

EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY ACROSS ACADEMIC LEVELS IN ONLINE LEARNING DURING COVID-19

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Abstract

This present study aims to investigate the levels and types of students' speaking anxiety in online learning during Covid-19; moreover, it is also need to find out the differences students' speaking anxiety across academic levels. The data were obtained from 60 students with equal 30 of sophomores and juniors in English Department at Universitas of Islam Malang by administering online questionnaire. This study applied a quantitative approach which used a questionnaire of FLCAS by Horwitz et al (1986) as the instrument. The data were analyzed by Using SPSS 20. The result of this study showed between sophomores and juniors were at moderate level of anxiety with the mean score of sophomore (M=117.70) and juniors (107.10). It was also shown that the type of sophomores' anxiety was mostly communication apprehension (M= 37.20), followed by fear of negative evaluation (M= 26.53) and test anxiety (M= 24.00). While juniors mostly faced anxiety type of test anxiety (M =45.17), followed by communication apprehension (M= 35.60) and fear of negative evaluation (M= 23.43). Furthermore, this study also proved that there was a significant difference between the students' speaking anxiety levels across the academic levels in online learning during covid 19 with a significance of 0.001 which is less than 0.05 and the mean difference between speaking anxiety level of sophomores and juniors was at 10.6.

Keywords: speaking anxiety, Foreign language anxiety, academic level, online learning; COVID 19

INTRODUCTION

In EFL context, speaking skill, as one of productive skills, has a significant role in academic setting. It requires the ability of students to make someone or their peers to understand about the content of speaking that they try to confirm. It stated by Kurniasih et. al. (2020) English students must have a strong command of the language, both written and spoken. Speaking also regarded as a challenging skill of all essential language skills while learning a foreign language. According to Bueno et. al. (2006), Speaking, which is regarded as the most crucial of the four language skills in EFL, is one of the hardest abilities for EFL learners to master. Chou (2018) claims that speaking a foreign language is a dynamic linguistic process that involve competence, oral proficiency, and the application of strategies. Meanwhile Harris (1974) states that to speak correctly and properly, pronunciation, mastering grammar, knowing a lot of words, articulacy, and understanding are the mechanisms of speaking skill that enhance speaking skills. Harmer (2001) defines speaking ability as the capacity to speak effectively, which implied not only being familiar with the characteristics of the language but also the capacity to analyze information and language "on an immediate basis". Similarly, speaking fundamentally calls for both productive and receptive skills (Sutarsyah, 2019). Therewith, Speaking is a necessary skill that students must master in order to increase their English proficiency (Pristiyaputri et al., 2023).

Brown and Yule (1983) divided speaking into three components. There are talk as engagement, transaction, and performance. While talk as a transaction places more emphasis on expression and assisting others in understanding what we require to say clearly and precisely, talk is communication, which is an interpersonal relationship done spontaneously between communicating people, and explains the way individuals effort to convey their intention to others. Talk as performance focuses more on monolog than dialog and is more similar to written language than conversational language. According to Rao (2019), a talk or performance is a type of partially-

interactive speech delivered in front of a live audience in which the audience does not interject with the speaker during a speaking scenario. Through the question and answer (Q & A) session that often follows the speech presentation, the audience can get answers to their questions. Talk as performance plays a significant part in the processes of educational activities, since it is commonly employed by the students in their speaking activities to transmit and share knowledge.

