

Engineering students' English public speaking: Why is it a nerve-wracking experience?

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Abstract

Mastering English public speaking is required for Engineering students to contribute to the Ministry of Education's internationalization policy that is manifested in the university's regulation. However, English public speaking has become a nerve-wracking experience for L2 learners. This research aims to explore Engineering students' English public speaking anxiety and its causes. The explanatory sequential design is applied. The online-based survey was conducted on 197 first-semester students and semi-structured interviews with 8 most anxious participants. The triangulation data analysis of quantitative and qualitative phases was carried out. The results illustrate that students experience moderate to low public speaking anxiety levels. The reasons for public speaking anxiety are linguistics problems, inhibition, lack of speaking practice, the difficulty for sentence construction from L1 into the target language, fear of peer negative feedback and being assessed, and dealing with unfamiliar topics as well as speaking delivery driven thoughts. Furthermore, teachers' reflexive identity and the appointment system used to determine public speakers become additional pressures. These findings can be used as valuable consideration to design appropriate speaking pedagogy, especially in the context of English for non-English major programs. Recommendation for future research is discussed.

Keywords: *Engineering student; non-English major; public speaking anxiety; foreign language anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian ministry of education's internationalization policy in higher education, currently Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) demands universities, including Institut Teknologi Telkom Purwokerto to collaborate with multinational business partners and universities. This policy increases the chances for students in different countries with different first languages (L1) to cooperate (Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014). Therefore, students need the ability to communicate in English as the lingua franca. Nevertheless, science majors or engineering education seemingly focus more on students' content knowledge than communication skills improvement. This kind of pedagogical process inadequately develops students'

communication competencies. It might disadvantage students to practice English speaking, especially those with low proficiency levels. Also, students with deficient English competencies are prone to limited potential of joining future internships, studies, or careers in English institutions (Delgado et al., 2021), reversing the aim of the Indonesian ministry of education's internationalization policy. Hence, a learning process that emphasizes on English communication competence development is required.

Though a foreign language classroom involves language learning and performing, speaking skills development is frequently overlooked in the class. Students commonly lack opportunities to practice speaking since lecturers mainly become the only active English users. Instead of using English to facilitate students to construct knowledge and explore ideas, lecturers use it mainly to interact with students (Hosni, 2014). When it comes to English-speaking practice, some students - not only those with low achievement but also high-performance students in certain circumstances - have anxious, stressful, or nervous experiences. Even though they know the language, students frequently have English public speaking problems (Ali, 2017). This phenomenon thus attracts scholars to investigate public speaking anxiety.

Research on public speaking anxiety has been growing. It can be seen from investigating age as an affective factor (Gaibani & Elmenfi, 2016), the relationship between self-efficacy and English public speaking performance (Zhang et al., 2020), and self-copying strategies for public speaking anxiety (Tee et al., 2020). Another research focuses on the relationship between students' self-perception of speaking delivery competence (e.g., use of voice and body language) and their levels of public speaking anxiety (Tsang, 2020). Most research focus on the students with high performance and achievement that have been done to students in English-related faculty. How Engineering as non-English major students experience public speaking is still underrepresented. It is necessary to carry out public speaking anxiety research for English intermediate-level students in engineering faculty where the curriculum favors content knowledge development over communication competencies. In this context, engineering students do not use English as much as those who enroll in English programs. This research is driven by these questions: (1) Do engineering students experience public speaking anxiety? and (2) why are engineering students afraid of public speaking?

Public Speaking Anxiety

English speaking skills in general contexts, both English for specific purposes and English language programmes demand students to create meaning for oral communication. It involves reciprocal processes including receptive and productive activities: gaining, processing, and making information for formal and informal interactions (Brown, 2001). In order to do so, several things need to be taken into consideration such as grammatical and semantic rules, the interlocutor, the discussion subject, the language (either formal or informal), and the way to express the ideas (Sayuri, 2016). Regarding to English speaking practice, Institut Teknologi Telkom Purwokerto in which English is taught for Engineering purposes demands students to present their research proposal, internship report, and thesis *viva voce* in English. Also, the internationalization

policy where students and lecturers' mobilization to other countries need them to be able to speak intelligible English. Hence, speaking skills development is emphasized more than three other skills during the learning process though the later skills are still developed. The integrative of three skills are employed to help students' speaking skills development. The oral presentation both for individual and group projects are widely used to serve the Telecommunication and Electrical Engineering department demands.

