

## **Unlocking the Key Factors behind Speaking Anxiety in English for Foreign Language Students at University**

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### **Abstract**

Speaking is a skill that can help the students to communicate and express their feelings and ideas in a direct way. However, it is difficult for students to master it because of many problems. One of those problems is speaking anxiety. Speaking anxiety is a problem that occurs in the learning process and causes shyness and nervousness. This research is intended to find out the contributing factors of speaking anxiety of English Language Education Study Program students batch 2019 in Basic Speaking at Lambung Mangkurat University. This research used qualitative method. The subjects of this research were the Basic Speaking students batch 2019. The data was gained by observation, interview and documentation. In analyzing the data, the researcher used descriptive explanation. The result showed that there were several factors of speaking anxiety in Basic Speaking. In conclusion, the contributing factors of speaking anxiety of English Language Education Study Program students batch 2019 in Basic Speaking at Lambung Mangkurat University were speaking activities in front of the class, being nervous, being shy, having negative thoughts of lecturer's correction of their performance, having trouble with grammar skill, having trouble with vocabulary skill, not having a good fluency in speaking English, afraid of making mistakes, and lack of preparation about the material. For the students, they need to respect each other and be more aware that speaking anxiety only limits their speaking English abilities. For other researchers, the researcher expected that the findings of this research would be used as the references for the part that have not been contrived.

**Keywords:** Speaking Anxiety, Contributing Factors, Basic Speaking

## **INTRODUCTION**

Studying English as a foreign language needs to be concerned on its skills as well as its purpose. In English, there are roles that are played by four necessary skills in a language. Those four skills will take you to a better level and they are different but bound to each other (Sadiku, 2015). They are listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Speaking skill is a different form from writing where attention is to the grammatical and lexical in writing skills. Speaking is a complex skill because it is concerned about pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency (Binus, 2018). In learning English as a foreign language, speaking is harder than the other skills. Speaking happens direct time. The words have to be processed into its meaning and speakers have to understand them directly in front of somebody. A lot of phenomena about how people react in speaking in a foreign language lead to anxiety. Especially, in the teaching and learning process. The researcher also has found many phenomena that caused by anxiety. In campus, so many juniors and even seniors who almost graduate said to the researcher that somehow they still feel anxious to speak in English. That is such a disadvantage to their performance for performing in such a thesis seminar for graduation requirement and for the junior who said it, that absolutely influences their performances in the classroom. The stage of anxiety has been found related to the nature of students' foreign language abilities.

The factor of the learners' speaking anxiety is when learners cannot make progress in their performance and bad language abilities make learners become anxious (Balemir, 2009). Anxiousness is a feeling of worrying, nervousness, overwhelmed tension. Anxiety is a complex emotion that is often caused by fearing moment (Clark, 2012). It also affects the behavior of learners into passive. In addition, learners also will feel difficult to learn the language. Anxiety also affects learners' academic

performance. If learners have anxiety in the class, they might not feel comfortable being in a group to complete a group task and have the unwillingness to ask help to other people.

The researcher already asked some of her friends on the fifth semester batch 2017 who already took the basic speaking course in the second semester about speaking anxiety in the classroom at that moment. Their answers were the same. In the basic level of speaking was more frightening because that was their first time learning speaking more intensively than ever. They said they felt nervous, afraid of being called by the lecturer to speak in front of the class, and afraid of being limelight to their classmates. Researcher also asked the lecturer at the English Language Education Study Program of ULM, the lecturer also said that average students were feeling so. He continued that they tend to feel nervous and lack of words because the basic speaking level was their first time learning speaking English more intensively.

Based on the fact, the researcher has seen those phenomena and the researcher is interested to conduct research in the Basic Speaking course of ULM batch 2019 which investigates the contributing factors of the speaking anxiety of English Language Education Study Program students in the Basic Speaking course. The researcher hopes that this research can help other lecturers and learners to evaluate and more aware of speaking anxiety especially for the English Language Education Study Program of ULM in the Basic Speaking course.

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Definition of Speaking***

Speaking is a necessary thing to communicate to others. It is used to get information and to ask anything to somebody (Susilowati, 2017). According to Harmer in Wahyuni (2016) stated that speaking is the ability to speak fluently not only for the language features but also can understand the meaning of words directly.

