

## The Correlation between Speaking Anxiety, Self-Confidence, and Speaking Achievement of Undergraduate EFL Students of Private University in Palembang

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: September 05, 2018

Accepted: September 15, 2018

Published: October 31, 2018

Volume: 6 Issue: 4

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

Speaking in a foreign language can be influenced by such psychological aspects as anxiety and self-confidence. The students who have high level of anxiety, worry, fear and low level of self-confidence in foreign language classes may have difficulties in developing their speaking ability. The objective of this research was to find out whether there was a significant correlation between students' speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and their speaking achievement. The research used correlation design. The data were collected through interviews that were scored by two raters and two questionnaires that were administered to fifth semester students ( $n = 28$ ) from a Teacher and Training Faculty in Indonesia. The data were analyzed using descriptive and correlational analysis. The results indicated that speaking anxiety has no significant correlation with speaking achievement. Self-confidence has a significant correlation with speech achievement ( $p = .01$ ). That is, students with self-confidence have higher achievement. So, it is important for teachers and lecturers to encourage students and practice speaking English in front of class, especially to improve the self-confidence when the students are communicating in English.

**Key words:** Speaking Anxiety, Self-confidence, Speaking Achievement

### INTRODUCTION

English is an important means of communication in the world. As an international language, English is one of the foreign languages taught to students in Indonesia. The students must be able to compete in the current global era, where competition is growing tighter. One of the skills required by students is communication in English. Learning English plays a central role in students' intellectual, social, and emotional development. It is a key to success as it is a *lingua franca* in various contexts including higher education settings. *Lingua franca* is an intermediate language or an association language in a place where there are different language speakers (Hammer, 2001). In Indonesia, English is usually taught or studied as the first foreign language for the practical use of everyday communication. People use English for communication especially with foreigners who speak different languages. Therefore, English becomes important for the students in communicating with foreigners.

English learners need four skills in learning English, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Of the four skills, speaking is the most important skill in communicating. Speaking skill is an important part of the language learning curriculum. Speaking skill is also an important assessment object (Anderson & Bachman, 2009). Anyone who wants to improve his/her speaking skill must have self-awareness, self-motivation, and positive behavior

patterns, and must make efforts to avoid communication errors (Turk, 2003). Speaking skill is one's important skill to improve English proficiency from the very beginning of language learning. Speaking is one of the most important language skills. This skill can be developed and enhanced as an effective means of communication (Morozova, 2013). Speaking skill is very important for students in communicating effectively through spoken language. The inability of students in speaking a foreign language can cause them difficulties in expressing their ideas even in simple conversations. One of the main objectives of a language learning program is to develop speaking skill and integrate spoken and written language. Language learning means using language in both spoken and written communication, and being able to express feelings, thoughts, and experiences in various contexts (Burn & Joyce, 2001).

In Indonesia, there are some problems in speaking skill learning. First, students feel bored in speaking English learning because they have difficulty in remembering words and pronouncing English (Astuti, 2018). Second, students rarely use English to communicate both in the classroom and outside the classroom. This makes them unaccustomed to speak English well. Third, students only remember the words when they have to practice speaking in front of class. They usually speak by imitating the words and phrases in the book. They do not understand the content being spoken and they

do not speak spontaneously using their own words. In order to meet the target of learning English, speaking skill has several problems, both internal and external. Internally, speaking skill learning makes them feel anxious. They may be reluctant to use the target language because they may be afraid of making a mistake. Students may feel uncomfortable speaking English because they do not use the means of communication that they usually do (Nascente, 2001).

In the early stages of learning English, students usually face many difficulties, especially in understanding grammar, pronunciation, and others. Students find it difficult, feel uncomfortable and make mistakes. Students become anxious in speaking. After it happens repeatedly, students experience speaking anxiety a second language (McIntyre, 1999). On the other hand, students who are competent in learning English but they think that they are not successful in the class lack self-confidence. One's confidence in realizing the goal of language learning is related to one's development of speaking skills. Various factors can lower one's confidence. For example, someone who is competent for a job but he/she is hesitant to start the job, he/she has low self-confidence. The center of self-confidence is cognition, therefore the success or failure of a person is felt cognitively (Rubio, 2007).