Despite the need for public speaking skills development, students frequently still become deficient English communicators. They still have problems in English speaking regardless of their knowledge of the language. Also, their willingness to do English public speaking is influenced by affective factors. Students' high affective filters due to linguistic challenges, inhibition, first language (L1) interference, and students' inadequate sentence formation skills can be English speaking hindrance (Hosni, 2014). Those who experience making mistakes related to pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary frequently build speaking anxiety (Sayuri, 2016). They also face English speaking apprehension due to lack of confidence, failure possibility, flawed performance, and negative evaluation (Cheng et al., 1999). There are also some pitfalls due to stressful and nervous experiences such as excessive hesitation, time dilation, quick speaking, repetition, irrelevant ideas provision, and forgetting the ideas (McLoughlin, 2006). Their distress of having negative evaluation from teachers and peers, dealing with comprehending teachers' instruction problems, and failing in the class also cause their public speaking anxiety (Ali, 2017).

Another affective factor that influences students' public speaking anxiety is having negative experience in doing public speaking and oral presentation. They might deal with fear of being judged (worried of other people thought); having physical symptoms (shaking hands, tongue-tied, panic attack, getting blushed, dried throat, and sweaty hands); feeling uncertain about the topic discussed that relates to fear of audience negative reaction; and negative effect of students experience in higher education which affects their class interaction and learning process (Grieve et al., 2021). These affective factors either external or internal, can make students feel uncomfortable speaking in front of many people that are usually called as having public speaking anxiety or glossophobia as Hancock et al. (2010) refers to.

Even though some researches have quite different findings about gender level of anxiety, English public speaking has become a nerve-wracking experience for both female and male students. Gaibani and Elmenfi (2014) who support Matsuda and Gobel (2004) and Tianjian (2010) state that even though both genders experience public speaking anxiety, being males and females has nothing to do with public speaking anxiety. They did not find any significant effect of gender differences on it. Conversely, Gerencheal (2016)'s study found that female students have higher levels of English public speaking anxiety than their counterparts. They have higher "communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and general anxiety of English classes" (p. 11). The similar result also occurs to the impromptu speaking activities both delivering speech in front of the class and answering questions (Mohtasham & Farnia, 2017). Hwa and Peck (2017) explain that female students experience

higher levels of speaking anxiety in terms of having more worries about negative evaluation and psychological anxiety (self-esteem). However, their research confirms that there is no significant difference between gender differences related to English classroom speaking anxiety, social-environmental factors (unpleasant emotion due to lack of speaking chances), and perception factor (communicative ability perception).

With regard to the English-speaking practice, students need higher motivation and self-esteem to succeed in language learning, particularly public speaking. As Krashen (1988) explained, students with high motivation and low level of anxiety or usually called having minimum affective filter, are highly likely to succeed in target language acquisition. This is supported by other researchers. Ellis (2005) suggests that despite having comprehensible input (as it is suggested by Krashen), students need a conducive environment to have social interaction and create meaning-making during speaking practice. Zhang (2009) explains that students' oral fluency development requires efficient and effective input, negotiation for meaning and interaction, output for greater automaticity, and less emphasis on language form and written test. In addition, their English-speaking enjoyment which links to emotional skills development and supportive peer group allows them to promote personal resiliency in dealing with problems (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Moreover, students with higher levels of motivation, self-esteem, risk-taking ability, and grit have higher willingness to communicate in target language or do public speaking (Lee & Lee, 2019). In order to be able to do public speaking, students need to have a clear self-roadmap and strategies to achieve ideal-self, opportunities to succeed in speaking, have emotionally supportive relationships with their lecturers, get peers' interactive engagement, iterative task, assisted performance, and scaffolding to build their speaking autonomy and automaticity (Thornbury, 2007; Zhang et al., 2020). They need to consider who the audiences are, the number of the audience, the familiar subject for the audience, the language tone, and the speaking purpose: idea presentation, entertainment, information provision or persuasion (Ward et al., 2016). In other words, public speaking needs students' meta-competence to know the audience type, audience level, speaking context, and medium.

METHOD

Respondents

The research was carried out to six-class of first semester students of Telecommunication and Electrical Engineering faculty at Institut Teknologi Telkom Purwokerto in the 2019 – 2020 academic year regarding ethical considerations. The purposive sampling technique was applied to get the participants due to time constraint. This technique was used to get samples which matched to the research objectives. It allowed the researcher to get rigorous case study results in understanding the public speaking anxiety phenomenon among Telecommunication and Electrical Engineering faculty students (Campbell, et al., 2020). Four out of 201 agreed participants were excluded due to incomplete responses to the questionnaires. The total participants for the online survey were 197 students {Male=144 (73.10%),

Female=53 (26.90%)). The researcher acknowledged that the gender gap in this study will become the limitation of equally distinguishing female and male students' public speaking anxiety levels. All participants were enrolled in the Telecommunication Engineering programme. English was a compulsory course for students. It was offered as General English (2 credits in 1st semester) and English for Communication and Business (2 credits in 4th semester). The learning activity was intended to develop four skills yet speaking skill development was more emphasized by the study programme. The participants' age range was 18 to 20 years old. They were low intermediate students with a 5-year minimum of English learning experience.