### ***Features of Speaking***

There are a few components in speaking skills. According to Underwood in Susilowati (2017), they are sound, stress, intonation, systematic speech, vocabulary, pauses and fillers, formal and informal language. The first is sound. Sound is what the listeners hear of words. Whether it is a vowel or consonant sound. The second is Stress is designed to highlight words that bring information the speakers want to understand. Changing the stress can actually change the meaning of the words itself. The next is intonation. Intonation is more like the tune of the words. The word's stress can be the clue to know the intonation of the words. The fourth is systematic speech. Systematic Speech means that a way that is created by speakers and depends on their creativity. The fifth is vocabulary. Vocabulary is a word that the speakers use for communicating. It is less specific because it can be understood just relating to what they use to reach the meaning of a word. The sixth is pauses and fillers. Pauses are aimed to give listeners time to think about what has just been spoken. The length is various. It depends on the speaker's speaking habits and the speaker's behavior. Meanwhile Fillers, it means that the sound the speakers commonly use in a conversation for example, hmm, ahh. Those sounds are used for avoiding long silence between speakers and listeners. The last is formal and informal language. Formal and informal language is usually used according to social setting or situation, the ages between speakers and listeners, and also the topic of whether it is used formal or informal language on it.

### ***Level of Speaking***

Speaking skill is not just a level by speaking itself. It also has some levels in it to measure learners' abilities. There are some levels of speaking skills. According to Ohio (2010), speaking has six levels of proficiency. They are pre-functional, basic, intermediate, advanced, superior, and distinguished. The first is pre-functional. Speakers at this level may understand some high-frequency daily vocabulary, single commands, and questions. They are also into gestures and facial expressions to understand spoken language. The second is basic. The basic level is where speakers can communicate short information and daily life conversation. In this level, commonly speakers use rare

or isolated words that are difficult to understand, especially for non-native speakers. The third is intermediate. Intermediate-level is where speakers are great to create language, especially when they talk about daily or common topics. The speakers can arrange or combine the language material which is used to reach their personal meaning. In this level, speakers also can understand the meaning of words that non-native speakers say. The next is advanced. In this level, speakers can clearly speak and communicate advanced topics such as national issues, or international stuff. They are able to handle the meaning of narrative and descriptive even in the past. The speakers at this level can also control and know the right vocabulary that is suitable for the topics. The fifth is superior. The superior level is where speakers are able to communicate and give information accurately. They also can present their opinions about politic issues, international interest. They are able to develop ideas with no errors. The last is distinguished. Speakers at this level are capable to speak language properly, successfully, and also skillfully. They can speak on a large range of global issues with no structure errors. Speakers at distinguished levels are often able to produce any kinds of sophisticated topics. Still, in this level a non-native accent may still produce.

### ***Basic Speaking***

Basic speaking is a level where learners can communicate or produce short messages, which is creating a sentence by learned vocabularies. There are some levels of basic speaking. According to Ohio (2010), there are three levels of basic speaking. The first is basic low. Basic low is where learners can only possibly speak with the very limited words. They are not able to do functional ability. Their pronunciation also is not very helpful in speaking. The topics are just the basic ones. Those topics can absolutely be found in the daily life such as family, greeting, self-identity, and favorite food. The second is basic mid. In basic mid, the learners' conversations are very limited by using personal stuff such as favorite food, and family. They also tend to find difficulties react to direct information. The learners respond to direct questions only with two or three words or acting with particular answers. The learners at this level are also going to have trouble or difficulties in connecting ideas and using appropriate language. The basic mid learners also delay often when they speak because they look for effortless vocabularies. The last is basic high. In this level, the learners are able to deal with easy tasks, but not able to carry a performance. They are able to handle effortless communicating tasks in social conditions. Their conversations are also limited by particular vocabularies such as a daily object, personal stuff, and a few activities. They are able to express individual meaning by words that they have learned before. Basic learners commonly use a short and sketchy sentence which are not reliable. Their pronunciation is also influenced by the main language that they use frequently.

### ***Definition of Anxiety***

Anxiety is one of the most well-known psychological phenomena. According to Scovel in Mostaham and Farnia (2017), Anxiety is an emotion that is classified as an uncomfortable emotional feeling, a feeling of worry, tension, nervous thoughts, lack of words and physical changes like overwhelmed sweating and blood pressure. Anxiety is often caused by a particular moment that is threatening. It also makes physical reactions such as sweating, foot tapping. According to Halgin and Whitbourne (2007), Fear tends to be considered as a normal response to a certain situation, especially panic moments. For example, you look down below from height that causes you to shake and afraid to fall down.

### ***Types of Anxiety***

The the most well -known types of anixety are trait and state anxiety. According to Speilberger (1983:4), Trait anxiety refers to an individual's tendency of becoming anxious in many situations even in non-threatening. Meanwhile state anxiety refers to the uneasiness that is found in a particular moment that is threatening. People with trait anxiety tend to feel worried more than most people do. It means that they often feel anxious and threatened even when they are not in an awful situation.

