Students' Speaking Anxiety on their Speaking Performance: A Study of EFL Learners

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Abstract—In the new era of industrial revolution 4.0, it demands that people should enhance their communication competence to interact globally. The ability to speak a foreign language is prominently influenced by one of the problems, namely speaking anxiety. This language production barrier affects various aspects of oral communication. This study aimed at finding out the impact of speaking anxiety on freshmen's speaking performance. There were seventy eight freshmen of the 2018/2019 batch involved as the participants of this study. The data were collected by using a Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) questionnaire as well as students' speaking performance, which was evaluated by using a speaking rubric. Pearson Product Moment formula was used to analyze the correlation between the two variables. It was found out that speaking anxiety was correlated to the speaking performance. Fear and nervousness produced by speaking anxiety would affect oral language performance.

Keywords—*freshmen; speaking anxiety; speaking performance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Technology advancement causes such a demand for people around the world to adapt to the changes in their life, study, and professional work. This growth can be seen from the increased use of digital technologies and the increased boundary of the real and virtual world through certain created programs. The industrial revolution 4.0 is also characterized by possible collaboration between machines and people. Thus, every country is expected to encounter a number of challenges related to the skill level of the workforce. In other words, people should be able to meet this demand by enhancing personal competence in many aspects.

This industrial era requires people to have creative insight, collaborative teamwork, and adaptation toward cultural differences, including intercultural and interpersonal skills [1]. These great impacts of technology advancement also impress the education field, which is called as Education 4.0. Education 4.0 is an education which responds to the needs on Industry 4.0 where smart machines work alongside with human-professionals, utilizes the potentials of digital technologies, personalized data, open-sourced contents, and

the globally-connected, technology-fuelled world of humanity, and establishes lifelong learning to grow and survive even to play a better role in the society [2]. Thus, students are expected to enhance their digital literacy skills to adapt to this new technology utilization.

English competence is also considered as one of the important elements in adapting to this advancement. As a means of communication, English relates people among nations and it covers many sectors including business, education, engineering, technology, banking, tourism, etc. Moreover, the communication tools which are available around us are supported by the use of this language. In 2018, the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) reported that Indonesia placed the 51st position among 88 surveyed countries with an average point of 51.58 [3]. Comparing to the previous report by EF EPI (2015), Indonesian English achievement run into digression as categorized in low proficiency [4]. At this proficiency band, several examples of tasks that an individual could accomplish are navigated an English-speaking country as a tourist, engaged in small talk with colleagues and understand simple emails from colleagues. In other words, this low proficiency band corresponds to level B1 according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) standard. It illustrates individuals as independent users who can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly (encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.), deal with most situations likely to arise while traveling in an area where the language is spoken, produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest, describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Four basic skills of English, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, contribute toward students' improvement in the language use itself. Therefore, it is very necessary to discover the barriers to foreign language production. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) in speaking is one of the elements that both teachers and students should consider in producing the language. A study found out that there were three causes of FLA, namely fear, shyness, and discomfort [5]. Moreover, the

study also encouraged self-reflection activity as students may identify their strengths and weaknesses, conduct problem solving, and increase confidence.

Students tend to place obstacles firstly before they encourage themself to speak in front of the class and they prefer to experience the explanations given by the teachers. In other words, students are afraid to speak English. Speaking is considered as the hardest skill [6]. It is stated that anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence are affective factors that influence students' speaking performance [7]. Anxiety is a feeling in which a person feels anxious, nervous, and confused [8]. When the students are anxious, they tend to be reluctant to speak, even afraid of errors production. This condition would affect the continuity of students' speaking performance. It is also confirmed that students complain about speaking problems such as anxious, being nervous, worried about making mistakes, and feeling shy in performing English communication [9].