Instruments

The data collection was conducted by applying an online-based questionnaire and a face-to-face semi-structured interview based on the participants' informed consent. It used McCroskey's (2013) Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) questionnaire. There were thirty-four statements on five-point *Likert* scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha of the scale for the questionnaire item is 0.85. Meanwhile, 30-minute recorded and transcribed interviews were conducted with eight most anxious participants.

Procedures

This research aims to examine whether Engineering students experience public speaking anxiety and the reason why they experience is based on the students' point of view. A mixed-method explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Clark, 2018) is used to answer the research questions. Quantitative data collection and analysis (phase 1) initiated the qualitative data collection and analysis (phase 2). The first phase tried to examine whether the students experience public speaking anxiety. The second phase was done to explain further why they experience public speaking anxiety. Both questionnaire and interview were carried out in Indonesian as participants' mother tongue. A semi-structured interview was chosen by following Galletta (2013)'s and Salmons (2015)'s interview protocols. Each research participant was treated delicately and regarded Lahman (2018)'s way of seeing research respondents to avoid taking their existence for granted or *othering* them.

Data analysis

The gained score of PRPSA was divided into three categories namely low <98, moderate 98 - 131, and high >131 based on McCroskey's formula to define the anxiety level. This PRPSA score reflects the higher the score, the higher fear of public speaking. Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) thematic analysis ideas were used to analyze the interview results. The code S1, F/M in the interview finding presentation is used to refer to student/participant (S), the order of the interview (first =1, second = 2, etc.), female (F), or male (M).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The students speaking anxiety

The students speaking anxiety level

Based on the online-questionnaire responses from 197 participants, the students' speaking anxiety level and their PRPSA scores related to their gender can be seen as follows.

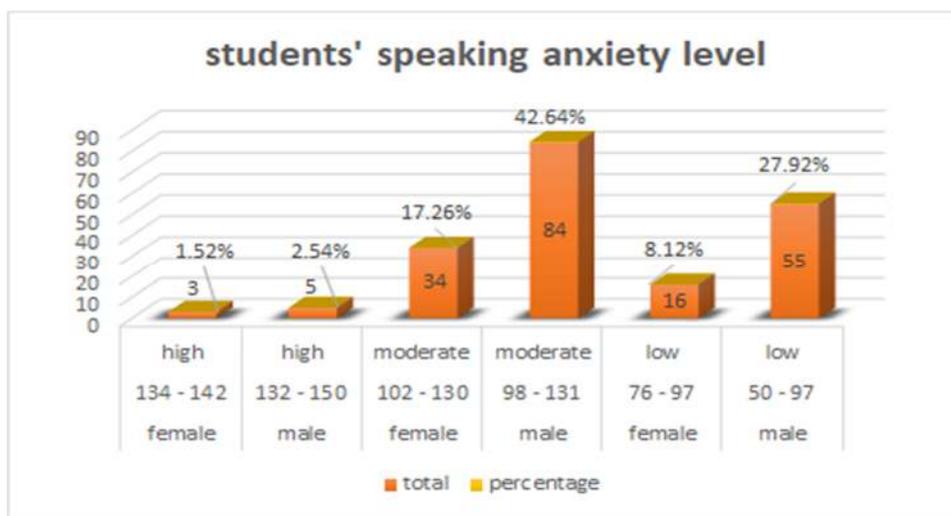


Figure 1. Students' speaking anxiety level

This research found that Engineering students at Institut Teknologi Telkom Purwokerto mostly have moderate to low public speaking anxiety levels. Overall results show that more than a half of participants (118 students = 59.90%) have moderate speaking anxiety level, followed by 36.04% (71 students) in low speaking anxiety level, and 4.06% (8 students) with high speaking anxiety level. Moreover, male students have greater numbers for all levels of speaking anxiety than female students. It can be seen consecutively from high to low levels of speaking anxiety: male students have a high level (2.54%), moderate level (42.64%), and low level (27.92%). Meanwhile, female students experience a high level (1.52%), moderate (17.26%) and low (8.12%) speaking anxiety level.

