

THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING ANXIETY OF FLIGHT ATTENDANT STUDY PROGRAM STUDENTS OF STTKD YOGYAKARTA: IN SEARCH OF CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

¹Anita Nur Masyi'ah

¹DIII Manajemen Transportasi, Sekolah Tinggi Teknologi Kedirgantaraan, Yogyakarta

Abstrak

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) telah menjadi masalah yang menantang di kalangan pelajar bahasa Inggris. Dampaknya bagi pembicara termasuk mencegah mereka berkomunikasi secara lisan dalam bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini meneliti alasan/penyebab spesifik kecemasan mahasiswa program studi Pramugari-Pramugara di STTKD serta solusi untuk mengatasi permasalahan tersebut. Subjek penelitian ini adalah empat mahasiswa yang mengikuti kelas English for Aviation dan merasa cemas ketika berbicara bahasa Inggris. Wawancara semi terstruktur digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data sebelum dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hasil temuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami FLSA karena: (1) takut membuat kesalahan tata bahasa dan kosakata terbatas; (2) kurangnya keterampilan pemahaman; (3) kurangnya persiapan dan; (4) ketakutan akan tanggapan negatif dari audiens. Sedangkan solusi FLSA tersebut antara lain (1) belajar dan membaca lebih banyak pengetahuan tata bahasa dan meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata dengan banyak membaca; (2) memiliki lebih banyak praktik mendengarkan dan berbicara; (3) memiliki lebih banyak persiapan, dan; (4) berfokus pada kinerja dan berpikir positif. Oleh karena itu, tersirat bahwa siswa membutuhkan strategi koping ini yang dapat mengurangi kecemasan mereka ketika berbicara bahasa Inggris. Namun, secara pedagogis, penting untuk menciptakan suasana yang nyaman selama proses pembelajaran berbicara bahasa Inggris sehingga memungkinkan mereka memperoleh keterampilan yang ditargetkan.

Kata kunci: *English speaking anxiety, foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA), strategi*

Abstract

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) has been a challenging issue among English learners. Its impacts for the speakers include preventing them to communicate orally in English. This study scrutinized the specific reasons/causes of the English speaking anxiety of flight attendants study program students in STTKD as well as the solutions to overcome the issue. The participants included four students who joined English for Aviation class and felt anxious when speaking English. Semi-structured interview was employed to collect the data before they were analyzed using thematic analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings outlined that the students suffered from FLSA because of: (1) the fear of making grammar mistakes and limited vocabulary; (2) the lack of comprehension skill; (3) the lack of preparation and; (4) the fear of negative responses from the audience. Meanwhile, the solutions of such FLSA included (1) learning and reading more of grammar knowledge and improving vocabulary mastery by reading a lot; (2) having more listening and speaking practices; (3) having more preparation, and; (4) focusing on the performance and thinking positively. Therefore, it is implied that students need these coping strategies that can make them less anxious when speaking English. However, pedagogically, it is important to create a less anxious atmosphere during the English speaking learning process to enable them acquire the skill targeted.

Keywords: *English speaking anxiety, foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA), strategies*

Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language in class can be an anxiety-provoking experience for the students. Among four language skills, it is stated that English-speaking anxiety is one of the issues in it (He: 2017). Speaking is one of productive skills whose role is very crucial to create an effective communication. However, it is often considered as the most difficult skill to acquire because in speaking, one must consider many aspects such as vocabulary retrieval, choice of grammatical patterns, and sociocultural competence (Al-Roud, 2016).

In the past decades, several studies related to speaking anxiety have been conducted and documented. One of them revealed that most English learners faced a certain degree of anxiety during their foreign language learning (Marwan, 2016). Those studies discovered the primary causes of the anxiety

¹Email Address: anita.nur@sttkd.ac.id

Received 30 October 2023, Available Online 30 December 2023

including lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, lack of preparation and fear of failing the class. Furthermore, they also revealed the strategies to manage it include peer seeking, relaxation, preparation and positive thinking.

The results and findings of the previous studies show that there has no one discussing about the speaking anxiety of flight attendant students. English subjects in STTKD Yogyakarta (College of Aerospace Technology of Yogyakarta) are considered as ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in which students have to learn in every semester. Considering the importance of English in aviation field/industry, especially speaking skill, this study attempts to discover the specific causes of the students' English speaking anxiety during the learning process in the classroom and ways or strategies to overcome it.

