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PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN EFL CONTEXT

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Abstract. Public speaking anxiety poses great challenges to developing these skills. It is estimated that approximately 15% to 30% of the general population suffer from public speaking anxiety, which is the most common type of social phobia. Excessive public speaking anxiety can lead to enormous stress and frustration, impaired speech performance, and further avoidance of social situations that require making public presentations, especially for students. This study aims to investigate the level and the factors that mostly occurred among university students in public speaking. The researchers used a questionnaire of Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) by Noorachima (2020) and made the senior students of the English Department as the respondents for this research. The result of the study showed that the PSA level of the seniors of ELEP UB is high and the general sense factor is the highest chosen factor that triggers their public speaking anxiety.

Keywords: Public Speaking; Public Speaking Anxiety; Academic Speaking

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking for academic context can be defined as the activities that people commonly perform while they are working or studying in an English-medium setting (Brown, cited in Nation and Newton, 2009, p. 122). These include delivering a lecture or a report on a particular topic. It is also important to note that these skills can be integrated into other areas of study or work. Learning about various forms of oral language texts can help students interact effectively in various settings (The Department of Education of Western Australia, 2013). This knowledge helps them develop their own set of rules and procedures for using these texts.

As we know about speaking in the academic context above, students will involve in speaking in front of people and it is called public speaking. Public speaking is a process, an act, and an art of making a speech in front of an audience (Nikitina, 2011, p. 10). Public speaking is in contempt of the fact that professionals worldwide are conversant in their field, they struggle due to a lack of good public speaking skills. In recent decades, Indonesian firms and offices have recognized the value of their workers learning public speaking skills. English public speaking and oral assessments are standard in university contexts, and they are used to evaluate a student's ability to build and convey an entertaining, well-informed, and convincing case. Public speaking is a method of

communication in which a speaker conveys messages to a community of people, and the people are required to understand the messages, which are composed of information. For EFL learners, specifically English education department students, they legitimately need to acquire this skill. They tend to have many presentations in their class and they need to speak in front of the audience in English. Nonetheless, they also have a kind of fear in doing public speaking such as anxiety especially when it comes to speaking in English, which is their foreign language (Apriyanti et al, 2016; Raja, 2017; Sari in Lomi & Mbato, 2019).

In its study, the Department of Education of Western Australia (2013) states that students encounter dynamic obstacles when attempting to fulfill the demands of communicating in social and academic environments. For these demands of communicating, students tend to have speaking anxiety. Further, Horwitz et al. (1986) stated that being the first scholars to deal with anxiety in language learning, explore speaking anxiety concerning foreign language anxiety which is defined as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". Yet, according to Tejwani et al (2016), public speaking anxiety poses great challenges to developing these skills. It is estimated that approximately 15% to 30% of the general population suffer from public speaking anxiety,

which is the most common type of social phobia. Excessive public speaking anxiety can lead to enormous stress and frustration, impaired speech performance, and further avoidance of social situations that require making public presentations. Individuals who struggle with this anxiety may be well aware of their irrational amount of fear, but it is usually difficult for them to control their responses without appropriate practice and training (Wang et al, 2020). That phenomenon also happened even as an English education department student in Indonesia.

In focus to carry out this study, the researchers tried to find out the level of and the factors of public speaking anxiety based on the learners of English as a foreign language of the seniors of English Language Education Program (ELEP) of Universitas Brawijaya (UB) who have taken the proposal seminar of their final project, that is the undergraduate thesis. The study set out to answer the following research questions: 1. What is the level of public speaking anxiety of the seniors of ELEP at UB? and 2. What are the factors of public speaking anxiety that mostly occurred by the seniors of ELEP at UB as foreign language learners? From those research questions, the researchers wanted to investigate the level and the factors of Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) among the seniors of ELEP.

II. METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a survey to conduct this study. Survey research designs are techniques in which investigators survey a subset of the whole population of individuals to identify the population's views, beliefs, habits, or characteristics (Cresswell, 2012, p.376). Rather than including rigorous interpretations, survey studies explain data patterns. Survey researchers often associate variables; their emphasis is on learning about a group rather than comparing variables or predicting outcomes. Then with the survey, the researchers decided to look into a phenomenon that occurred in the seniors of ELEP UB who have conducted their proposal seminar on Public Speaking Anxiety.

The steps in conducting survey research are similar to the steps in researching in general. The methods for gathering data, reviewing data, and preparing the final report are all included in the survey steps. According to Ary et al (2010, p.378) also from Creswell (2012, p.404) in conducting survey research, they have each step as well. Apparently, in conducting this, the researcher had the idea to modify those two approaches to the steps that are convenient and are shared into the following steps.