### ***Speaking Anxiety***

Speaking anxiety is related to students' language competence. Most students have anxiety when they have to talk in front of somebody. Based on another theory of speaking language anxiety Toth (2010) has declared that anxiety can restrain foreign language production. The development of this theoretical, Toth stated the parallels between foreign language related to anxiety and the performances of learners. The first parallel is communication apprehension. Communication apprehension is a kind of fear of communicating with people. It tends to refer to foreign language students as the target especially speaking it in public. The second parallel is the fear of negative evaluation. Fear of negative evaluation is the tendency of being afraid of other people's bad judgment. In a language classroom, it refers to the condition when learners make an error and people around them are judging or laughing at them. It may become a source of students' foreign language anxiety.

### ***The Contributing Factors of Students' Speaking Anxiety***

Speaking anxiety can increase because of several factors. Those factors can be there in the learning activities. When lecturers give clues of the lesson such as lecturers wants one of the students to speak up in front of the class. It can be one of the most affecting factors of speaking anxiety. According to Von Worde (2003) there are shortness of preparation and speaking activities. In shortness of preparation, Students often felt anxious in the speaking English class when they did not prepare enough for the exam or speaking section. They often worried about whether the lesson is about vocabulary or about anything related to speaking. Joining the class with less preparation often leads to anxiety. For the speaking activities, Most of the learners admitted that they were very worried if they were told to speak English in front of the class by the lecturer. They often started to feel anxious and sweating when it happened. Also, many of them said that they got nervous when the lecturer suddenly asked the questions or being called one after another in the seating order. There is also another theory that stated about the factors of speaking anxiety as well. The theory was stated by Deyuan (2018). According to Deyuan (2018) the contributing factors of speaking anxiety are nervousness, shyness, and being worried of making mistakes. For nervousness, Nervousness often leads the students to speaking anxiety when studying English in the classroom. They tend to feel insecure about their competence. Students got nervous in situations such as speaking English in front of the class, being pressured by their friends, and not being confidence when performing in the classroom. For shyness, Students admitted that they started being shy when they study English in the classroom. Shyness also destroyed their speaking English abilities in the classroom. They admitted that they often looked down to the ground when they spoke up in front of the class. The last is for being worried of making mistakes, Students revealed that they felt worried about their competence in performing English in the classroom. They stated that afraid of making any mistakes in the learning process often caused them for taking too much of the negative feelings inside their heads about their speaking English abilities.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The approach of this research was a qualitative approach. According to Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2010:8), qualitative research is an approach to describe a phenomenon or people's experiences in the time of the study by using an appropriate method such as interviews, observation and biographies. Qualitative researchers study people in the natural or actual setting to analyze their behavior that is formed by such as social environment, and lifestyle. The researcher used qualitative approach because it helped to explain and analyze more about the students' behaviors in the classroom descriptively based on the fact from observation, interview and documantation to find out the contributing factors of speaking anxiety of English Language Education Study Program Students batch 2019 in Basic Speaking at Lambung Mangkurat University.

### **Subject of the Research**

In this research, the subject were seven selected students of the English Language Education Study Program of Lambung Mangkurat University who were taking take Basic Speaking course in A1 and A5.

### **Instrument**

#### ***Observation***

In this study, the researcher's role was as the participant. To avoid unnatural behaviors involved in the research, the researcher entered the class as a senior who wanted to study as usual. The researcher was the observer of the basic speaking students, mainly for the participants that were selected to be interviewed.

#### ***Interview***

In order to get more fulfilled data, this research used an interview as an uplifting instrument. Asking some specific questions to respondents those were related to contributing factors of speaking anxiety in basic speaking. The interview was conducted from Basic Speaking students who were detected having the characteristics of anxiety by the observation that the researcher did. During the interview, the researcher translated the questions to students into Bahasa to make the students more relieve to express the answers and without limiting them, which affected the final result of the research. The researcher recorded the data from the interview by the researcher's phone and exported it into audio files. Every interview lasted for ten minutes and was recorded with participants' permit.

#### ***Documantation***

In this research, the researcher used documentation to complete the data from observation and interview. The researcher took some photos and videos from the observation and recorded audio from the interview, then made it into video transcript and interview transcripts.

### **Data Collection**

The findings of this study involved an explanation and description of the data from observation and interview. The researcher first gained the data by observation to identify the anxious students. Then the second step is did an interview by asking few questions related to speaking anxiety. The last is making documentation which were video transcript and interview transcript.

