

Unwillingness to Speak English: Survey of Psychological Factors Influencing Indonesian EFL Student sand Efforts to Remedy

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Abstract

Background: *The present study is an attempt to get confirmation toward students' unwillingness to speak English. This activity of research is conducted to seek what the most prevented the students to be willing to speak English at the classroom with regard to psychological factors including anxiety, lack of motivation, shyness, and lack of confidence.*

Method: *Closed-ended question in the activity sheet was carried out with 130 in which 54 students were freshmen and 76 were sophomore. They were faculty of Education and Teacher Training students at Tompotika University of Luwuk. The data was collected in June 2020 in the last of the even semester, and analyzed and counted in percent. Results:* *The results show that, of four factors of psychology, anxiety was the most factor prevented students to be reluctant to speak English at the classroom. It was about 43%.*

Conclusion: *The research also in part postulates efforts to remedy for an effective language teaching and learning. The propensity for engaging methods in teaching speaking such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Audiolingual in the EFL context must be remedied, because anxiety as the most found can grow within the unorganised teaching pattens in the EFL classrooms.*

Key Words: *unwillingness to speak, psychological factors, EFLcontext*

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I. Introduction

A very common problem encountered by many EFL students particularly in classroom is unwillingness to speak English. Speaking English itself is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects. Learning to speak English for EFL students is somewhat difficult. It needs extra efforts from students themselves. It is because speaking English must be learnt through combining both competence and performance, particularly learning to speak English to have the ability of academic talks. In this case, academic talks are verbal interactions which are full of lesson or lecture vocabularies and terms, complete sentences and appropriate syntax such as verb forms and also pronunciation. In line with the research done by Kinsella (2006)¹, the research indicated that only 2% of an English language learner spent engaging in the academic talks. In line with this, the pattern of foreign language learning at the tertiary levels, like at the research setting focuses on language performance at the classroom, in which the curriculum expects that all students can explore their language performance for the sake of employing communicative target language. By all means, when the students do not take part to participate at the classroom, such this situation gives a signal that some prevented factors can be there.

In foreign language, learning to speak English is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of language. In speaking, ideally a student or learner needs someone to listen to what she or he speaks. In another setting, such as practicing, she or he needs to speak individually and loudly. Sometimes such this situation disturbs other learners inasmuch as making a noise. By all means, it is different with written language, in which a student or learner can write or need without disturbing other learners (Brown and Yule, 1983)². Concerning difficulties in the area of speaking, Brown (2001: 270 – 271)³ summarizes several things of spoken language making speaking somewhat difficult to acquire. Firstly, breaking down speech into smaller groups of words, or so-called clustering. In classroom settings, a teacher or a lecturer needs to help students or learners to single out manageable clusters of words, or sometimes foreign language learners will try to master or hold a whole sentence or even several sentences. For example, in giving their comments to a particular topic or issue, sometimes they will use several sentences, or they have to use its whole sentences from what they read or get, not using their own words. Secondly, reducing forms can be phonological, morphological, syntactic and pragmatic. For instance, in morphological the form “I will or I shall” reduced to be a contraction like “I’ll” or “I have got to” to be “I gotta”, reducing forms syntactically like a question “when will you go there?” answered “tomorrow maybe”, and pragmatically such as phone rings in a house, a child answers and he or she yells to his or her mother, “Mom! Phone!”. These reductions constitute significant difficulties, particularly for

classroom learners in which they may have been taught to the complete or full forms of the English language. English foreign students who have been taught standard spoken English or English textbooks sometimes encounter difficulties or feel surprised in dealing with the colloquial language in dialogue for example. The colloquial language frequently includes idioms, words, phrases, cultural knowledge, and it turns up either monologues or dialogues of English. Finally, nevertheless, learners of English foreign language will need to be able to comprehend language delivered at varying rates of speed, or achieve an acceptable speed. This situation sometimes includes stress, rhythm, and intonation. Learners of English have to know about them. The stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns of spoken English are the key points that they bring or convey important messages.