It can be seen from figure 1 that male students surpass their counterparts for all speaking anxiety levels. It contradicts Gerencheal (2016)'s and Mohtasham and Farnia (2017)'s studies in which female students have a higher level of speaking anxiety than male students. However, it cannot be said that this research supports Matsuda and Gobel (2004), Tianjian (2010), Gaibani and Elmenfi (2014), and Hwa and Peck (2017) where gender differences have nothing to do with public speaking anxiety. The likely reason for this finding can be the existing uneven distribution of represented male (73.10%) and female (26.90%). The number of female students in this research is one third of male students. Hence, it is inconsiderate to either generalize which male students have a higher level of public speaking anxiety than their counterparts or to state that gender has no significant effect of speaking anxiety. It can only be said that engineering students with low intermediate English level at Institut Teknologi Telkom

Purwokerto mostly experience a moderate and low level of public speaking anxiety.

The students' tendency responses on questionnaire items

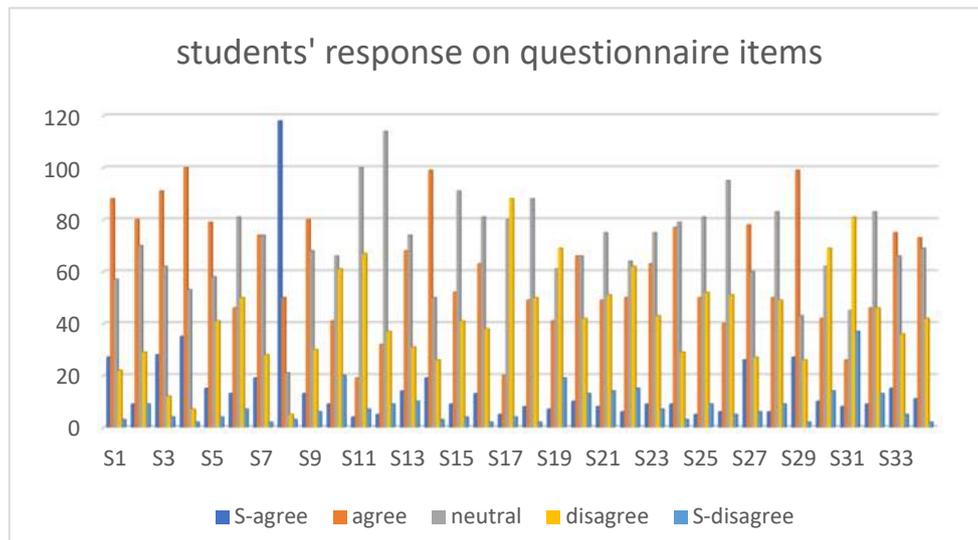


Figure 2. students' tendency responses on the questionnaire statement

Based on the most agreed responses (figure 2), students look forward to giving a speech (S8) and they have a pleasant experience right after giving a speech (S4). This might happen since they have individual and group presentation projects for their English course. It is reasonable that they feel relief whenever they finish their projects. Furthermore, some students consider it a good opportunity to practice speaking and they want to impress others.

"I think that it is good to have a chance to present ideas in front of the class. It's a rare occasion. I'm aware that later on we have to compete with other jobseekers. Mastering English is a must. It's time for me to practice" (S2, F).

"I want to give a perfect speech in front of my classmates, especially my girlfriend. I'm captain of the class, so I also have to do it properly in front of my lecturer. I don't mind being teased by my classmates as long as I don't get critics from my girlfriend. I want to impress her and my lecturer" (S3, M).

"I love presenting ideas in front of the class. I joined English private course from elementary until high school. So, I want to impress my lecturer and show that I'm worthy" (S4, M).

Despite seeing the chance of practicing speaking, my participants mostly agreed to the statements related to speaking problems. Students find difficulty concentrating when they make mistakes during the speech (S29), their thoughts become confused and jumbled during the speech (S3), and they get anxious if someone asks them about a topic they do not know (S14). The reason why these statements get most agreed by the students can be seen from the interview results. Meanwhile, the five most disagreed items found on the students' tendency responses are different from the interview results. It occurs because the interviewees are the most anxious participants who have slightly different

experiences than most moderate and low speaking anxiety level students in terms of speaking preparations and calmness. The most frequently disagreed items on the questionnaires are having trouble falling asleep the night before the speech (S31), their mind is clear when giving a speech (S17), they perspire just before starting a speech (S19), experiencing a feeling of helplessness building up inside them during the important speech (S30), and their hands tremble when they are giving a speech (S10). Inversely, the eight interview results show that students experience perspiration, trembling, nervousness, racing thought, and spoonerism during the speech.