### **Data Analysis**

For the analysis of the observation, the researcher gained the observation data from students of Basic Speaking A1 and A5. It was described qualitatively in interpreting the data of students about their behaviors in Basic Speaking class that was detected as the contributing factors of speaking anxiety. The result of the interview was gained from seven selected students who were detected having speaking anxiety in the classroom. The interview data was conducted to gain more data of the students to express better of their feelings about speaking anxiety in the classroom through talking by phone. It was also analyzed in the transcript form. For the documentation, the researcher gained the completeness of the data by taking some photos and videos from observation and then by recording the audio from the interview. The photos from observation were also analyzed qualitatively. For the video documentation was explained in the transcript form of Basic Speaking classes of A1 and A5 speaking English learning process.

### **FINDINGS**

The findings revealed several factors that possibly contributed to students' speaking anxiety in English class. Based on the experts' theories, the researcher classified the findings of the contributing factors of students' speaking anxiety.

According to Von Worde (2003) the contributing factors of speaking anxiety were speaking activities, and shortness of preparation.

#### **A. Shortness of Preparation**

##### **a. Having Trouble with Grammar Skill**

This factor frequently experienced by the students in the Basic Speaking class. Based on the data, they tend to be afraid to speak up because they were having problems with their grammar skill. They

revealed that even though it was okay to speak without worrying about grammar, they were still afraid to do it.

The fourth interviewed student said in the interviewed section that “Daripada nanti salah grammar atau urutan katanya salah kaya gitu” “Maunya sih lancar kak makanya itu takut salah grammar”

The sixth interviewed student answered that “Takut salah apalagi tentang grammar. Takut dipikir dosen tidak bisa masalah grammar padahal dosen tidak apa-apa yang penting maju begitu tapi ya saya ingin grammar saya sempurna tetapi masih belum mampu”.

#### b. Having Trouble with Vocabulary Skill

Not having a good vocabulary skill was also one of the contributing factors of students’ speaking anxiety. The students revealed that their vocabulary skill was still less. Because of not having a good vocabulary skill, they tend to be more clueless about what the lecturer said.

It came out from the fifth interviewed student said that “Perasaan saya biasa aja ya cuman kadang kurang mengerti aja gitu kak, bukan karena penjelasan dosennya kak, tapi karena kemampuan kosa kata saya yang kurang banyak”.

#### c. Not Having a Good Fluency

This factor was also found in students’ speaking anxiety at the Basic Speaking class. The students tend to choose the safest way which avoiding to speak up because they did not have good fluency in English.

It came from the fifth interviewed student said that “Karena speaking classkan harus ngomong ya jadi karena kurang fluent kurang lancar gituna”

#### d. Lack of Preparation

This factor was found in students’ speaking anxiety. It happened because they did not have good preparation to face the next material that would be discussed in the classroom. In fact, they were just being blank and not having the greatest performance in the classroom.

It came out from the answer from the seventh interviewed student who said “Karena kurang persiapan sebelumnya kak habis itu pas kalo masih duduk dan masih memikirkan apa yang mau disampaikan itu masih bias, tetapi kalo pas maju kedepan itu blank kak”.

Similar to Von Worde (2013) noted that this fact happens because they do not know what the material is therefore they also do not how to discuss the material properly.

### B. Speaking Activities

#### a. Speaking in Front of the Class

Based on the factual data, speaking in front of the class was the biggest factor that caused students’ speaking anxiety in English class. During the observation, it also found that the students’ voice was so low type when they performed. And also they kept looking down to the ground and avoiding eye contact with everyone in the classroom. They also frequently answered that the first factor was speaking activities in front of the lecturer and the classmates in the interview.

It came from the first interviewed student said that “Paling ada perasaan gugup aja kak. Kaya misalnya maju kedepan” “Karena di Basic Speaking ini maju kedepan”

The second interviewed student also said that “soalnya karena saya orang nya termasuk kurang bisa untuk bersosialisasi gitu kak kurang”

The third interviewed student also said that “kalo kelas speaking berlangsung jadi belibet ngomong nya jadi blank gitu”

The fourth interviewed student said that “Basic Speaking ini malu yang pasti kak, apalagi saya ini kaya pendiam gitu kak orangnya jadi kalau maju itu kurang aktif” “Soalnya kak kadang saya itu mendapatkan ide sebelum maju itu, namun pas dipanggil maju saya pun blank”

The fifth interviewed student said that "saya suka Bahasa Inggris, cuman ya karena saya itu kurang suka gitu tampil didepan banyak orang"