In line with having the ability of speaking English, it is affected by some factors such as environment or interaction with other people. Shumin (2002)⁴ categorizes that there are several factors affecting learners' oral language (speaking). They are cognitive, linguistic, sociocultural, and affective factors. The theory of cognitive assumes that age stages or biological maturation and environmental experience take part in the process of learning for grasping cognitive riches or intelligence (Olson and Hergenbahn, 2009)⁵. On the other hand, cognitive structures or intelligence will be influenced by maturation, and what learners have undergone in learning such as they learn from childhood to adulthood. It can be said that the longer the learners study, the more the learners get. Age and maturation for learners can be prominent factors to be successful or fail in learning. It means that length and experience for learners are influenced factors to achieve higher language proficiency. On the other hand, learners studying English from secondary levels to tertiary levels particularly majoring English or English education ideally have great knowledge or intelligence of English, which functions as their awareness of making problems in their English performance.

One of the factors that foreign language learners encounter barriers, and they tend to make errors is linguistic factors. Even, linguistic problems can occur when there is a problem in the speakers' intention, or in the hearers' perception particularly involving unsuccessful mappings of intention (Dua, 1990)⁶. In oral language, speaking English fluently becomes possible when speakers are completely aware of the linguistic factors. In line with the research done by Tanveer (2007)⁷, he found that psychological and linguistic factors caused language anxiety for learners in speaking skills. The results also showed three difficulties in the area of linguistic, that is, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary items.

Interaction with other people or environment can also be used to strengthen the oral language. It may not deny that interaction is the key to improve the speaking abilities of learners (Shumin, 2002). Understanding the social and culture of language can also help learners know what comments are appropriate, how to ask questions during interaction, and how to respond nonverbally based on the intention of the talk (Brown, 2001). People's interaction with one another in social relationships can carry an important impact on oral language. Li (2010)⁸ found the use of English outside the classroom is one of the best strategies to use in oral communication. Even, the input-poor environment by using English outside class contributes to problems for oral communication that closely related to sociocultural contexts (Gan, 2012)⁹. In addition to interference from the first or second languages is also considered as one of the factors of socialcultural context in acquiring foreign language (Brown, 2001). Interference also was the main problems in oral performance (Sadeghi, 2009)¹⁰. Moreover, Everett (2013)¹¹ also revealed that the direct influence of a geographic factor impacted to the basic sound inventories of human language.

The affective factors are also called as the psychological factors or personality factors in foreign language learning that consist of self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy and extroversion (Brown, 2001: 145-154), whereas Shumin (2002) categorized emotions, attitude and motivation. These factors are also as the causes that hinder learners in oral language. Personality has the influence in oral skills specifically in speaking. For example, extrovert students will not worry about making mistakes and taking risks, and finally they do or perform much more practices for themselves, compared with the introvert students who are much more to keep silent than to be active in class or outside class. Even, the fear of speaking in front of the others becomes one of the oral problems for learners (Jamshidnejad, 2010)¹². Some of the psychological factors that can make students to be successful or fail in expressing their English in speaking are anxiety and shyness. Anxiety is defined as feeling of tense, apprehension, nervousness and worry, or fear especially about what happen. For example, fear to be corrected and fear of making mistake. Meanwhile, Feeling shy is the propensity to awkward, worried or tense during social encounters, especially with unfamiliar people. It also as negative feelings or worries of shy person about how others think about or consider to him or her (Kazdin, 2000)¹³.

The other psychological aspects also have influences to learners in exploring their English speaking such as motivation and confidence. Dincer (2013)¹⁴ found that motivational orientation became one of the problems on speaking that cause little chance to speak English. Motivation as the process in maintaining the goal-oriented behaviours involving biological, emotional, cognitive and social forces (Cherry, 2010)¹⁵. There are two kinds of motivation, that is, extrinsic motivation influenced by outside things, and intrinsic motivation influenced by inner interests (Ryan and Deci, 2000)¹⁶. Lack of motivation can inhibit someone to do something.

In language learning, motivation is one of the most significant factors affecting students' performance (Klimova, 2011)¹⁷ and foreign language learning (Lei and Qin, 2009)¹⁸. Gilakjani (2012)¹⁹ also pointed out a number of factors affecting the learning of English pronunciation such as attitude and motivation. Whereas, Souriyavongsa (2013)²⁰ mentioned that lack of confidence in using English to communicate also became a problem. Self confidence is a belief in yourself and your abilities, or it is about how one is trusting himself or herself that he or she has abilities and powers. Lack of confidence invites negative effects like a sense of uselessness and worthlessness and feeling inferior to others (Farmer and Sweeney, 1997)²¹.