Learners' proficiency and performance are factors related to foreign language anxiety [10]. A high level of foreign language anxiety influences communication apprehension which makes learners unwilling to communicate. Anxiety deals with the feeling of concern and obvious in personal evidence such as secretion, speedy heartbeat, and communicating unclearly as the effect of uncertainty of the ability of speaking [11]. Anxiety is not only faced by low proficiency students but also high proficiency students. It all depends on how students use their own way to reduce speaking anxiety while speaking. Speaking anxiety may influence language learning particularly performance ability. The feeling of anxiety is found when the students have to communicate in English with a lack of opportunity to rehearse given by the teacher [8]. In the earlier studies, results showed that speaking anxiety contributed toward students' speaking performance in various types. The use of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) instrument generated a moderate negative correlation between FLCAS and second language achievement [12]. It implies that when students are getting more anxious, they tend to avoid the difficulties in learning the target language.

Considering the results of the previous study and the need for analyzing the barriers to oral language production, this study aimed at finding out the connection between speaking anxiety and speaking performance. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to give further information to the participants of this study about their speaking anxiety level. This would be helpful to determine the strategy for preparing a better speaking performance.

II. METHOD

Since this study aimed at investigating the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance, and correlational design was implemented. This design concerns with determining the relationship between two or more variables [13]. Therefore, correlation design is believed as the best research design for this study. The participants of this study were seventy-eight freshmen of the 2018/2019 batch, which were selected by using a convenience sampling method.

The speaking anxiety was identified by the adopted Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety Questionnaires [14]. This instrument consists of 34 original statements, which highlight attitude, psychology, and feeling aspects. The students were required to complete the questionnaire and the results determined their speaking anxiety level, which ranges from very low to very high. There were five speaking anxiety levels assigned in this study (very low, low, moderate, high, and very high). The following table illustrates the detail conclusion of each level.

TABLE I.   DETAIL CONCLUSION LEVEL OF ANXIETY

No	Speaking Anxiety Levels	Description
1	Very Low	Indicates very low anxiety about public speaking
2	Low	Indicates a moderately low level of anxiety about public speaking
3	Moderate	Suggests moderate anxiety in most public speaking situations but no severe that the individual cannot cope and be a successful speaker
4	High	Suggests moderately high anxiety about public speaking. People with such scores will tend to avoid public speaking
5	Very High	Indicates very high anxiety about public speaking. People with these scores will go to considerable lengths to avoid all types of public speaking situations.

Source: [15]

To obtain the data of the students' speaking achievement, a speaking test in the form of role-playing was assigned to the students. It was evaluated by using adopted speaking rubric, which focused on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency aspects [16]. The score was also categorized into five speaking levels ranges from elementary to superior levels (elementary, intermediate, high intermediate, advanced and superior).

The data were statistically analyzed by using Pearson Product Moment formula. It involved statistics to calculate the degree of the correlation between interval variations [17].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part highlights three main results of the study, namely the results of the normality test, descriptive statistics, and

Pearson Product Moment analysis. Before the obtained data were descriptively and statistically analyzed, the normality test was administered in order to find out whether or not the data were distributed normally through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. If the normality spread is p>0.05 then it is normal, whereas if p<0.05 then it is considered not normal or approximately normal [18]. The result of the normality test is shown below:

TABLE II.   SUMMARY STATISTICS OF NORMALITY TEST

Independent Variables	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Sminorv Test				
	N	*Normal Parameters*		*Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z*	*Asym. Sig (2-tailed)*
		Mean	*Std Deviation*		
Speaking Anxiety	78	2.55	1.276	1.894	0.02
Speaking Performance	78	2.60	1.220	2.238	0.000

Table II shows the Kolmogorov-Smirnov significant value on speaking anxiety and speaking performance test. The results showed respectively were 0.089 and 0.150. Therefore, it was assumed that p>0.05. It implies that the data of this study were distributed normally. Furthermore, the table below shows descriptive statistics of students' speaking anxiety level.

