

# Factors Causing Language Anxiety of EFL Students in Classroom Presentation

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify: (1) Types of foreign language anxiety experienced by the students (2) factors causing language anxiety of EFL students. This research applied qualitative descriptive research method. It was carried out at Graduate Program of Makassar State University. The subject of this study were six students majoring in English who conducted a presentation seminar. They are all selected by using purposive sampling. The researcher observed and interviewed all G-class students conducting presentation seminar from February to April to identify type and factor of anxiety experienced by the students in a presentation seminar. The researcher made observations using video recording devices and field notes. Based on the result, there were three types of anxiety experienced by the students when doing presentation using English, namely anxiety related to positive (facilitative anxiety), anxiety related to negative or destructive (debilitative anxiety) and anxiety which was not related to any of them. The researcher called it as non-effecting anxiety. As for some factors causing the students feel anxious in their speaking ability, generally they divided into two main factors, namely internal and external factors, but in the case of this study, the researcher found only internal factors.

**Keywords:** *anxiety, EFL students, presentation*

## Introduction

Speaking a foreign language in front of people usually triggers an anxiety. Occasionally, excessive anxiety occurs when EFL student becomes very frightened in delivering his/her ideas in unexpected circumstances. It can make the appearance of the student embarrassing and slip of the tongue. As the result, the student gets a failure in his/her speaking.

Everything has two sides, mostly we consider anxiety as a negative affective (Debilitative anxiety) variable, but it does not demonstrate to be necessarily negative in its effect on speaking. It has been discovered that sometimes EFL learners who are anxious do better than those who are not. The higher levels of anxiety may be related to the higher levels of risk-taking (Smith, 2016), so that those who actually attempts to produce more difficult structures in his/her speaking performance may report more anxious than those who are content to remain at a lower level of attainment, Kleinmann, 1997 as cited in ( Shangping & Qingyan, 2015).

Numerous empirical latest studies related to second and foreign language anxiety have pointed out that anxiety can be found in about each aspect of second/foreign language learning. Several latest studies were explained below:

First, the research about An Investigation of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Its Relationship With Students' Achievement (Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz, 2010) from University of Sargodha. They examined anxiety in undergraduate English classes is related to various factors that can trigger anxiety during the learning process and the relationship of anxiety to student achievement. They found several facts that speaking in front of others was considered as the biggest cause of anxiety, as well as concerns about grammatical errors, pronunciation and the inability to speak spontaneously. Finally, the result of their current study showed that language anxiety and the student's attainment are negatively related to each other.

Second research was conducted by Yusi Chen (Chen, n.d.2015) which is entitled "ESL Students' Language Anxiety In-Class Oral Presentations". The method in this research, Chen explored the intercourse between ESL students' speaking anxiety and their presentation performance, factors causing speaking anxiety during presentations, and strategies to manage L2 students' speaking anxiety in presentations. In his findings, he revealed that all participants get anxious during oral presentations.

Third, Muhammad Tanveer (Tanveer, 2008) with his research about "Investigation of the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners in learning speaking skills and the influence it casts on communication in the target language investigated the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners from three different perspectives: from the perspectives of ESL/EFL learners, ESL/EFL practitioners, and ESL/EFL teachers. His research was conducted in the context of the University of Glasgow, with multi-lingual groups of students belonging to different cultures and nationalities. The results of his study obviously show that despite the use of modern communicative language teaching strategies from highly experienced language teachers, most students who learn English still have a high level of language anxiety.

Fourth, Lucas, Miraflores & Go (Lucas, Miraflores, & Go, 2011) Investigated the causes of anxiety in English language learning of foreign students in the Philippines. A survey was conducted on 250 foreign students were the respondents of this research. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) as cited in (Salehi & Marefat, 2014) was used to obtain data for this study. The respondents from this study were asked to rate every statement in FLCAS using a 5-point interval in which 1 refers strongly to agree, 2 to agree, 3 to neutral, 4 to disagree, and 5 strongly disagree. The researchers repeated items 6, 7, 10 and 13 in the FLCAS questionnaire and changed the terms foreign language classes into English classes. As the result of the data show that foreign students experienced anxiety for fear of negative evaluations from the teacher as well as from their peers. it is caused by students' concerns about class activities and assignments that they must fulfill in class.