Students' speaking activities is not only limited to face to face meetings since they got themselves in online learning environment during Covid-19 which all courses must be delivered online, including a speaking course, which primarily requires face-to-face interaction. Ismiatun & Suhartoyo (2022) point out that in today's learning environment, using technology becomes a substitute answer and offers significant flexibility. At this time, teachers provide instruction and give students' assignment through online tools to link each other in online environment. Plenty of online platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and WhatsApp are used by teachers to conduct online instruction to the students (Kurniasih et al., 2022). According to the definition of online learning, "The use of the Internet to access learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; and to obtain support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, construct personal meaning, and grow from the learning experience," (Ally, 2004 as cited in Kurniasih et al., 2022). This online classroom environment leads the difficulty to the students in doing their speaking activities, such as delivering their knowledge in presentation which the students accustomed to do so when they got assignment from the teachers in traditional or face to face learning environment. According to Gonzalez Ramirez et. al. (2021), this new scenario may have an impact on the students' emotional aspects, which are important in language learning since they deal with feelings that can help or impede students' language acquisition. Beside the difficulty of unusual of the setting classroom environment, speaking or making a presentation in front of the class in online learning might be difficult for EFL students since it may be influenced by the same emotional elements that affect their language acquisition. Thornbury (2005) further asserts that the affective element, or the emotional aspect of human conduct, might have an impact on the ability to speak clearly. An affective element, in this case anxiety, prevents students from improving their English skills (Aydin, 2008). It is also stated by Ali & Fei (2016) that anxiety is likely to occur in both receptive (reading and listening) and productive (writing and speaking) skills.

Anxiety is a mental as well as physical condition with somatic, mental, emotional, and behavioral aspects. Anxiety can also be defined as a dread of expressing oneself verbally, as evidenced by the preceding physiological symptoms (Pertiwi & Hidayanti, 2022). It is also described as "anxiety the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (Spielberger, 1983). It is the unpleasant emotion of worry and fear. In order to distinguish between persons who experience anxiety in a range of scenarios on a regular basis and those who experience anxiety only in certain circumstances, psychologists coined the phrase "relevant anxiety reaction" (Horwitz, et al., 1986). Anxiety is a component that invariably affects learners' overall performance when learning and utilizing L2, according to Gardner (1985). Anxiety is one of primary obstacles of EFL learners in speaking foreign language. Language anxiety significantly impairs oral communication skills (Henter, 2014). Additionally, Horwitz and Young (1991) explained that the anxiety discovered in foreign language students experience is a distinct kind known as Foreign Language Anxiety. It is also found in the statement of Sulistyowati & Mukti (2023) that foreign language anxiety is an aspect of anxiety that language learners suffer when learning a language. Horwitz (2001) also describes anxiety to a foreign language as "a distinct complex of proprioception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that occur during learning in the classroom because of the uniqueness of a learning language."

Speaking anxiety could deter the students in performing their oral communication clearly. It because anxiety makes pupils feel uneasy in every scenario when learning English, and they do not have many opportunities to demonstrate their abilities due of their anxiousness (Pristiyaputri et al.,

2023). Kurniasih et. al. (2023) declared that when pupils have writing anxiety, their minds become stopped, and they are hesitant to write English papers. Also Kurniasih (2017) revealed that anxiety has a negative psychological effect, which leads to a decline in writing performance. These difficulties of writing anxiety are also found in speaking as also one of productive skills. Horwitz (2001) claimed that foreign language anxiety presents the same clinical picture as any other type of anxiety difficulty: concentrating, sweating, palpitations, worry, fear, and even horror of foreign language class, nervous pupils avoiding lessons and not doing their homework.

Many consequences occur when students struggle with public speaking anxiety. When communicating in English, most pupils struggle to communicate their views. According to Horwitz (2010), there are three major anxiety concerns in speaking English. The first factor is communication apprehension. According to Horwitz (2010), communication apprehension is an embarrassment that manifests as fear, anxiety about communicating with people, difficulty speaking in groups, and verbal communication in public. The second type of anxiety is test anxiety. It refers to performance anxiety caused by a fear of failure. Students who suffer from test anxiety have excessive expectations of themselves and believe that anything less than flawless exam performance is a failure. The anxiety of fear of negative evaluation comes next. It refers to peer evaluation. It could also mean avoiding evaluative situations and anticipating others to judge them adversely. Other than that, anxiety has the level of it, they are a low anxiety, moderate anxiety and high anxiety.