Some researches frequently do not include psychological aspects while doing linguistic-related researches such as investigation of pronunciation problems or grammar in oral performance or speaking. Whereas psychological factors have also influence to linguistic-related. Tanveer (2007), in his research, mentioned that pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar can be caused by personality factors such as anxiety. Some researchers have focused on the researches with respect to anxiety. Abderrezag (2010)²², Riasati (2012)²³, and Lucas (2011)²⁴ showed that anxiety has influences or effects that can seriously inhibit or hinder success for students in learning and performing English.

However, the present research does not investigate what factors hinder EFL students' English speaking in the scope of whether pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar. The research explores what factors of the psychology that inhibit the students' willingness to start speaking English at the classroom setting as the real facts. In other words, the research focuses on investigating the psychology factors including anxiety, lack of motivation, shyness and lack of confidence. It scrutinizes what the most aspect of psychology inhibiting students' willingness to speak English at the classroom. The psychology aspects like anxiety, lack of motivation, shyness and lack of confidence are the limitation of the research.

II. Method

Participants

All of the participants were the university students at Tompotika University of Luwuk. They have been students majoring educational studies. They are taking Guidance and Counsel Studies, Math Education, and Civic Education. All students were from Faculty of Education and Teacher Training at Tompotika University of Luwuk, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. Before coming to the university, they had completed their six years of secondary schools in which they had learned English. At the Faculty setting, English language becomes the compulsory subject that they have to take. The curriculum focuses not only on language performance but also competence regarding learning and teaching at the classroom. In other words, the teaching process of the English subject at the classroom in the University setting motivates the students to take part at the classroom to communicate using English. The individuals involved in the research were 130 in which 54 students were freshmen and 76 were sophomore. Of 130, 35 students were males aged 18-19, and 95 were females between the ages of 17-19. All of them are available students in the first and second year. They were considered to be more beneficial and available as well as representative on the focus of the research done. Their perceptions into the answer sheet were based on what they experienced in the teaching and learning process in the EFL classrooms.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for the research were obtained through activity sheet. The research employed closed-ended question, in which the students were asked to choose from the answer available. The form of this close-ended question provided four choices with respect to psychological factors including anxiety, lack of motivation, shyness, and lack of confidence. Those four items (see appendix) engaged in the research generated from the preliminary survey. The students were given a list of all possible factors that hampered them having willingness to speak English at the classroom while the process of learning and teaching lasting at the previous semester. On the other hand, to find psychological factors of speaking, activity sheet was carried out. The data collection was done in June 2020.

To elicit reliable results as what expected in which among students did not influence each other, the process of collection data was divided into five classes, in which each class was supervised by one lecturer. The researcher coordinated with the faculty and some lecturers for the time and classes engaged. The students were given a sheet of closed-ended question comprising four choices asking what the most factor prevented them having willingness to speak English at the classroom. They pointed out one as the most as they perceived. The process was about three to four minutes. This was due to they were not expected to give spontaneity or they had adequate opportunity to respond the question. Through this activity, the research was hoped to inquire hampering the students' willingness regarding four choices selected based on a pilot survey conducted in order to get necessary feedback for the final survey. The data gathered was analyzed based on what the students picked out from the sheet, and their choice was categorized and counted into percent.

III. Results

Each student was given a list of four choices comprising anxiety, lack of motivation, shyness, and lack of confidence. The components within the psychological factors in this regard were framed based on the preliminary survey. The researcher asked the students to render the most inhibited them inside the classroom concerning willingness to speak English by engaging the opened question. Terminally, four then were disposed as the more recurring. With respect to conducting the research, the students had to pick out just one of four that most inhibited them having willingness to speak English as they perceived. The result is shown in the following table.

Table 1: Psychological factors influencing EFL Students

Psychological Factors	Number of students choosing	Percentage (%)
Anxiety	60	46
Lack of motivation	17	13
Shyness	20	15
Lack of Confidence	33	25

From the data analysis of the students' sheets, it is noticed that the students perceived feeling of tense, apprehension; nervousness and worry or fear of making mistakes became the most factor inhibiting their willingness to speak English at the classroom. It was 46% in which the students considered anxiety as the highest factor. Approximately 25% related with the self confidence. The students considered that lack of confidence was the second highest within psychological factors. The data shown that, of 130, 33 students picked out lack of confidence. About 15% of the students deemed that feeling shy as the reason why they had unwillingness to participate at the classroom through speaking English, while only around 17% claimed that lack of motivation as one of the reasons why they did not have willingness to speak.