The sixth interviewed student said that "di Basic Speaking ini kan ada sesi berbicaranya kak, sesi Tanya jawab, ada sesi menjelaskan di depan kelas, dan sesi berbicara Bahasa Inggris nah karena saya orang nya introvert jadi saya tidak banyak bicara dan saya mengalami sedikit kesulitan dalam berbicara Bahasa Inggris di depan kelas" "yang paling menyulitkan saya itu pas sesi disuruh maju ke depan kak, disuruh menjelaskan dan berbicara dihadapan orang banyak dan di depan kelas"

And the seventh interviewed student also said that "Paling takut salah di depan banyak orang kak dan bisa gugup begitu" "pas kalo masih

duduk dan masih memikirkan apa yang mau disampaikan itu masih bisa, tetapi kalo pas maju kedepan itu blank kak"

According to Deyuan (2018) the contributing factors of speaking anxiety were nervousness, shyness, and being worried of making mistakes.

#### C. Nervousness

##### a. Being Nervous

The other major factor that caused students' speaking anxiety was being nervous. It came from many students answered in the interview section that they were nervous in the classroom.

"Paling ada perasaan gugup aja kak" said by the first interviewed student.

"Perasaan saya kebanyakan gugup sih kak" said by the second interviewed student.

It is similar to the theory of Deyuan (2018) stated that being nervous is one of the major factors that is contributed to speaking anxiety. Deyuan stated that being nervous limits students to speak and to have a great performance in the classroom.

#### D. Shyness

##### a. Being Shy

Another factor that the Basic Speaking students experienced was being shy. They were being shy during speaking English class. It came out from the students. During the observation, it also found that the students' voice was so low type when they performed. And also they kept looking down to the ground.

The fourth interviewed student answered that "Perasaan saya pertama kali kelas basic speaking ini malu yang pasti kak, apalagi saya ini kaya pendiam gitu kak"

Similar to the theory of Deyuan (2018) stated that being shy is one of the contributing factors of speaking anxiety. Students often experience this factor when they are about to perform their speaking ability.

#### E. Being Worried of Making Mistakes

##### a. Afraid of Making Mistakes

This factor also bothered the students in the learning process in English class. This factor limited the students to perform in front of the class. It came from several students that said about it in the interview section.

"Karena aku tau speaking aku kurang lancar begitu maunya sih lancar kak makanya itu takut salah grammar" said by the third interviewed student.

"Takut salah apalagi tentang grammar. Takut dipikir dosen tidak bisa masalah grammar padahal dosen tidak apa-apa yang penting maju begitu tapi ya saya ingin grammar saya sempurna tetapi masih belum mampu jadi itu yang membuat saya gugup" said by the sixth interviewed student.

"Paling takut salah didepan banyak orang kak" said by the seventh interviewed student.

##### b. Having Negative Thoughts about Lecturer's Correction

This factor also caused students' speaking anxiety in the Basic Speaking class. They revealed that having a negative thought about the lecturer's correction means that the students have their own mindset that when they perform or speak up, the lecturer is going to criticize their speaking abilities. In fact, it was not true. It was just inside of their heads.

“Maunya sih lancar kak makanya itu takut salah grammar, nanti kalo disuruh dosen berbicara kan ketahuan tuh grammar nya kurang bagus jadi takut kak” said by the fourth interviewed student.

“Takut dipikir dosen tidak bisa masalah grammar padahal dosen tidak apa-apa yang penting maju begitu tapi ya saya ingin grammar saya sempurna tetapi masih belum mampu” said by the sixth interviewed student.

Based on the data, there were several contributing factors to students’ speaking anxiety in Basic Speaking batch 2019. They are speaking activities in front of the class, being nervous, being shy, having negative thoughts of lecturer’s correction of their performance, having trouble with grammar skill, having trouble with vocabulary skill, not having a good fluency in speaking English, afraid of making errors, and lack of preparation about the material.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It can be concluded from the result of data analysis about the contributing factors of speaking anxiety of batch 2019 students in Basic Speaking were speaking activities in front of the class, being nervous, being shy, having negative thoughts of lecturer’s correction of their performance, having trouble with grammar skill, having trouble with vocabulary skill, not having a good fluency in speaking English, afraid of making mistakes, and lack of preparation about the material.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

### **For the students**

For the students, Some students need to respect each other and need to be more aware that speaking anxiety only limits their speaking English abilities. They also need to realize that having negative thoughts about lecturers’ bad correction only makes their speaking abilities do not evolve. It is because those thoughts are not real. They need to know that making mistakes while learning is fine.

### **For future researchers**

The researcher expected the findings of this research could be used as the references to guide the other researchers to conduct a similar research. The other researchers can also evolve and search for topics and studies related to the contributing factors of speaking anxiety from the parts that have not been contrived and become a brand new finding that can be functional for the students.



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