Research Method

This study employed classroom research as the research design. The researcher believes that it is the most appropriate to examine her classroom phenomenon without having to provide any treatment (Hopkins, 2008; McDonagh, Roche, Sullivan, & Glenn, 2019). In this study, the researcher only attempted to do an investigation on the phenomenon of students' English speaking anxiety and particularly about the causes of the speaking anxiety as well as their strategies to overcome it.

Data Collection and Research Instruments

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to get deeper information about the students' thoughts and feelings on the topic. According to Patton (1990) in Apsari and Satriani (2016), semi structured interview is intended to collect in-depth responses from the participants and also to set clear limits of questions to avoid wider responses from them. The interview was in the form of a focus group interview accomplished with a group of four students. It was chosen in order to generate a relaxed atmosphere for the participants to prevent them getting anxious. The process was audiotaped and the results then were changed into written form for analysis purpose.

Research Participants

The participants included the students of flight attendants study program of STTKD Yogyakarta (College of Aerospace Technology of Yogyakarta) who joined English for Aviation class, in which the class required them to speak English in front of their classmates. The total number of students in the class was 42, however, only four students who met the criteria were chosen as participants. For all the participants, English is their additional language and most of them experienced speaking anxiety. Therefore, four students who felt anxiety were selected in order to discover the causes of the anxiety and how they overcome it.

Data Analysis Technique

The data that were collected then was analyzed using thematic analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This technique is a flexible approach for identifying and also analyzing qualitative data that will generates codes and themes related to the data. The steps of thematic analysis includes (1) familiarizing with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing them, (5) defining and naming them, and the last one is (6) producing the report.

Results and Discussion

As the first research question is to discover the learning activities that cause English speaking anxiety of the students and the second one is to explore the strategies to overcome it, the researcher formulated some themes as this study employed thematic analysis. The themes are listed as follows.

Table 1. Causes of English Speaking Anxiety and Ways/Strategies to Overcome it

Causes of English Speaking Anxiety	Ways/strategies of Overcoming the Anxiety
Fear of making grammar mistakes and limited vocabulary	Learn and read a lot to improve grammar and vocabulary mastery
Lacking in comprehension skill	Listen and communicate in English more
Lacking in preparation	Have more preparation
Fear of negative responses from the audience	Focus on the performance and think positively

Causes of English Speaking Anxiety

There are several causes of the English speaking anxiety of flight attendant study program students in STTKD. Some students expressed that their feeling of anxiety went higher when they were asked to speak and perform in front of their classmates. They assumed it was because they were afraid of making grammar mistakes. They hesitated a lot because they thought too much in order to perform perfect grammar when speaking. Moreover, they also lack in vocabulary mastery which made them unable to express their thoughts freely.

Table 2. Vignette #1: Fear of making grammar mistakes and limited vocabulary

Researcher	<i>Apa yang membuat Anda merasa gugup ketika berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris?</i> “What makes you feel anxious in speaking English?”
Informant A	<i>Saya gugup pas berbicara takut kalo ngomong ternyata grammarnya salah. Kalo misal miss atau teman-teman bisik-bisik bahwa grammarnya salah, saya langsung makin grogi hehe. Selain itu, saya kadang tidak tahu bahasa inggrisnya kata-kata tertentu.</i> “I felt anxious when speaking because I’m afraid of making grammar mistakes. When the lecturer or classmates were correcting me about my grammatical mistakes, I became even more nervous. Besides, I often failed to find the translation of some words in Bahasa Indonesia.”

The students expressed that when their classmates or lecturers corrected their grammar mistakes, they became even more anxious and hesitant when speaking. This is in line with the results of the study conducted by Mak (2011) stating that students got anxiety when their mistakes being corrected by classmates and/or teachers during their oral performance in the classroom. Also, Fitriah and Muna (2019) supported with the results of their study showing that there were several elements contributing towards students’ nervousness including lack of vocabulary and grammar mastery.

The lack of vocabulary mastery can cause anxiety as it is an important skill for students to master in order to be able to speak fluently, and if they do not master it well, they will find difficulties in

expressing their ideas. When they were unable to convey their meaning through smooth oral communication, their anxiety tended to increase.

Table 3. Vignette #2: Lacking in comprehension skill

Researcher	<i>Apa yang membuat Anda merasa gugup ketika berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris?</i> “What makes you feel anxious in speaking English?”
Informant B	<i>Misal dosen sedang melakukan tanya jawab, saya sering kurang memahami pertanyaan/perkataan beliau, sehingga saya jadi nervous karena tidak tahu harus menjawab apa.</i> “During the question and answer session with the lecturer, I often did not understand/comprehend the questions. That caused anxiety because I did not know how to answer the questions.”