According to the English First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI), Indonesia with a score of 52.91 ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 72 countries in the world based on research conducted by the international education company English First (EF) (Valentina, 2016). Meanwhile in 2017, Indonesia with a score of 52.15, ranked 39<sup>th</sup> out of 80 countries (Valentina, 2017). Thus, Indonesia with low-level English proficiency shows its ability is still at a low stage and has not been able to negotiate, mediate and lobby, or compete with other countries in learning English. It means that speaking skill is still low. It is important for educators and lecturers to encourage and motivate students to speak English, especially in the classroom.

The result of early observation on English learning program of Tridinanti University in Palembang on September 2017 shows that the students' speaking skill in fifth semester is as follows. First, some students feel uncomfortable in speaking English in front of class. They have no preparation and enough English words. Second, many students feel less confident in speaking English. They are still thinking about English at structural and sentential levels. Some students feel intimidated by lecturers who give them many tasks. Furthermore, some students can not speak English well. They are afraid of making mistakes. Finally, most students do not have the opportunity to engage in English communication activities. Only the more intelligent students are active in communicating in English and dominating English learning in class.

### Objective and Research Questions

Based on the above explanation the researcher is interested to conduct the present research. The objective of this study was to determine the correlation between speech anxiety and self-confidence with students' speaking achievement. Thus the research questions are as follows.

1. Is there a correlation between anxiety and students' speaking achievement?

2. Is there a correlation between self-confidence and students' speaking achievement?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking involves two or more people who make two-way communication. Speaking is one of the language skills in everyday life used for communication. Fulcher (2003, p. 23) defines speaking as "the verbal use of language to communicate with others." Speaking is a productive oral skill usually performed by two or more people. Chaney (2002) states that speaking is a process of interaction between two or more people by developing and sharing ideas through the use of verbal and non verbal symbols, in various contexts.

Hammer (2001) states that the ability to speak fluently assumes not only the features of knowledge (e.g., speech, expressive, lexical and grammatical as well as language negotiation) but also skills for processing information (e.g., language processing, interacting with information processing and others). Brown and Yule (2000) suggest that there is a clear distinction in speaking between interactional functions and transactional functions that focus on information exchange. Brown (2007) states that the ability to speak focuses on two things, namely: the language form and function. The form of language will focus on how to use language that matches the pattern, structure, vocabulary and language elements. Then, the language function will focus on how to use language elements and purpose.

Tsiplakides (2009) stated that speaking anxiety is a person's reluctance to participate in conversations using a particular language. It is due to lack of motivation and low performance. Speaking anxiety is a common phenomenon in learning English as a foreign language. English learners are more anxious in speaking foreign language because they have no ability and less practice in speaking English in class.

In examining English-speaking students on how they learn a foreign language, Cohen and Norst (1999) found that students have expressed their fears and anxiety when they are put in situations where they have to perform before their peers and their teacher. These fears and anxiety are reflected not only through the use of such words as embarrassment, trauma, unnerving, frightening, resentment, frustration and so on, but also through their physical responses.

Kayaoğlu and Sağlamel (2013) found several causes of language anxiety. They are (1) linguistic difficulty in the form of lack of vocabulary, lack of grammatical understanding and bad pronunciation; (2) cognitive challenges in the form of feelings of fear can not communicate, fear of failing the test, the fear of making mistakes, shame to fail in front of others, low self-esteem; (3) lack of understanding of the original language; (4) teacher's role and competitiveness. The results showed that the speaking anxiety of respondents more due to linguistic difficulty, especially the lack of vocabulary, less understanding of grammar, and bad pronunciation. The results of studies conducted by Horwitz (2001) and Le (2004) indicate that in a variety of language learning contexts there are about one third of foreign language students who experience at least moderate level of foreign language anxiety.

Murray (2006) states that self-confidence is a firm belief. If a person is convinced of something, he/she is not worried about the outcome, he/she simply takes it for granted that it will go well. According to Ansari and Oskrochi (2004) self-confidence is related to selection, motivation, perseverance, vulnerability, and patterns of subjective expectations, ambition and ambitious influence of one's self. Therefore, a person with high self-confidence is more likely to achieve positive and successful outcomes. Thus, self-confidence as a belief in something will work well and succeed. A similar opinion is stated by Adalikwu (2012) that self-confidence as a belief that someone has it in his/her ability to succeed in a task, based on whether he/she is able to do that or not a task in the past. So, when students are confident about their abilities irrespective of their past experiences, they will succeed in their learning. Lawrence (2006) states that self-confidence is a set of beliefs about one's talents and abilities. Thus, students who are confident are successful in their learning because they believe in their abilities and never give up.