Researchers have undertaken several studies on students' speaking anxiety with different results. A study carried out by Sutarsyah (2017) revealed that students with lower levels of anxiety perform better orally than students with greater levels of anxiety, and speaking anxiety may have a detrimental impact on a student's total speaking performance score. Additionally, it has been discovered that anxiety is the main contributor, followed by worry and stress. Similarly, the study performed by Sabbah (2018) showed that students' anxiety was caused by three primary factors: communication anxiety caused by the gap between secondary and college education, test anxiety caused by the unequal distribution of grades, and test anxiety caused by the unified tests and worry about receiving a poor grade. Because they are aware that the only three components that make up the basis of their course grades are a midterm, a project, and a final, the students were mostly apprehensive. And the greatest contributor to the students' worry was exam anxiety. Moreover, a study conducted by Chou (2018) declared that partial EMI students had a high degree of speech anxiety, low confidence, and negative attitudes toward learning English. Additionally, it was shown that partial EMI context recipients tended to employ rehearsing or paraphrasing techniques less frequently than those who got entire EMI context. Additionally, a link was discovered between the pupils' speaking difficulties and their EMI history.

Another study came from Bollinger (2017) discovered that although pupils in conventional foreign language classrooms are not as worried compared to those in online foreign language classes, pupils in conventional foreign language lessons fail to do any better than pupils in distance learning. While Pichette (2009) uttered that there were no differences in the anxiety profiles of classroom and online students. He discovered that whereas perceived feelings of anxiety remained high in those who took classes in person at the intermediate and advanced levels, they tended to decline among more experienced learners of languages when they learned remotely. After some time in the new environment and getting used to the instructional system and course materials, remote language learners seem to be less worried compared to their colleagues in traditional, classroom settings. More recent study of (Pristiyaputri et al., 2023) revealed that there was no significant difference between freshmen and sophomores in students' speaking anxiety. It means both groups exhibited moderate anxiety levels, which were approaching a high level. Furthermore, female students exhibit higher degrees of speaking anxiety. In addition, it was discovered that competitiveness was a role in increased speaking anxiety among freshmen and sophomores.

Despite the fact that the subject of speaking anxiety has been studied extensively, it remains an intriguing issue in language learning. The results will also differ depending on the location and number of study participants. Furthermore, no studies comparing the amount of speaking anxiety in sophomores and juniors and the likely causes of their speaking anxiety in online learning have been analyzed by researchers. Previous studies' findings, as well as their shortcomings, will strengthen this investigation. So, in order to find out more about speaking anxiety, this study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What are the levels and types of speaking anxiety of sophomore and junior students in online learning during Covid-19?
2. Is there any significant difference between the students' speaking anxiety levels based on students' academic levels in online learning during covid-19?

METHOD

The quantitative approach based on an objective examination of the ability to simplify the results from distinct populations was the goal of this study, which made a quantitative approach appropriate. It also aims to compare subjects using quantitative trials. A quantitative non-experimental causal-comparative study is used by the researcher to determine whether there is a significant distinction in the degree of students' speaking anxiety based on their academic levels. A descriptive study is used specifically by the investigator to investigate, show, and indicate the level and types of speaking anxiety in sophomores and junior students. The population of this study is sophomore students of third semester and juniors of the fifth semester in English Education Department at University of Islam Malang. This study used a purposive sampling method (a form of non-probability samplings) that involved the criteria students from the English Department in fully remote learning. A total of 60 students with equal 30 of sophomores and juniors responded a 33-item questionnaire via Google Form. This study used Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire adopted from Horwitz et. al. (1986) has been translated to Indonesia version which is a tool for self-report to gauge how anxious students of languages feel as a specific reaction to foreign language learning in the foreign language classroom environment.

The questionnaire of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et. al (1986), which consists of 33 items include communication apprehension (1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32), test anxiety (3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28), and fear of negative evaluation (2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31, 33) was administered to the all participants by online using Google Form. The FLCAS gives the result as a total score ranging from 33 to 165 from total scores from each participant. On the basis of the calculation proposed by Horwitz et al (1986) were classified 33-75 as low level anxiety with the classification is "1", 76-119 as medium level anxiety with the classification is "2", and above 120 as high level of anxiety with the classification is "3". This scale used Likert-type 5-choice response format; Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The data that had been collected was evaluated by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 20, specifically used Descriptive Statistics and an Independent Sample T-test. To figure out the levels and types of sophomores and juniors speaking anxiety, the data from FLCAS questionnaire was analyzed using Descriptive Statistics; furthermore, Independent Sample T-test was used to know whether or not there is a significant difference between students' speaking anxiety across academic levels. If the grade of Sig.(2-tailed) < 0,05, there is a significant differences between variables. If the grade of Sig. (2-tailde) > 0, 05, there is no a significant differences between variables.