Lecturers usually employed a question and answer activity during the teaching and learning process. Unfortunately, some students thought that this activity caused anxiety as they were sometimes did not get the point of what the lecturers were asking or saying. In other words, they lacked in comprehension skill and therefore they found difficulties in answering the questions. Andriani and Abdullah (2017) postulated that students could get anxious when they had inadequate comprehension skill for communicating in English. Those who could easily comprehend the questions would be able to answer the questions correctly, but those who were anxious would remain silent and lost the chance to get the exposure of speaking.

Table 4. Vignette #3: Lacking in preparation

Researcher	<i>Apa yang membuat Anda merasa gugup ketika berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris?</i> “What makes you feel anxious in speaking English?”
Informant C	<i>Kadang saya bingung harus ngomong apa kalau diminta bercerita atau dimintai pendapat hehe</i> “Sometimes it’s hard for me to speak if I was asked to tell a story or to give my opinion hehe”
Researcher	<i>Itu kira-kira apa penyebabnya ya?</i> “Why is it like that?”

Informant C	<p><i>Soalnya seringnya saya tidak baca-baca dulu materi yang akan diajarkan, jadinya kurang persiapan</i></p> <p>“Oftentimes, I did not read the materials that will be discussed, therefore I lacked in preparation.”</p>
-------------	---

The fact that many students oftentimes did not prepare themselves before the class became another cause of speaking anxiety. This is in line with the result of the study conducted by Aydin (2008) stating that lack of preparation for a learning process in class is one of the reasons that lead to speaking anxiety. When they did not read the materials beforehand, they will have limited background knowledge of the topic discussed during the class. When they have limited knowledge of the topic, they will tend to have limited ideas when speaking and that can eventually cause anxiety.

Table 5. Vignette #4: Fear of negative responses from the audience

Researcher	<p><i>Apa yang membuat Anda merasa gugup ketika berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris?</i></p> <p>“What makes you feel anxious in speaking English?”</p>
Informant D	<p><i>Kalau speaking di depan teman-teman, saya malu miss. Malu kalau ditertawakan oleh teman-teman jika membuat kesalahan.</i></p> <p>“When speaking in front of my classmates, I’m embarrassed, Miss. I’m scared that they will laugh at me when I make mistakes.”</p>

From the interview, it can be seen that some students were fearful of the negative evaluation or responses from the teacher and classmates. Beside afraid of making mistakes, they were also afraid of being laughed by their classmates. This is supported by the result of a study conducted by Jannah et. al (2022) stating that students who felt anxious when speaking English can be due to lack of confidence and the embarrassment from being laughed by their classmates.

Ways/Strategies of Overcoming the Anxiety

Anxiety problems were disadvantageous for students as they led to poor oral performances. Therefore, students need to overcome the problems. Strategies shared by the students are presented as follows.

Table 6. Vignette #5: Learn and read a lot to improve grammar and vocabulary mastery

Researcher	<p><i>Bagaimana cara anda menghadapi ketakutan anda agar anda bisa mengikuti pembelajaran berbicara bahasa inggris dengan baik?</i></p> <p>“How do you overcome your anxiety in order to be able to speak English smoothly?”</p>
------------	--

Informant A	<p><i>Belajar lebih lagi terkait grammar dan juga banyak baca miss supaya kosakatanya nambah, jadinya gak bingung pas harus speaking.</i></p> <p>“I study more about grammar and I also read more to increase my vocabulary mastery so that I don’t feel confused when speaking English.”</p>
-------------	---

The students who realized that they had the English speaking anxiety and tried to find ways to overcome it can actually influence others who had the same problem to get better. Some of them did not give up and tried their best to improve their speaking skill and removing the anxiety. Some stated that they learned and read a lot to improve their grammatical and vocabulary mastery so that they can reduce the mistakes they usually made when speaking English. This is supported by the results of a study conducted by Fitriah and Muna (2019) postulating that students need to improve their speaking ability and try their best to think of ways to overcome the speaking anxiety.

Table 7. Vignette #6: Listen and communicate in English more

Researcher	<p><i>Bagaimana cara anda menghadapi ketakutan anda agar anda bisa mengikuti pembelajaran berbicara bahasa inggris dengan baik?</i></p> <p>“How do you overcome your anxiety in order to be able to speak English smoothly?”</p>
Informant B	<p><i>Saya berusaha untuk memperbanyak menggunakan bahasa Inggris, Miss. Sehingga saya jadi belajar mendengarkan juga memahami maksud dari perkataan orang lain.</i></p> <p>“I tried to use English more to communicate. By doing so, I am able to get the opportunities to listen and understand what other people say.”</p>

Using English as much as possible can be a way to overcome this problem as when students get sufficient exposure and get used to speaking English for communication, they will eventually forget their anxiety. By gaining experiences, students will eventually gain comprehension skill too.