The reasons why students are afraid of doing English public speaking ***Fear of making linguistics and pronunciation mistakes***

Despite the success of communication requires more on intelligible language than linguistics matters, fear of making linguistics and pronunciation mistakes become the main reason why students are afraid of doing public speaking. All of the participants mention that they do not want to make grammatical mistakes and focus on how to give “acceptable without being teased by classmates” pronunciation. This finding supports Hosni (2014) who explains that linguistics difficulty can be a speaking hindrance for second language learners. Here are some of the students' responses.

“I’m afraid of making mistakes ... There are a lot of things to do in English. We have to think about the English formula. (tenses/grammar [sic]) ... we have to memorize many words when we speak” (S2, F).

“I have to stay on the track and avoid any grammatical mistakes and pronunciation” ...I have to make sure that my language is correct, my way of speaking is not odd... (S4, M).

“Public speaking has always been terrifying for me. It makes me nervous. The thing is I’m afraid of making mistakes. When doing public speaking, I don’t only focus on the topic but also tenses and appearance” (S5, M).

“Doing a group presentation in Indonesian has already made me nervous. The problems will add up when doing it in English. I have to think more: the grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, friends, and lecturer” (S6, F).

“...speaking in English is a problem for me. English has different structures and pronunciation from Indonesian. It is more complicated. It has many ways to discuss things that happen now, in the past, or in the future. I also have a problem choosing words that are correct for my speech. That is why it is difficult for me to do public speaking. I have to think whether my sentences are correct or not and my pronunciations are weird or not” (S8, M).

The fear of creating mistakes both grammatical and pronunciation becomes the primary reason for students' public speaking anxiety in this research. Despite the lecturer's encouragement to speak without concerning the mistakes, students' main focus remains on it. It can be said that students' risk-taking competence and self-esteem need more attention to reduce their speaking anxiety as it is described by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014); Lee and Lee (2019). Thus, the speaking learning process should raise students' awareness of the learning core: developing self no matter how small it is. They need to know that

creating mistakes should be considered as a process of learning and use this experience as a formative evaluation for learning strategy improvement.

Fear of peers' negative comments

Following the fear of grammatical and pronunciation problems, students' most-frequently-mentioned reason for public speaking anxiety is getting negative comments from their classmates. In this research, peers' negative feedback to students speaking not only in the form of teasing, but also in the form of inquiry that is meant to test their classmates' understanding on the topic presented, their confidence, and their mental state. Therefore, it becomes a nerve-wracking experience.

"I just don't want to be teased by my friends because of my pronunciation or the way I talk. It's not about the English. I think I know it. All I think about is my friends' negative comments. I think it's more comfortable to have a speaking task with nobody present in the class, just me and the lecturer. The lecturer will not tease me, right?" (S1, F).

"I'm afraid of making mistakes and being mocked by my friends. You know, my friends are kind of bad commentators. I experienced being mocked by my friends when I was in high school. It demotivates me to practice speaking. It makes me more cautious" (S2, F).

"My classmates love challenging others when they have to do presentations. Sometimes, they ask questions only to test us, the presenter. They already knew the answer but they still ask us. For me, it feels safer to do group presentations than individual speaking project. When I have friends doing presentations, we share a burden. Unfortunately, it doesn't happen in individual [sic] public speaking...the pressure is only on me. My friends' attention is only on me. It's fearful (S5, M)

The peers' negative feedback reason is commonly found within second language (L2) speaking learners though I have not noticed whether or not it becomes a second famous reason in the previous research as it occurred in this study. This finding supports Cheng et al. (1999), Ali (2017), and Grieve et al. (2021) one of the reasons for speaking anxiety.

Fear of being assessed by their lecturer

Another reason for students speaking anxiety that usually links to fear of peer criticism is fear of being tested or assessed. As it is explained by Gerencheal (2016), Sayuri (2016), and Grieve et al. (2021) teachers' evaluation toward students' speaking practice can also develop students' speaking anxiety. The interview finding related to the assessment's pressure on students that in line with those researchers' statements are:

"Thinking about being assessed by my lecturer puts pressure on me. I'm getting sweaty" (S1, F).

"I love presenting ideas in front of the class. The problem is being assessed by the lecturer. It makes me cautious" (S4, M).

"When we write in English, there is a chance to do revision. It doesn't happen for speaking. The moment you say your ideas, it is sent automatically to the audience. It will be embarrassing to frequently revise our words. The grade will also be bad" (S6, F).

"Even though my lecturer emphasizes that it's okay to have Banyumasan or

whatever English accent, it is not that simple. My speaking is meant to be assessed that follows English rules. So, I keep thinking about structure and vocabulary during my speech to get a good grade” (S8, M).