IV. Discussion

The research was designed in part to contribute implications of study though the main focus of the research explores the most factor inhibited EFL students inside class while speaking English. Based on the findings of the data analysis, it is shown that, anxiety was the highest factor of willingness to communicate in English. According to Spielberger at al (2005)²⁵ language anxiety is the fear that an individual feels when s/he is not fully qualified. Anxiety in foreign language context is considered as a personality trait with respect to the students' propensity to react nervously while speaking in English. Fear of making mistakes while speaking seems to be one of difficulties in the learning process of language so far. Even, some researches have been done for the sake of exploring, for example, to postulate pedagogical implications. Anxiety stands as one of the main influential factors for effective language learning (Brown, 2007)²⁶. In fact, anxiety has been one of the main issues in having the ability to speak (Tercan and Dikilitas, 2015)²⁷. Moreover, the present study also shows that anxiety as an obstacle impacting on speaking (Toubot at al, 2017)²⁸.

In light of the results from the data analysis, in which anxiety went to the highest factor within the psychological factors prevented students' willingness to speak English, postulating implications can be drawn. First, project work can be benefited to reduce anxiety (Abderezag, 2010). This is due to students are more personally involved. They do not feel that they are constantly assessed. While speaking, for students, errors are natural. They are proper to do those. An additional benefit of project work is that students have an active role and responsibilities which finally boost their confidence and reduce negative effects such as apprehension, feeling of tense, nervousness and worry, for example, fear of making mistakes as well as avoid perceptions of low ability in speaking English.

Second, anxiety frequently comes from students' particular perceptions toward environment. Teachers are dictators in which they talk all the time and do not give enough time to students to speak. Another situation shows their class is usually full of stress in which students are afraid of speaking since if they speak and then make a mistake, something bad may happen. Thus, creating a learning community that provides a supportive classroom atmosphere can help to reduce fear of errors. On the other hand, class atmosphere as an important factor contributing to students' degree of willingness to speak (Riasati, 2012). This is in line with Lightbown and Spada (2006)²⁹, that is, relaxed atmosphere from a teacher has an opportunity to continue speaking despite making a mistake. In academic setting, particularly students majoring English education in a tertiary level in which they have to take for four years, they can be motivated into two steps. In the first two years, the students can be developed to speak English inside or outside the classroom by using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The use of CLT is appropriate particularly in the EFL context, and by all means it is able to decrease the having of anxiety done by EFL students while speaking. This is because the fluency as the acceptable language is the primary goal, effective communication without thinking about grammar is sought, and also meaning is

paramount, in which language learning is learnt to communicate or for communicative purposes (Richards and Rodgers, 2001)³⁰. By employing CLT in teaching Speaking, EFL students are much more motivated to speak English without thinking whether they speak grammatically correct or not as long as the classmates understand their spoken. The second two years, Audiolingual can be engaged. The principles include such as linguistic competence is needed in speaking and also students are expected to interact with the language system. On the other hand, accuracy is a primary goal in terms of formal correctness. It ensues as the demand of the curriculum that needs the propensity to have the ability to speak in the academic setting. That have been done is most of EFL students are trapped in the demands of using formal English in which how they speak English as native speakers speak. Even, they are forced to have linguistic competence and accuracy while speaking particularly in the first year or while they are freshmen or sophomores. By all means, psychological factors like anxiety are easily to grow in this situation.

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the survey data through the activity sheet, a number of psychological factors were perceived by the students in the tertiary level. Those have impact on students' degree of willingness to speak in English classes. The result of the current study shows that anxiety is the most factor prevented students to have willingness to speak at the classroom using English. It can be assumed that the study supports some researches in the preceding with respect to exploring psychological factors in the foreign language.

Some techniques or method in teaching particularly for EFL students should be organised well and appropriately by considering students ability or situation in the teaching and learning process regarding speaking at the classroom activities. CLT is also can be employed in the initial months or semesters to welcome particularly for freshmen to stimulate them to be brave to speak English. It certainly while being implemented can overcome students' anxiety. They also improve their performance through project work, and establish a learning community and a supportive classroom atmosphere that is teacher-students relations.

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Appendix

Anxiety (takut, gugup, cemas akan sesuatu)

Shyness (merasa malu)

Lack of motivation (keinginan/motivasi kurang)

Lack of Confidence (rasa percaya diri kurang)

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS ACTIVITY SHEET

Q: Mark the following factors that most inhibited you to speak English at the classroom. Pick out just one that you consider the most prevented you.

- Anxiety
- Lack of Motivation
- Shyness
- Lack of Confidence

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