Table 8. Vignette #7: Have more preparation

Researcher	<p><i>Bagaimana cara anda menghadapi ketakutan anda agar anda bisa mengikuti pembelajaran berbicara bahasa inggris dengan baik?</i></p> <p>“How do you overcome your anxiety in order to be able to speak English smoothly?”</p>
Informant C	<p><i>Kalau saya kurang persiapan kan saya jadi tidak bisa berbicara banyak ketika ditanya atau diminta diskusi di kelas, jadi saya</i></p>

berusaha untuk lebih mempersiapkan diri saya dengan membaca materi yang akan diajarkan di kelas.

“When I lack preparation, I will not be able to speak much when asked questions or during discussion. Therefore I tried hard to prepare myself for the learning process by reading the materials beforehand.”

Students conveyed that they were less anxious when they prepared themselves for the learning process. They read the materials that would be taught beforehand. That way, they would be able to understand the context and have better background knowledge of the topic. This is supported by the study of Aydin (2008) mentioning that the basic strategy one must do before presenting is preparation.

Table 9. Vignette #8: Focus on the performance and think positive

Researcher	<p><i>Bagaimana cara anda menghadapi ketakutan anda agar anda bisa mengikuti pembelajaran berbicara bahasa inggris dengan baik?</i></p> <p>“How do you overcome your anxiety in order to be able to speak English smoothly?”</p>
Informant D	<p><i>Saya mencoba untuk fokus kepada apa yang akan saya sampaikan dan mencoba berpikir positif bahwa saya akan mendapat respon yang baik dari audiens.</i></p> <p>“I tried to focus on what I’m going to say and think positively about the responses from the audience.”</p>

Positive thinking is another way that helped students cope with their anxiety. They expressed that when they did not think too much about what kind of responses they would receive, they were able to control their anxiety. This is in line with the results of the study from Fitriah & Muna (2019) highlighting that students believing they have poor skills do not have a positive self-image and that may lead to a language pressure.

Conclusion

Based on the research problem on the specific causes of the English speaking anxiety of flight attendant study program students, this study outlines several causes mentioned by the students. They include fear of making grammar mistakes and has limited vocabulary, lacking in comprehension skill, lacking in preparation and fear of negative responses from the audience. Meanwhile, to answer the second research question, this study highlights the strategies to overcome the speaking anxiety including learning and reading a lot to improve grammar and vocabulary mastery, listening and communicating in English more, having more preparation and focusing on the performance and thinking positively of the responses that the audience will give. However, pedagogically, it is also important to create a less anxious atmosphere during the English speaking learning process to enable them acquire the skill targeted.

Although this study offers valuable insights about how to overcome speaking anxiety, it is limited by several factors. They include the absence of classroom observation to collect more data due to time constraints and the absence of investigation related to teacher's techniques in teaching that may affect the students' speaking anxiety as it only focuses partially on the students. Due to those limitations, future researchers are suggested to fill the gaps as their future investigative attempts.

References

- Al-Roud, A. (2016). Problems of English Speaking Skill that University Students Encounter from Their Perspectives. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 18(3), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.9734/bjesbs/2017/28404>
- Apsari, Y., & Satriani, I. (2016). Students' Perception toward the Implementation of Digital Storytelling in Teaching Writing. *P2M STKIP Siliwangi*, 3(2), 97-102.
- Aydin, S. (2008). An investigation on the language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation among Turkish EFL learners. *Asian EFL Journal*, 31(1), 421-444.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Fitriah & Muna, H. (2019). Foreign language speaking anxiety: a case study at English department students of IAIN Lhokseumawe and Al Muslim University. *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, 53(9), 1689-1699.
- He, D. (2017). How to Cope with Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Effectively? The Case of University Students in China. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 14(2).
- Hopkins, D. (2008). *A teacher's guide to classroom research*. New York City: McGrawHill.
- Jannah, N., Noni, N., & Talib, A. (2022). Students' Speaking Anxiety in EFL Classroom of Senior High School. 1 (3).
- Mak, B. (2011). An exploration of speaking-in-class anxiety with Chinese ESL learners. *System*, 39 (2), 202-214.
- Marwan, A. (2016). Investigating students' foreign language anxiety. *Malaysian Journal of ELT research*, 3(1), 19.
- McDonagh, C., Roche, M., Sullivan, B., & Glenn, M. (2019). *Enhancing practice through classroom research: A teacher's guide to professional development*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.