TABLE III.   DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY LEVEL

No.	Proficiency Level	Score Range	Total	Percentage
1	Very High	120-170	24	30.8
2	High	111-119	9	11.5
3	Moderate	93-110	30	38.5
4	Low	85-92	8	10.3
5	Very Low	38-84	7	9
Maximum Level		**5**		
Minimum Level		**1**		
Mean		**2.55**		
Standard Deviation		**1.276**		

It shows that there were 24 students (30.8%) who had very high speaking proficiency. It implies that these students might have low speaking anxiety and were able to perform well in public. Furthermore, there were 9 students (11.5%) who were at high level of speaking proficiency. It implies that these students also had good performance in speaking. However, there might be some weaknesses. Then, 30 students (38.5%) were at a moderate level of speaking anxiety. This implies that

students experienced anxiety in most public speaking situations but no severe. Then, it shows that 8 students (10.3) and 7 students (9%) had low and very low speaking proficiency respectively. It implies that these students had speaking anxiety which influenced their speaking proficiency and performance. However, students probably afforded to perform as a successful speaker. Thus, among all the participants, the different number of students with low speaking proficiency and students with high speaking proficiency was quite significant. Therefore, there is a possibility that almost all the participants have good speaking performance despite the speaking anxiety.

Besides students' speaking anxiety, the researchers also found the data of students' speaking performance. The data is statistically described in the following table:

TABLE IV.   DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDENTS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

No.	Proficiency Level	Score Range	Total	Percentage
1	Superior	96 – 100	11	14.1
2	Advanced	91 – 95	3	3.8
3	High Intermediate	81 – 90	20	25.6
4	Intermediate	66 – 80	32	41
5	Elementary	<65	12	15.4
Maximum Score		**97**		
Minimum Score		**43**		
Mean		**76**		

It can be clearly seen that 11 students (14.1%) had superior speaking performance. These students got score in between 96-100 at speaking performances. It indicates that these students had best speaking performance among other students. It might be influenced by the level of their speaking anxiety. These students might have the lowest speaking anxiety, therefore they could perform better. Then, 3 students (3.8%) had advanced speaking performance. These students got score in between 91-95 at speaking performance. It implies that these students might have low speaking anxiety. However it was still a little bit higher rather than the students who had superior speaking performance. Furthermore, there were 20 students (25.6%) who had high intermediate speaking performance. These students got score among 81-90 at speaking performance. It implies that these students have higher speaking anxiety rather than the other students who have superior and advanced speaking performance. Therefore, it influenced their speaking performance. Moreover, students with intermediate speaking performance had the biggest number which was 32 students (41%). It means that most of the students had intermediate

speaking performance. These students got score among 66-80. It also implies that these students might have higher speaking anxiety rather than the other students who had superior, advanced, and high intermediate speaking performance. Lastly, there were 12 students who had elementary speaking performance. These students got the lowest score which was below 65. It implies that these students might have highest speaking anxiety. Therefore, it influenced their speaking performance.

After getting the data about students' speaking anxiety level and speaking performance, the researchers tried to find the correlation of students' speaking anxiety level and speaking performance since the main purpose of this study was to correlate these two speaking factors. Pearson Product Moment formula was used to analyze the students' speaking anxiety level and speaking performance. The data of analysis is revealed by table 5 below. Then, the researchers tried to interpret the analysis result. If the significance level is lower than 0.05 (<0.05), it will be interpreted that there is significant correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance. If the significance is higher than 0.05 (>0.05), it will be interpreted that there is no significant correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance.

TABLE V.   THE RESULT OF CORRELATIONAL TEST

		Speaking Anxiety	Speaking Performance
Speaking Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-.358**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	78	78
Speaking Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.358**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	78	78
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Based on the data presented above, it can be seen that the significance level was lower than 0.05 (<0.05). It is interpreted that speaking anxiety and speaking performance have significant correlation. Besides describing the correlation between the two discussed variables in this study, the data analysis also showed that there was a negative correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance. It can be clearly seen from the negative coefficient value which was -0.358. It implies that the higher the degree of students' speaking anxiety level, the lower the speaking performance result. To keep the speaking performance going on and achieve the best result, students need to overcome their speaking anxiety. This

can be done by obtaining information about their speaking anxiety level prior to their speaking task.