The preparation of the study was the first phase. The researchers defined the research problems and objectives in this process. This move entailed deciding on the research's topic, scope, and limitations. The study looked at PSA in 69 seniors of ELEP UB who have conducted their proposal seminar between September 2020 and April 2021. It aimed to see the anxiety level of English education department students in public speaking. The population was described in the second phase. This action allowed the researchers to have the authority to choose who would get the survey. In this situation, the survey was circulated to seniors of ELEP UB.

The researcher skipped the sampling stage and went straight to constructing the instrument. Constructing the instrument that would be used to collect data from the study is a major challenge in survey analysis. The researcher should develop the instrument that will be used in this study in this process. Instead of creating a new instrument, the researcher used one that already existed which was made by Noorrachima (2020) named Public Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (PSAQ). It was adapted from PRSPA by McCroskey (1970), and FLCAS by Howirtz et al. (1986). The questionnaire indicated three aspects which are speech preparation (insufficient preparation, stage fright, test anxiety), speech performance (communication apprehension, stage fright, speech anxiety), and general sense (fear of negative evaluation, audience, past failures).

This thesis uses the quantitative analysis tradition of the questionnaire. The fundamental of a survey is a questionnaire. In this analysis, the researcher selected a questionnaire, which was made by Noorrachima (2020), and it was adopted and adapted from McCroskey (1970), Zainal (2013) & Howirtz et al. (1986). The questionnaire itself includes 37 points aimed at explaining what triggers the fear of students' public speaking. The questionnaire, just for the reason to get the students' response. Seventeen questions and a close-ended question format are included in the questionnaire. These questionnaires are connected to anxiety arising from speaking the English language, which is most applicable to the ongoing inquiry (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). This questionnaire consists of 30 items, each of which was answered on a Likert scale of four points, ranging from four "Strongly Agree" "Agree" "Disagree" to one "Strongly disagree." This questionnaire is used to assess the extent of public speaking anxiety in the context of the thesis proposal seminar.

III. DISCUSSION

The theoretical figures were obtained using SPSS calculations.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid very low	2	2.9	2.9	2.9
low	6	8.7	8.7	11.6
medium/average	20	29.0	29.0	40.6
high	26	37.7	37.7	78.3
very high	15	21.7	21.7	100.0
Total	69	100.0	100.0	

This section entails a discussion of the findings from the data collection and how they relate to the research issues in this study. The respondents refuted several of the statements. However, most respondents agreed with the other statements in the questionnaire, indicating that they are expected to do great in the presentation because they often practice before, however they still have Public Speaking Anxiety. Most of them agreed with the factors listed in the questionnaire that influence their PSA, indicating that these are the factors that influence their PSA. Based on the questionnaire, the discussion of this study is divided into four parts.

Referring to the first research question, which is the level of public speaking anxiety of the seniors of ELEP UB, the

researchers found that the PSA level is high. As can be seen in table 4.1.4.2, 37.7% of the respondents' anxiety level is high. Followed by 29% of respondents have medium/average public speaking anxiety levels and 21.7% of respondents have very high public speaking anxiety levels. It can be added up that 88.4% of the respondents have medium to a very high level of public speaking anxiety and only 11.6% of the respondents have low to very low levels of public speaking anxiety. This is also in line with the results of the previous studies that have been mentioned in this research.

Kalra & Siribud (2020) said that according to the descriptive statistics of their research, the majority of Thai ESL students were fearful of speaking in English (75%). A low level of anxiety towards public speaking was experienced by 5% of the students, while a low level of anxiety towards speaking in English was expressed by 20% of the students. Also, research conducted by Huda (2018) showed that speaking anxiety in presentations is in the category in the IC class of English Department Freshmen, as proven by the results of the questionnaire with speaking anxiety scores range from 54 to 26, with an average of 39.025. The result of the last research, which was conducted by Kurniadi & Kasyulita (2019), stated that 14 students were identified as having state anxiety and one who was identified as having trait anxiety. As a result, the majority of second-semester students were classed as anxious. As we can see here, the result of the study was all the same as the previous studies. Mostly, all of the respondents are in a medium to a high level of anxiety.

Proceeding to the next discussion about the first part of the questionnaire, which is how the respondents' Public Speaking Anxiety is influenced by speech preparation. From their data result, it showed that 68,075% of the respondents agree that their public speaking anxiety is affected by their speech preparation. This is also in line with Kurniadi & Kasyulita (2019) result that they found that students, on the other hand, appear to have a negative attitude when they are forced to talk without preparation. As well as the result of the research conducted by Ay (2010) has shown that students are most anxious when they are expected to speak without being prepared beforehand.