Fifth, Puvaneswary Selvam, and friends (Selvam et al., n.d.2010) investigated Effects of debilitating and facilitating anxiety on speaking in second language among Malaysian EFL. In their study, they adapted the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which was designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) as the data collection instrument in their research. There are 33 items of the questionnaire scaled with a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. That questionnaire was apportioned to a random sample of 100 ESL adult learners which consists of students from Executive Diploma Program. Their research investigates how anxiety affects the way of speaking in second language (L2) Malaysian ESL students in terms of two different dimensions that are debilitating and facilitative.. The finding of their research shows that 70% of the students have negative attitudes towards speaking second language (L2) despite of having facilitative anxiety

in speaking English as L2. Although in this study showed a number of students have negative attitudes toward speaking second language, but the results indicated that generally, the ESL adult learners in Malaysia still have positive attitudes towards speaking second language (L2). The students are well aware of the importance of English in their daily life and they have a strong desire to improve their level of proficiency. Even though they felt that speaking English was quite difficult and stressful, they did not consider it as an obstacle, in fact they considered continuing to improve their English when they graduated.

All the studies above showed the correlation between students' participation and foreign language anxiety in language class. A number of studies found that a student with higher level of anxiety will get lower scores while few others found that a learner with lower level of anxiety will get higher scores. The second believes that anxiety brings competitiveness that motivates learners to study hard, they believe in the positive effect of anxiety. As stated by Khairi and Nurul Lina, 2010, moderate anxiety feeling in second language learning may assist students to desire to learn, to motivate and to make them realize that they have to try harder in term of acquiring the target language.

Those five studies above tried to examine second and foreign language anxiety in term of undergraduate and diploma program stages, while the present study tried to investigate foreign language anxiety in graduate program stage. The reason why the researcher conducted the research for this stage was to reveal the existence, types of anxiety, and factors causing language anxiety of EFL students in classroom presentation in higher educational level.

According to the second previous study above, it was done to find the connection between second language speaking anxiety (L2) and the results of presentations in classroom, factors that cause language anxiety during a presentation, and strategies to manage speaking anxiety when doing presentations in classroom.. Furthermore, after revealing the factors and the coping strategy to regulate the anxiety in oral presentations, the researcher of this previous study did not identify and classify clearly the kinds of anxiety either facilitative or debilitative that the students experienced during oral presentation even though he mentioned those two types of anxiety in the first chapter of his research. The only the fifth study of the five previous researches focused on revealing two types of anxiety either facilitative or debilitative anxiety. But it was not in public speech such or oral classroom presentation case Thus, to fill this gap, the researcher conducted his research to accomplish this work.

Based on the gaps above, the researcher tried to identify the types of language anxiety experienced by the EFL students in presentation seminar and also to investigate the factors causing language anxiety of the EFL students in presentation seminar.

## Method

This research applied the purposive sampling. The researcher selected participants according to the needs of the study. This means that purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which the researcher counts on the results of his own decision when selecting members of the population to participate in the study. These participants were expected to be able to help the researcher to understand the phenomena under the investigation.

In this case, the participants of the research are the students of graduate English program at State University of Makassar. The research focused on seminar presentation of the students at

graduate English program 2015/2016 academic year where it consists of seven classes, videlicet, A class to G class. However, the researcher took one class of them, namely G class purposively which consists of eighteen students. The researcher observed the students' presentation especially in their thesis proposal and result examination to know the types and factors causing language anxiety of the students in classroom presentation. In addition, the students of this class selected as the research participants by regarding to some reasons (1) The students looked anxious in presentation, (2) The students are English graduate program, as the writer mentioned in chapter two, he explored the anxiety that experienced by the students of higher educational level.

## **Instruments**

### ***Classroom observation***

The researcher attended the presentation seminar as a participant and observer concurrently. In doing this research, the researcher totally involved with the subjects in the research setting. During the observation the researcher used the observation sheet to checklist the students' symptoms of anxiety.

### ***Recording***

Recording is an important instrument that used by the researcher to save the data and to avoid losing it. The writer recorded the students' presentation by digital camera as a tool to record the data. It is used as an instrument to keep the data to be authentic during the student presentation while in the interview session, the writer used audio recording device.

### ***Interview***

The researcher used interview to get the data which supported the result of the classroom observation. There are three fundamental types of research interview:

structured interview, semi-structured interview and unstructured interview. Structured interviews are, essentially, verbally administered questions, in which a list of predetermined questions are asked. Semi-structured interviews are the interviews which consist of a number of key questions which can help to establish the scope which is to be explored, and also accord the interviewer or interviewee to get more detailed ideas or responses. Unstructured interviews are questions that are not focused in terms of research. Unstructured interviews usually take a long time and allow a bit difficult to manage, and to participate in. In this research, the researcher applied the second type of interviews because it was focused in this research where the questions will be given independently.