It shows the need for a learning paradigm shift among students. In this context, they are product-oriented (focus on getting a good grade) rather than process-oriented (do the project, take a risk to practice speaking as a process of speaking skills development). It seems that the lecturer's encouragement will be ineffective to reduce speaking anxiety as long as students still chase the speaking perfection to get a good grade. The lecturers need to raise students' awareness of being brave to take risks, making mistakes, and experiencing the learning process. By doing so, students can develop their self-esteem and eventually can speak confidently in front of their classmates.

Feeling embarrassed by being an attention center in the class

From the interview excerpt, students' feel embarrassed due to fear of attention, which makes them build self defense mechanisms. They avoid getting more attention by describing simple topics to stay in their comfort zone. This finding supports Sayuri's (2016) explanation where students are shy due to the attention they get. It influences their confidence to deliver their speech.

“I just hope that no one will listen to my speech. I don't like being the center of attention. The more they ignore me, the safer it gets. I will not get embarrassed by my speech” (S1, F).

“For me, I feel happy to see my friends are busy talking to each other while I have to do my public speaking. They will not bother my speech and notice me making mistakes. I feel nervous when my friends pay attention to my speech. So, I have to stick to simple ideas to make me safe. I mean I have to stay in my safety zone by doing simple talk. If I talk about interesting or popular things, they will listen to my speech. I don't want that. I don't want to embarrass myself” (S2, F).

It is interesting that in this research, the fear of getting attention occurs only to female students. None of male interviewees report the similar experience. If the nature of the gender division in the Engineering programme is taken into consideration, this is a common phenomenon. All classes at Institut Teknologi Telkom Purwokerto are dominated by male students. Female students are rarely active in the class unless they are high performance students. Hence, it might explain what is happening for this fear of attention and embarrassment.

Difficulty in structuring ideas from their L1 to target language (TL)

The finding illustrates that students struggle to find the appropriate way of expressing their ideas due to insufficient linguistic repertoire (both vocabularies and grammar). They find difficulty in transforming their ideas into English as their target language.

“I have problems structuring my ideas into English way. It's different from Indonesian and complicated” (S3, M).

“I have to study more on the topic and put it in English. It's problematic. The vocabulary is complicated and I know little about it. I also have to use tenses. There are so many tenses to choose from. It's confusing” (S5, M).

“I know the idea in Indonesian but it is hard to find the right expression in English”

(S6, F).

"It is hard for me to let alone express ideas in Indonesian. I have to translate it into English. It becomes more complicated to present it in front of the class" (S7, M).

It confirms Hosni's (2014) findings where students cannot create simple sentences in English despite the long-time learning grammar rules. In this research, students have a 5-year minimum of learning English experience. Their previous learning focuses on grammar, reading, and writing to pass the national exam. However, they still have a problem structuring ideas in English and delivering it into spoken form.

Forgetting words or ideas and experiencing spoonerism

As Ali (2017), Cheng et al. (1999), Hosni (2014), Sayuri (2016), and Zhang (2009) explain, students find difficulty delivering their speech due to their nervousness which is built up inside them. Their speaking ability is still insufficient no matter what they know about English. In this research, students experience spoonerism and they do not know what to say.

"When I have to speak in front of the class, I don't know what to say. It's just blanked no matter how good my preparation is. Sometimes, I make weird unstructured words or what is it? tongue twist... blb..blb sounds?" (S1, F).

"I always feel terrified when I have to do public speaking. I always forget things that I have to say whenever I see a lot of people watching me. My hands are cold... I usually keep repeating information if I forget what to say" (S2, F).

"My focus spreads on a lot of things when I have to do public speaking. I have to think harder and deal with my nervousness... This usually causes me to forget the ideas that I want to share" (S4, M).

"I prefer writing a page of a story to speaking in front of the class. I have a lot of ideas to share, but when it comes to presenting it in front of many students, I just don't know what to say. It feels like my tongue is frozen. It doesn't work properly. As a result, my ideas will be messed up and I feel stifflingly hot" (S7, M).

Students feel unsafe being watched by their classmates. Even student 7 has a preference to write a page of English story rather than do public speaking. This is interesting since both speaking and writing are productive skills which do not only need linguistics application but also knowledge transformation. However, they struggle on speaking delivery and keep forgetting their ideas or give irrelevant information when it comes to public speaking as McLoughlin (2006) described. It shows that students need oral fluency development and most importantly self-esteem development to speak publicly.