FINDINGS

This study aim to answer two research problems such as the research question about the levels and types of speaking anxiety of sophomores and juniors students as well as the difference between

the students' anxiety in speaking levels in accordance with students' academic levels in online learning during Covid 19. The results presented as follows.

Table 1. The Descriptive Statistics of Sophomores and Juniors Speaking Anxiety levels

Academic Degree		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Anxiety
Sophomores	Anxiety Score	30	106	129	117.70	5.897	Medium
	Valid N (listwise)	30					
Juniors	Anxiety Score	30	78	145	107.10	15.927	Medium
	Valid N (listwise)	30					

To answer the first question about the level of speaking anxiety of sophomores and juniors during online learning, a descriptive statistic in the format of calculating mean scores was used. The data above explains that there are 60 students participated in this study with equal numbers of 30 students for sophomore and junior students. The score ranges from the lowest of 78 at a medium degree of anxiety to 145 at a high level of anxiety. In this case, there are no students with low levels of anxiety among the participants. The mean score shows that the majority of sophomore and junior students at medium-level anxiety with a score 117.70 for sophomore students and 107.10 for junior students. Comparing the mean score of sophomore and junior students, it revealed that sophomore students have higher levels of anxiety in online learning during Covid 19 pandemic.

The researcher also conducted a frequency analysis in identifying the distribution of students' anxiety levels. The data is presented in the following table.

Table 2. the Descriptive Statistics of Frequencies analysis of Sophomores and Juniors on Speaking Anxiety Levels

Academic Level	N	Frequency	Percentage	Anxiety Level
Sophomore	30	0	0%	Low
		17	56.7%	Medium
		13	43.3%	High
Junior	30	0	0%	Low
		24	80%	Medium
		6	20%	High

In terms of the partial distribution of speaking anxiety levels between sophomore and junior students, it is found that sophomore students in the third semester have more high anxiety levels at 43.3% compared to junior students with only 20% high anxiety levels. With further indicated that sophomore students are more anxious about speaking during online learning.

To answer the most type of FLA of Sophomore and Junior students during online learning on the first question, the researcher employed descriptive statistics. The data is presented as follows

Table 3. the Descriptive Statistics of Types of Sophomores and Juniors Speaking Anxiety

Academic Levels	Types of Anxiety	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sophomores	Communication Apprehension	30	1116	37.20	3.056
	Fear of Negative Evaluation	30	796	26.53	2.389
	Test Anxiety	30	720	24.00	2.533
Juniors	Communication Apprehension	30	1058	35.60	5.103
	Fear of Negative Evaluation	30	703	23.43	4.591
	Test Anxiety	30	1355	45.17	11.039

Table 1.2 shows the mean scores of three categories of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety. Judging from the highest to the lowest mean score for sophomore students, it can describe that Communication Apprehension (CA) contributes as the most affecting type of anxiety to the students, followed by Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) and Test Anxiety (TA). While junior students, it revealed from the mean score that Test Anxiety (TA) played the most important in their type of anxiety, followed by Communication Apprehension (CA) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE).

In answering the second research question, the researcher analyzed the data using an independent sample t-test to measure the mean difference between speaking anxiety levels and academic levels (sophomore and junior students). The data is presented as follows

Table 4. the Result of Independent Sample T-test on the Students' Speaking Anxiety across Academic Levels

Academic Level	Mean	Mean Difference	Significance	Interpretation
Sophomore	117.7	10.6	0.001	Significant
Junior	107.1			

Based on the data above, the mean difference between the speaking anxiety of sophomore and junior students is 10.6 with a significance of 0.001 which is less than 0.05 and indicated that there is a significant difference between sophomore and junior students in terms of speaking anxiety levels and academic levels in online learning during Covid 19. It assumed that H_1 is accepted, and H_0 is rejected. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between speaking anxiety levels and academic levels.

