of interest in the language, however it was because of the fear of being adversely judged by their classmates for their poor command of English, particularly in speaking skills. Thus, these negative impacts show that speaking anxiety is extensively a significant worry that researchers and teachers need to address, particularly in the field of second language learning, as it may place a great impact on ESL learners experience in language learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The focal point of this section is on describing the quantitative approach which was applied to this study in gauging the students' speaking anxiety in English oral presentation. There were 199 participants, 129 female students and 70 male students, who were from four faculties, namely, Business and Management, Plantation and Agrotechnology, Computer and Mathematical Sciences and Art and Design in UiTM Melaka that participated in this study. Purposive non-random sampling method has been utilized to ensure that all respondents were undergoing the same English courses for that semester. 51 semester three students from the Faculty of Business and Management, 56 semester three students from the Faculty of Plantation and Agrotechnology, 48 semester three students from the Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences and 44 semester three students from the Faculty of Art and Design Faculty of Plantation and Agrotechnology were involved in this research. The respondents in this study had all obtained satisfactory English grades in their previous semester English papers. 25 students managed to score A, 39 students acquired A-, 46 students earned B+, 45 students got B, 18 students gained B- and 26 students scored C. The participants included in the study are Malays and aged between 18 to 21 years old.

Instrument and Analysis

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale or FLCAS questionnaire designed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) was adapted and applied in collecting the data as well as in evaluating speaking anxiety level among the participants involved. The 33-item questionnaire was constructed into three categories of language anxiety which covers communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The 5-point Likert scale determines the 33 item scores that range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The internal reliability for the scale is 0.93 on all items and $r=0.83$, $p=0.001$ for test-retest reliability (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). In ensuring participants' thorough comprehension of each item, two languages were employed, English and Malay, in the questionnaire. The data collected from the participants were then analysed descriptively and inferentially by using SPSS.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A questionnaire was disseminated to determine students' speaking anxiety in English oral presentation among the participants in Universiti Teknologi MARA. The analysis of the survey revealed the following findings.

Research question 1: What are the levels of speaking anxiety experienced by the English language learners in UiTM?

Table 1 exhibits mean and standard deviation scores for three dimensions of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). In terms of communication apprehension, the mean score is 3.21 while the mean score for fear of negative evaluation is 3.42. On the other hand, the mean score for test anxiety is 2.96 and the mean score for the overall speaking anxiety is 3.31. The finding has indicated that learners experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety in English oral presentation.

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication Apprehension	3.21	.48045
Fear of Negative Evaluation.	3.24	.41450
Test Anxiety	2.96	.66635
Overall Speaking Anxiety	3.13	.46042

Table 1 Dimensions of Speaking Anxiety

Mean score indicator: 0.00-2.50 (Low), 2.51-3.50 (Moderate), 3.51-5.00 (High)

The result gathered from this study shows that the participants experienced moderate level of speaking anxiety in English oral presentations. It is parallel to the findings of studies led by Nur Aqilah and Aminabibi (2019), Balemir (2009), Abdullah and Abdul Rahman (2010) and Chan, Abdullah and Yusuf (2010). From the finding displayed in Table 1, the participants' moderate level of speaking anxiety in English oral presentation is dominantly affected the Fear of Negative Evaluation dimension of which Horwitz et al. (1986, p.128) emphasized that students with this sort of anxiety are worried and concerned of other's evaluation and they have a belief that other's would assess them negatively. Therefore, these may impede them from articulating their views and ideas in English (Cagatay, 2015) and discourage their readiness for communicating in English (Wu & Lin, 2014) thus affecting their learning performance in general.

Research question 2: Is there any significant difference on the level of speaking anxiety by genders?

Table 2 reveals that the anxiety level of female students (M = 3.18, SD = 0.466) in English oral presentation was found to be marginally higher than that of male students (M = 3.04, SD = 0.439). Consequently, it overtly shows that there is a relatively small difference between the genders.

	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Level of speaking anxiety	Female	129	3.18	0.466
	Male	70	3.04	0.439

Table 2: Level of speaking anxiety and genders

The finding shown in Table 2 uncovered that there is a relatively small difference on the level of speaking anxiety between male and female respondents in this study. This finding is aligned with the finding of the study done by Balemir (2009) who discovered that female students experienced a higher level of speaking anxiety compared to the male students. Other studies that support the same finding were carried out by Gokhan and Nurdan (2012) and Huang (2004) who mostly stressed that female students were more anxious and nervous while speaking English in the classroom as compared to male students. As a result, in the light of various past studies, it can be verified that gender plays a notable role on determining the level of speaking anxiety in English oral presentations.