Lack of speaking practice experience

As it has been mentioned in the previous section, students' previous English learning is meant to succeed on a national exam which focuses on reading and writing. Speaking skill is still underdeveloped. Subsequently, their speaking project becomes nerve-wracking due to lack of practice experience.

"I am not from Java. My English teacher in Senior High School never asks me to practice speaking in English. We learn English to do the national exam. This (the English course at his university [sic]) is the first class that insists on practicing English speaking" (S3, M).

“I am not used to it. I joined a private English course when I was in junior and senior high school. However, it focuses on how to prepare myself for the national exam. English in school also focuses on reading and writing. I rarely practice English speaking. I’m also not an active student. I join the discussion only when the teacher tells me to do so. It’s also done in Indonesian. It is hard for me to express ideas by doing English public speaking” (S7, M).

In other words, assisted performance, scaffolding, and task repetition might help them to practice speaking more and develop their autonomy and automaticity. Also, out-class speaking activity which usually becomes a challenge in the context of EFL needs to be regulated as suggested by Thornbury (2007).

Speaking delivery driven thoughts and unfamiliar topic as a hindrance

Another cause of public anxiety that is experienced by students are concerning more on the speaking delivery and having unfamiliar topics to discuss.

“I focus on thinking about not creating weird ways of speech. I just don’t want to be teased by my friends because of my pronunciation or the way I talk. Sometimes, it hinders me to share my ideas” (S1, F).

“I want to impress my girlfriend and also my lecturer so I think a lot about my way of speaking. The more I think, the more I cannot say anything. I’m worried about discussing a topic that is new for me. I’m thinking about my lecturer’s opinion. She might want to laugh at me though she never does that in the class” (S3, M).

“It will be more difficult if I get a topic that I am not familiar with. For example, I experience presenting about solar cells and alternative energy for my group presentation. It is not the topic that I meet every day. So, I have to study more on the topic and put it in English. It’s problematic” (S5, M).

This speaking activity which is driven by “giving a perfect speech in front of others” may link to the reason why they keep forgetting ideas whenever they speak in front of the class. They keep busy thinking and trying to give the best during the speech instead of trying to deliver a story. They focus on “how to do it” rather than on “what story they want to tell”. This finding links to Ward et al. (2016) who explain that speaking is a complex process which demands the speakers to think about a lot of aspects not only the content but also the audience and the delivery itself. In this research, topic unfamiliarity occurs in the group presentation project where the lecturer prepares the topic to be chosen by students. Meanwhile, students have freedom to choose their own topic for their individual speech projects. The idea of giving a group presentation project to allow peer interaction and scaffolding as Thornbury, (2007), Zhang et al. (2020) seems not really helpful for student 5. It is worth considering the nature of student group work whether there is a high competition or learning-together motif.

Lecturer’s reflexive identity as an additional pressure

It is surprising that lecturers’ reflexive identity also becomes pressure for students regardless of the emotionally supportive relationship built in the class.

“My lecturer frequently says ‘it’s okay to make mistakes and have thick accents’. I am from Purwokerto with “medok” (thick [sic]) accents.... She graduates from

university in the UK, it puts more pressure on me. She will focus on my pronunciation and speech, right?" (S4, M).

"It will be embarrassing to revise our words frequently. Especially if you have a lecturer who studied in the UK. The demand will be high, not only on structure and pronunciation. There are a lot of things, like eye contact, facial expression, and so on" ... She usually encourages us to say whatever we want to say. She says that it is only a practice. But, it's graded and she uses English with native and knows how to use it well" (S6, F).

During the learning process, the lecturer employs teaching techniques which are in line with Zhang et al. (2020)'s ways to develop students' motivation in speaking class. Students have group presentations to allow student-to-student interaction. They also have individual speech projects to give even participation and reduce the domination tendency from certain students. They have freedom to choose a topic for their individual speech projects. The lecturer develops students' self-esteem by encouraging them to embrace their identity for having different accents and ways of speaking from the native English speakers. She also creates an egalitarian relationship with students to make them feel safe, motivate them to practice speaking, and allow them to make mistakes. However, this finding shows that those ways of developing students' motivation need adjustment by considering the lecturer's reflexivity. Some students might be inspired and motivated to learn and practice using English by having a lecturer who graduated from English speaking country, others may find it as an additional pressure.

The pressure of speaking appointment system used

In order to determine who will present individual speech, students are chosen randomly. This technique is used because students are reluctant to do individual public speaking even though they are usually active during the learning process. Meanwhile, group presentations are scheduled based on the raffled results. No spontaneous and random calling used to determine whose turn to speak in a group project. It is interesting to know that the random technique used by the lecturer to choose students presenting ideas in front of the class still makes them nervous despite the lengthy preparation. They have two weeks at the minimum to prepare their speech. Also, the later they are appointed; the longer the preparation time they have. The participants' reasons are:

"I feel nervous whenever I get a speaking task. My heart beats faster when the lecturer calls my friend that is close to my name on the students' list. I don't know why" (S1, F).