## METHOD

This research is concerned with three variables, students' level of anxiety to speak English, students' level of confidence to speak English, and students' English speaking achievement. A correlational design was employed to test the relationship between students' speaking anxiety, students' self-confidence and students' speaking achievement. Survey method was used to collect the data and regression correlation was used for analyzing the data. The study aims to know the extent to which differences in one characteristic or variable are related to differences in one or more other characteristics or variables. A correlation occurs if the independent variable (X) increases and the dependent variable (Y) also increases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

The population in this research is all fifth semester students of Study Program of English Language Education of a private University in Palembang in the academic year 2017-2018. The researcher assumed that the fifth semester students have a competency of speaking since they have taken the speaking subject from semester 1. It consisted of two classes, regular A and regular B, that have different numbers of students from each semester. Therefore, the researcher used convenience non-random sampling. There were 28 students as samples who followed the speaking test that the researcher distributed. The researcher distributed the questionnaires and conducted the speaking test in two sessions. For the first meeting the researcher gave the instruction about the upcoming speaking test for next meeting. Then in the second meeting an individual speaking test with certain topics was given to each student in 7-10 minutes. After that, the researcher distributed the questionnaires. There were two questionnaires, speaking anxiety questionnaire consisting of 17 items and self-confidence questionnaire consisting of 20 items. To find out the validity of the questionnaires, a panel of experts validated the instruments. The researcher also tested the inter-rater reliability of the writing scores. Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used to analyze the correlation between the independent variable (anxiety of speech and confidence)

and the dependent variable (speech achievement). Then, in analyzing the data, the researcher focused on questionnaires and speaking test. The scoring of the speaking test was based on the rubric. This rubric is called Practical Rating Rubric of Speaking Test (P2RST). It enables the rater to perform scoring mechanism more efficiently and economically than the existing analytical rubrics. Its subscales include communicative competences, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse, and strategic competence. Its band score ranges between 0 and 4 showing the most basic to the most competent performance level, respectively (Latifa, Rahman, Hamra, & Jabu, 2015). The data obtained from the questionnaires and speaking test were analyzed by using SPSS (Version 20).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result shows that speaking anxiety score mean was 52.14, minimum score was 33, maximum score was 73, and the standard deviation was 8.26 (Table 1).

There were three categories of students' speaking anxiety; high, medium and low. There were 3.57% students classified in high category, 53.5% students were classified in medium category and 42.9% students were classified in low category. In other words, it was found that the students had medium level of speaking anxiety.

The result shows that self-confidence score mean was 72.64, minimum score was 56, maximum score was 87, and the standard deviation was 7.504. There were three categories of self-confidence; high, medium and low. While none of the students was categorized in high level of self-confidence, 82.1% students were classified in medium level and 17.9% students were classified in low level of self-confidence. It means that the students had medium level of self-confidence.

Finally regarding the speaking achievement of the students, the mean score was 71.96, minimum score was 45, maximum score was 100 and the standard deviation was 16.518. Students' speaking achievement was divided into five categories of excellent, good, average, poor, and very poor. There were 32.1% students classified in excellent category, 32.1% students were classified in good category, and 35.8 students were classified as average. In contrast, there were none of the students classified in poor or very poor categories.

### Correlation between Students' Speaking Anxiety and Speaking Achievement

The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used to test the correlation between independent variables (speaking anxiety and self-confidence) and dependent variable (speaking achievement). Table 2 shows the results of correlation analysis for speaking anxiety and speaking achievement:

It was found that correlation coefficient between students' speaking anxiety and speaking achievement was  $r = .157$  at the significance level of  $p = .425$ . Speaking anxiety has no significant correlation with speaking achievement since the significant value ( $p = .425$ ) was higher than .05. That is, students' speaking anxiety has a significantly negligible relationship with students' speaking achievement. So, one of the most recurrent problems in the conversation class is speaking anxiety.