Level of speaking anxiety	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.066	.797	1.947	197	.053
Equal variances not assumed			1.982	149.143	.049

Table 3: t-test results for level of speaking anxiety and genders

In order to discover if there is a statistically significant difference on the mean scores of males and females, a t-test was applied. Connolly (2007) stated that it is essential to check the statistical significance of Levene's test for equality of variances. The variances are expected equivalent since $p > 0.05$, specifically 0.797. Table 3 represents three fundamental data of t-test result which decide the significant difference between two groups ($t=1.947$, $df=197$, $p=0.053$). The probability of value ($p=0.053$) is greater than 0.05, so the result is not statistically significant. Subsequently, there is no statistically significant difference on the level of speaking anxiety by genders.

Research question 3: Is there any statistically significant difference on speaking anxiety level by program?

Table 4 shows there is no significant difference between the level of speaking anxiety and the students' program ($F=.082$; $p>.05$). The result of the ANOVA test demonstrates that the students' program does not affect their level of speaking anxiety.

	Group	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Level of speaking anxiety	Between Groups	.053	3	.018	.082	.970
	Within Groups	41.921	195	.215		
	Total	41.973	198			

Table 4: One-way ANOVA test results for level of speaking anxiety and the students' program

With regards to the question of whether the students' program influences their speaking anxiety level, Table 4 indicated that is not the case among these respondents. Among the factors that have been identified to affect speaking anxiety, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) highlighted communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety while Ansari (2015) added that this might be because of their inadequate knowledge of the second language. In addition, Bailey (1983) did mention that anxiety can also stem from learners' competitive nature while Young (1991) and Gregersen (2013) pointed out the teachers' role in the language classroom as a contributing factor. Nevertheless, the findings in this study clearly showed that the students' program did not have a part in affecting their anxiety level. Thus, it can be deduced that the students' program is not a factor that influences the respondents' anxiety levels.

Research question 4: Is there any statistically significant difference on speaking anxiety level by English proficiency?

According to the data in Table 5, it is noticed that there is a significant difference between the level of speaking anxiety and students' English proficiency ($F=4.660$; $p<.05$). The ANOVA test result shows that students' English proficiency affects the level of speaking anxiety.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Level of speaking anxiety	Between Groups	4.522	5	.904	4.660	.000
	Within Groups	37.452	193	.194		
	Total	41.973	198			

Table 5: One-way ANOVA test results for level of speaking anxiety and students' English proficiency

This study has parallel findings with what was found by Saito and Samimy (1996), Wu (2010) and Zheng (2008), where it was reported that generally students' performances have some effects on speaking anxiety. Furthermore, Kojima (2007) clarified that a learner who has deficient semantic knowledge (articulation, grammar, and lexis) tends to have a significant level of nervousness. In this regard, the interview results in Kayaoglu and Saglamel's study (2013) suggested that linguistic impediments (vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation) increased language anxiety of 30 Turkish EFL students. Sutarsyah (2017) revealed that students who are good at speaking will have less anxiety and thus would perform. These findings from prior studies concur the results from the current study. Hence, it can be concluded that students' English proficiency can influence the level of speaking anxiety.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATION

The findings revealed that the participants for this study experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety in English oral presentation. There is no statistically significant difference with regards to gender on speaking anxiety level found which indicated that gender is not a strong factor of speaking anxiety among the participants. Moreover, there is also no significant difference on speaking anxiety level detected by students' program, exhibiting that program was not a factor of speaking anxiety among the participants. However, the findings displayed that in relation to English proficiency level, there is a significant difference on speaking anxiety level shown by students which explained that proficiency level indeed influences the participants' speaking anxiety.

Future studies on speaking anxiety might want to explore more on the influence of English proficiency level towards speaking anxiety and other factors that influence speaking anxiety. A possible focus can also be on the pedagogical methods in reducing speaking anxiety among ESL learners. Different research designs are also recommended so as to provide a holistic insight on the issue of speaking anxiety.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Foreign Language Anxiety Scale

Please answer the following questions by providing the number correspondent to the option that best describe your opinion: 1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.

16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance

Appendix B

Speaking Anxiety Scale (Adapted from Foreign Language Anxiety Scale)

Please answer the following questions by providing the number correspondent to the option that best describe your opinion: 1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