"I always prepare my speech and be ready whenever the lecturer chooses me. You know, it's getting tense since my lecturer chooses names randomly. I have a chance to be chosen whenever there is an English class. I'm waiting to be chosen to show what I already prepared, but I am also afraid of it, at the same time" (S3, M).

"I feel trembling and my hands get cold the moment the lecturer calls us - one by one to do public speaking. I know that there is a chance for not being chosen on that day. I also have a 50:50 chance to be appointed, right?" (S6, F).

This finding may or may not link to the lack of preparation as it is described by Cheng et al. (1999) and Marwan cited in Ali (2017). Students in this research

are not appointed to do impromptu speaking as it is done by Mohtasham and Farnia (2017). Despite the length of preparation time, they still feel unready and get anxious when the lecturer randomly calls them one by one.

CONCLUSION

These research findings show that Engineering students at Institut Teknologi Telkom Purwokerto mostly experience a moderate level of speaking anxiety. Despite the greater number of male students than their counterparts in all public speaking anxiety levels, it cannot be generated that they have higher public speaking anxiety than female students. It is because of the uneven gender distribution number in the Engineering programme where female students who participate in this research are only one third of their counterparts. Based on the qualitative data finding, the reason why students have public speaking as a nerve-wracking experience supports previous research. The public speaking anxiety reason that support other research are afraid of making linguistics and pronunciation mistakes, getting peers negative comments, high concern of being graded, having embarrassment feeling due to fear of being spotlight, having problem of structuring ideas from their L1 into target language, forgetting words or ideas due to the pressure inside of them during the speech, lack of speaking practice experience, and dealing with speaking hindrance in the form of unfamiliar topics and speaking delivery driven activity. Two additional reasons found in this research that the researcher might take for granted during the learning process are her reflexive part of being graduated from an English-speaking country and the speaking appointment system used which inevitably puts pressure on students. These findings can be used as valuable consideration to design appropriate speaking pedagogy especially in the context of English for specific purposes where students learn English as a secondary course for their study programme. Further research on what strategies students used during public speaking and whether group presentation is more effective than individual speech projects in developing students' public speaking motivation and performance are required. Some students still experience nervousness in dealing with the speaking appointment technique regardless of their preparation time, further research exploring to what extent the use of random appointment technique in public speaking activity influences students' self-perception of preparedness is needed.

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APPENDIX

Students' tendency responses on McCroskey's (2013) questionnaire items ranging from the most agreed to the most disagreed.

Statement number and its items
S8. I look forward to giving a speech.
S4. Right after giving a speech I feel that I have had a pleasant experience.
S29. When I make a mistake while giving a speech, I find it hard to concentrate on the parts that follow.
S3. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
S14. I get anxious if someone asks me something about my topic that I don't know.
S1. While preparing for giving a speech, I feel tense and nervous.
S27. I do poorer on speeches because I am anxious.
S5. I get anxious when I think about a speech coming up.
S7. Although I am nervous just before starting a speech, I soon settle down after starting and feel calm and comfortable.
S9. When the instructor announces a speaking assignment in class, I can feel myself getting tense.
S33. I feel anxious while waiting to give my speech.
S2. I feel tense when I see the words "speech" and "public speech" on a course outline when studying.
S24. While giving a speech, I know I can control my feelings of tension and stress.
S34. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.
S13. I am in constant fear of forgetting what I prepared to say.
S20. My heart beats very fast just as I start a speech.
S12. I enjoy preparing for a speech.
S11. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
S26. I feel comfortable and relaxed in the hour or so just before giving a speech.
S15. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
S18. I do not dread giving a speech.
S32. My heart beats very fast while I present a speech.
S28. I feel anxious when the teacher announces the date of a speaking assignment.
S25. I breathe faster just before starting a speech.
S16. I feel that I am in complete possession of myself while giving a speech.
S6. I have no fear of giving a speech.
S23. Realizing that only a little time remains in a speech makes me very tense and anxious.
S21. I experience considerable anxiety while sitting in the room just before my speech starts.
S22. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
S10. My hands tremble when I am giving a speech.
S30. During an important speech I experience a feeling of helplessness building up inside me.
S19. I perspire just before starting a speech.
S17. My mind is clear when giving a speech.
S31. I have trouble falling asleep the night before a speech.