**Table 1.** The distribution of descriptive statistic

Variable	Mean	SD	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Speaking anxiety	52.14	8.263	High (>68)	1	3.57
			Med (51-68)	15	53.5
			Low (<51)	12	42.9
Self-confidence	72.64	7.504	High(>88)	-	-
			Med (66-88)	23	82.1
			Low (<66)	5	17.9
Speaking achievement	71.96	16.518	Excellent (81-100)	9	32.1
			Good (61-80)	9	32.1
			Average (41-60)	10	35.8
			Poor (21-40)	-	-
			Very poor (0-20)	-	-

**Table 2.** Relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement scores

Correlations		
	Speaking anxiety	Speaking achievement
Speaking anxiety		
Pearson correlation	1	0.157
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.425
n	28	28
Speaking achievement		
Pearson correlation	0.157	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.425	
n	28	28

Speaking anxiety is a feeling of fear and worry associated with language speaking. Clement (2001) as cited in De Bot, Lowie, Verspoor, & Verspoor, 2005, p. 201) finds the relationship among self-confidence, anxiety, and motivation. He also states that the absence of anxiety in learning or using the language will promote self-confidence and success in language learning.

### Correlation between Students' Self-confidence and Speaking Achievement

The correlation between self-confidence and speaking achievement was analyzed. Table 3 illustrates the results of this analysis:

It was found that the correlation coefficient between students' self-confidence and their speaking achievement was  $r = .480$ . It means students' self-confidence and their speaking achievement were moderately correlated. Since the p-value (.01) was lower than .05, the correlation was significant.

The result of research indicating a significant correlation between self-confidence and speaking achievement is consistent with Kalanzadeh, Mahnegar, Hassannejad, and Bakhtiarvand (2012) results that showed highly self-confident students were found to be more inclined to involve themselves in the conversations and other spoken activities in the classroom including the oral production of stories in English. That is, self-confidence is very important for EFL learners to perform their language skills in real-life situations. Krashen (1982) (as cited in De Bot et al., 2005) proposes a hypothesis called

**Table 3.** Relationship between self-confidence and speaking achievement scores

Correlations		
	Self-confidence	Speaking achievement
Self-confidence		
Pearson correlations	1	0.480**
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.010
n	28	28
Speaking achievement		
Pearson correlations	0.480**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.010	
n	28	28

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

affective filter hypothesis, which states that the students who are able to avoid negative attitudes (including anxiety, lack of motivation, and lack of confidence) will attain success in SLA.

Brown (2007) suggests that to build students' self-confidence the teacher should tell students explicitly (verbally and nonverbally) that s/he indeed believes in them and teachers should have them make lists of their strength, of what they know or have accomplished so far in the course. Mak (2011) suggests that language instructors should consider students' linguistic and pragmatic competence, and also need to take their psychological needs into account, and attempt to meet such psychological needs, identifying and countering affective factors that can impact upon students' learning.

Brown (2007) also suggests self-confidence as one of twelve principles of language teaching. He states that the students' belief to be able to accomplish the work will be a factor that determines their success in language learning. He further argues that the heart of all learning is students' belief in their ability to complete the tasks. If they firstly believe that they can do the tasks, the self-confidence will appear to motivate them in achieving and finishing the tasks. That is one of the keys to become successful in language learning.

### CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the relationship between speaking anxiety and self-confidence with speaking achievements

of undergraduate EFL students of Private Universities in Palembang. The result shows there is a significant positive relationship between the variables of self-confidence and learning achievement. That is, the higher the self-confidence, the higher the speaking achievement. The finding also revealed that speaking anxiety has an insignificant and negligible correlation with speaking achievement. The result also shows that self-confidence is a significantly stronger predictor of speaking achievement than speaking anxiety.

Findings from this study indicate that EFL instructors need to encourage students to contribute better to speaking achievement. EFL instructors also need to help students cultivate their confidence, to help them handle demanding speaking tasks in the context of real life and class. In addition, these findings can also increase the awareness of EFL language learners about the importance of self-confidence and encourage them to seek opportunities to improve their speaking achievement.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author wishes to thank Prof. Rusman Roni, M.Pd. for his useful suggestions and extensive guidance, as well as Prof. Hazairin Samaulah for his comments.

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