Based on the data on table III, IV, and V about students' speaking anxiety and speaking performance then relate it to table I about conclusion for each level of anxiety, it can be seen that two discussed variables have correlation. First, there were 24 students and 9 students who have very high and high proficiency level of speaking. It means that these students have very low and low level of anxiety, which implies these students able to speak well in front of public. Then, it influenced their speaking performance. Therefore, they might have superior and advanced speaking performance. Moreover, there were 30 students who have moderate speaking proficiency level. It means these students have moderate level of anxiety. It implies these students might have anxiety about public speaking, but these students are still capable in doing public speaking. It influenced their speaking performance as well. Therefore, they might have high intermediate speaking performance. Lastly, there were 8 students and 7 students who have low and very low speaking proficiency level respectively. It means these students might have high and very high anxiety level. It implies these students will tend to avoid public speaking or will go to considerable lengths to avoid all types of public situations. This condition influenced their speaking performance. Therefore they might have intermediate or elementary level of speaking performance.

However, the result of correlation analysis between speaking anxiety and speaking performance also supports the statement that students with high performance also face anxiety. As table III and table IV show students' speaking anxiety and speaking performance, there were 24 students have very high proficiency level, however there were only 11 students and 3 students have superior and advanced speaking performance respectively. It implies that even though students have high speaking proficiency, it does not mean students might have high speaking performance. It is influenced by speaking anxiety that they face.

Moreover, it also indicates that the students should be able to handle their speaking anxiety despite having good speaking proficiency. Reference [11] mention some aspects of anxiety such as secretion, speedy heartbeat, and communicate unclearly. Even though the students have high speaking proficiency, but if they spoke unclearly because they felt unconfident with their speaking ability, it would influence their performance. It means when the students already prepare well for their speaking performance, but suddenly they speak unclearly in front of public, they do not have good speaking performance. In order to be able to perform well in public, students should be able to handle their anxiety first.

Besides, reference [9] mentions some factors that influence students' speaking problem such as anxious, being nervous, worried about making mistakes, and feeling shy performing English communication. The students also should handle these problems in order to speak well in front of public. Since these factors might influence the students to avoid any kinds of public speaking. Reference [5] states that self-reflection activity is a good activity where students can conduct problem solving, identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as increase their confidence. The students can implement this activity in order to handle their speaking anxiety. Therefore, the students with high speaking anxiety will have an opportunity to be better speakers.

Anxiety is one of a very familiar issue that affects students' speaking performance. It is recommended that knowing the level of anxiety might be useful for speakers [19]. This would provide a better opportunity to precisely identify personal strengths and weaknesses. Hence, a speaker could highlight more on it and try to figure out solutions to cope with that. It is also claimed that anxious students experience less confidence, forgetful, sweating, and heart beating that may lead the students to avoid class and delay doing homework [12]. In brief, these behaviors will affect their competence because high-anxiety students will produce and obtain lower than those who have low-anxiety in the class. Students cannot produce well-performance in the classroom if their language anxiety is getting higher. At any time, when they are in front of the class, they tend to forget what they already have in mind, and it makes their speaking performance becomes not clear. Their fear and nervousness in speaking, English test, and performing in a class show that they are already dealing with anxiety.

IV. CONCLUSION

Speaking anxiety is commonly experienced by most EFL learners, but both teachers and students are not fully aware of how to deal with this problem. The results of the data analysis clearly proved that there is a significant correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance. Besides, it is proved the statement that students with high speaking proficiency also face speaking anxiety. Therefore, students and teachers should be able to handle speaking anxiety together since speaking anxiety influences students' speaking performance. Self-reflection activity can be considered as a good activity to handle speaking anxiety. It is supported by the finding in reference [5] that self-reflection activity will help students to solve their problem, find their strengths and weaknesses, as well as build their confidence. These aspects are important for handling students' speaking anxiety.

The findings of this study contribute to the development of EFL teaching and learning. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory subject in higher education. The teaching of English is not only limited to the mastery of writing ability but also foreign language communicative competence. This study helps EFL learners to identify speaking anxiety as one of the barriers of speaking performance. The use of Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety Questionnaires or other relevant instruments is strongly suggested to overcome the speaking anxiety. Having clear identification of personal speaking anxiety levels would direct EFL learners to anticipate and implement certain strategies to avoid the failure in speaking class, as well as to try to solve their problems and achieve a better speaking performance. Furthermore, the future researcher might also use the result of this study as one of the baselines to conduct future relevant studies on similar variables.

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