DISCUSSIONS

The first question of investigation of the level of speaking anxiety of junior and sophomore students indicated that the majority of the students are at a medium level of speaking anxiety. The mean scores of junior, and sophomore students and overall are at a medium level. This shows that the student's anxiety level in speaking during online learning at the time of Covid 19 is a medium level of anxiety. Furthermore, the other finding was types of students' speaking anxiety that the most of sophomores faced is communication apprehension ($M = 37.20$) in which it is the highest mean score of all types. Then followed by fear of negative evaluation ($M = 26.53$) and the last, type of anxiety ($M = 24.00$). While juniors speaking anxiety types most faced is test anxiety ($M = 45.17$), next to communication apprehension ($M = 35.60$), and fear of negative evaluation ($M = 23.43$).

The first result of this study is in line with the previous study by Prisitiyaputri et. al (2023). The results of this research proved that students between freshmen and sophomores were in moderate level of anxiety. Also the population was also from second year students, the result was dissimilar due to the differences in the selection of participants because the researcher of previous study chose the first and second year of students in offline learning environment; meanwhile, this current study chose the second and the third year students in online learning environment. The result of this study that the absence of low-level anxiety and the dominance of medium and high anxiety due to Covid 19, is also in line with the finding of Bollinger (2017) who found that the students in traditional foreign language classes are less anxious than in distance learning foreign language classes. The result also shows that the most influential indicator of anxiety was in line with Sabbah (2018) who also found that communication apprehension played a significant role in influencing anxiety levels which this result same as sophomores most faced speaking anxiety types. And this previous study is also in contrast with the result of juniors which test anxiety become the most influencing factor on students' speaking anxiety.

Regarding to the second research question, the result lead to believe that there was a significant difference between students' speaking anxiety levels on academic levels. This finding was in contrast with Prisitiyaputri et. al (2023) which revealed that there was no significant difference on students' levels anxiety across academic levels in offline learning. It means both groups exhibited moderate anxiety levels. The findings of Pichette (2009) also indicated that there were no appreciable variations in the anxiety characteristics of classroom and distance learners and that first semester remote students had greater levels of anxiety.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGETIONS

The overall students including juniors and sophomore students have a score of speaking anxiety ranging from medium to high level and no student is at a low level of speaking anxiety in online learning. The study also discovered that sophomore students have higher overall speaking anxiety, they also have a higher percentage of high-level anxiety compared to junior students. The study also indicated that sophomore students contributed Communication Apprehension (CA) as the most affecting type to them, followed by Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) and Test Anxiety (TA). While Test Anxiety (TA) contributed the most chosen type for junior students followed by Communication Apprehension (CA) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE).

The result of the independent t-test on the speaking anxiety level based on the FLCAS questionnaire shows that the difference in speaking anxiety levels from both sophomore and junior students across their academic levels in online learning classroom environment. In this case, it indicated that there is a significant difference between speaking anxiety levels of sophomore and junior students across the academic levels.

A better improvement is definitely needed in this study. The further researchers hopefully can dig more deeply about these two variables by adding more participants so that the result can be generalized the population, using other instruments to find out other research results which related to the students' speaking anxiety and can be conducted a mixed-method approach to obtain richer data. Moreover, it would be better for the lecturers to take actions in class to reduce students' anxiety by choosing an appropriate teaching method, technique and strategy in speaking class. The most important thing is that the lecturers should be able to make the class in a comfortable, serene, and good atmosphere. This kind of atmosphere in class will make students feel enjoy to learn, so that they can overcome their fear as well as their speaking anxiety. It is also needed to the students to train themselves to avoid anxiety in speaking. They also should be aware more about their anxiety, and they have to know how to overcome their anxiety. Anxiety is a problem comes from affective side, so the students have to be able to make their own solutions to handle their speaking anxiety.

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