Then the questionnaire's second section contains any remarks on the respondents' speech performance and how it affects their public speaking anxiety. It demonstrated that 61.4% of the respondents are in between agree and disagree that the speech performance factors are indeed affecting their public speaking anxiety. In this section, the factor which has the highest score which is 78.3% of the respondents chose to agree and strongly agree is when they are asked to speak English without planning. This is in line with Kalra & Siribud (2020) result that towards speaking in English, 75% of Thai ESL students had a high level of anxiety. In addition, students who scored high on anxiety in Horwitz et al (1986) research stated that they are hesitant to speak in the FL. In addition, anxiety is also characterized as a feeling of uncertainty in terms of knowledge and cognition that has a detrimental impact on students' capacity to learn a foreign language.

The third section of the questionnaire focused on the respondents' fear of negative evaluation. It is delineated as

"apprehension about other's evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson & Friend, as stated in Leary, 1983). It showed that 74.2% of the respondents chose 'agree' and 'strongly disagree' in this section. It counted as the highest rank up of the questionnaire out of the three sections. The findings also revealed that the majority of respondents feel helpless, fear being judged, and compare themselves to others. The result is in line with the research conducted by Huda (2018) and it stated that anxiety could be caused by a variety of factors, one of which is a lack of self-confidence. Some of them are afraid of receiving a negative evaluation from their speaking partners. They thought they were bad at public speaking. Another uneasy student believes she is focusing too much on avoiding grammatical errors. Further study is still needed, particularly longitudinal study that is more practical and appropriate in the context of anxiety-related teaching spoken language.

The second research question, the factors of public speaking anxiety that mostly occurred by the seniors of ELEP UB as foreign language learners, was answered in the final section of the discussion. The first most selected factor that the respondents agree on is the sort of audience. Implying that the more significant the audience, the more concerned they became. The answers between strongly agree and agree are 82.6% and only 17.4% of the respondents chose 'disagree' and strongly disagree. Motley as cited in MacIntyre et al. (1997) stated that it becomes evident how a set of anxiety-related cognitions would be created, he added, because this represents a speaker's early experience in the public arena. As a result, a speaker's emotional and cognitive reactions to making a speech will be influenced by experience with a particular audience type.

The second most selected factor that the respondents agree with is they are anxious if someone asks them about a topic they do not know. It shows 81.2% of the respondents chose agree and strongly agree. The result of the research conducted by Huda (2018) is in line with this and it said that the respondents responded that they feel apprehensive due to a lack of preparation because they are fearful of being asked about a topic they are unfamiliar with. Also, Hanifa (2018) stated that students' background knowledge affects their speaking performance, therefore cognitive factors focus on it. When EFL students are asked to speak on topics they are unfamiliar with, they are more likely to have difficulty formulating ideas.

The researcher can derive numerous conclusions on ELEP students' public speaking fear based on the findings gathered, examined, computed, and discussed. In this study, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with every statement.

According to the findings, more than half of the respondents have a medium to extremely high public speaking anxiety level. The research shows that the factor that mostly triggers their public speaking anxiety is a general sense which has fear of negative evaluation, audience, and past failures as the variable. With the highest mean for 'agree' and 'strongly agree' answers with 74.2%. In addition, it can be seen from

the two highest percentages from the people who choose agree and strongly agree are from general sense factor. First is the type of audience that triggers their anxiety the most. Then the second statement about how they will become super anxious when someone asks them about a topic they do not know follows it. This means they become anxious when someone immediately asks them for something they have not prepared before. From this, we know that the type of audience and when someone asks them about a topic they do not know mostly triggers the English education department batch 2017 students' public speaking anxiety. The second highest mean for agree and strongly agree answers is the speech preparation factor with 68.1%. The respondents' third mostly choose stage fright with the statement "I feel anxious while waiting to give my speech". It strikes 79.7% of the respondents who choose 'agree' and 'strongly agree' for this statement. It means that they tend to be more anxious when they are waiting for the time to speak. Then lastly the third one is the speech performance factor with 61.4% of the answers is agree and strongly agree with the statement "I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in advance" that holds the highest percentage for 'agree' and 'strongly agree' answers with 78.3%.

The research showed that the anxiety level of the seniors of ELEP's public speaking level is high and general sense factor is the highest chosen factor that triggers their public speaking anxiety and then followed by speech preparation and lastly speech performance factor.

IV. CONCLUSION

The research shows that the PSA level of the seniors of ELEP UB is high and the general sense factor is the highest chosen factor that triggers their public speaking anxiety with the highest mean for 'agree' and 'strongly agree' answers with 74.2% and also it can be seen from the two highest percentages from the people who choose agree and strongly agree are from general sense factor, and then followed by speech preparation and lastly speech performance factor. The researcher in this study proposes some recommendations based on the findings. The last suggestion is for the other researcher from a different department who wants to research public speaking anxiety as a topic with different languages as well. Then, this research used undergraduate thesis proposal seminar presentation as the public speaking topic and other researchers can use the other seminar such as thesis result or thesis defense as the public speaking topic or they can compare the public speaking anxiety which occurred in each seminar. This topic also can be seen from the psychology side to know deeper about anxiety.

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