### ***Field note***

Field notes are used by researchers to keep in mind and record observable response such as activities, occurrence, and other main items of student presentations. All field notes generally consist of two parts, the first one is Descriptive information that accurately document factual data such as date, time, the settings, actions, behaviors, and conversations that is being observed by the researcher. The second is Reflective information which the researcher records his/her thoughts, ideas, questions, and concerns as he/she is conducting the observation. Field notes must be completed as soon as possible after observation is done.

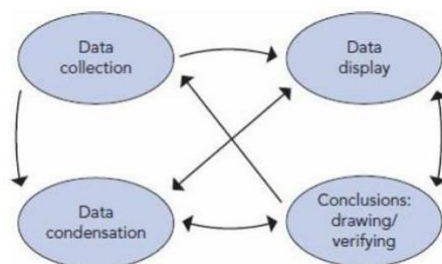
## *Procedure*

The following procedure of collecting data cover several types: The researcher attended the classroom as a student and observer to see the students' presentation, and asked permission to the lecturer for doing observation until the end of the presentation. After that, the researcher observed the presenter's performance in the classroom presentation for each meeting constantly until the researcher get enough data. In conducting observation, the researcher recorded the student appearance and the utterances that produced by the student as a presenter during the presentation of this research by using video recorder. The recording carried out in relaxing and natural ways as a subject (student) is close to the writer before recording. Importantly, the researcher did inform the observed student about the specific objective of the observation to keep the situation of the presentation real as natural as possible. While recording, the researcher made notes related to the students' presentation in the classroom.

In the end of exploring the research, the researcher carried out the interview of the students, this interview was conducted with a semi-structured face-to-face method to gather perceptions, experiences and strategies that are often used by students to fight and suppress language anxiety in presentations. The data from this instrument revealed the type of anxiety which was experienced by the students and support to answer the factors that may cause students' language anxiety in classroom presentation. to make participants tell their stories freely, the writer tried to focus on interactions that create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere in order to get reliable information. The research transcribed, identified, and classified the data; the researcher only transcribed the students' interview result in the classroom presentation.

## *Technique of Data Analysis*

In analyzing the data which had been collected, the analysis covers three important activities; Data collection, data display, data condensation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, Johnny Saldana (last), 2014) The model of Miles and Huberman data analysis is described below :



Picture 1. Components of Data Analysis interactive model (2014:33)

**Data collection:** In this study, the researcher collected the data related to research questions by using the instruments, such as: Observation, audio and video recording, field notes, and interview. In collecting the data, firstly the researcher observed the students presentation process as a non-participant observer for one hour and thirty minutes per meeting, non-participant observations did not interrupt the students presentation were undertaken. As a participant observer, the researcher watched the presentation process by sitting at the back while writing field notes. In writing field notes, the researcher wrote everything that he saw and heard. In collecting the data, the researcher also used audio and video recording device to the students' presentation. The recording carried out in a relaxed and natural way because the subjects or presenters had a fairly close relationship with

the researcher. Before recording, the researcher firstly requested permission from the subject, and the researcher informed them that the recording was intended for the purposes of analyzing class presentations and they were asked to make presentations as usual without having to be affected by the recording. Importantly, the researcher did not inform the observed students about the specific objective of the observation to keep the presentation situation as real and natural as possible. In the end of collecting the data, the researcher conducted the interview to the students to reveal the feeling experienced by the students during presentation and to answer research question number two.

**Data display:** After collecting the data through classroom observations, audio and video recording, field notes, and interview. The researcher listened carefully to the students' utterances from audio and watched video recording once more and repeat it if it is necessary. The researcher only transcribed the interview that was conducted to the students. The data from interviews were transcribed to make the researcher easier in coding the data to answer research questions.

**Data condensation:** In data condensation process, after transcribing the data into written transcript, the researcher identified (coding), selected (labeling), and classified based on the analyzing needs which was related to the topic of the research. The transcript was coded to answer the research questions number one and two.

**Conclusions – drawing/verifying:** after displaying and coding the data, The third part of the data analysis activity is the conclusion. Since the beginning of data collection, qualitative analysis apprehends and expounds the meaning of something by recording patterns, explanations, cause and effect, and propositions.

## **Results**

The result of the research based on the research questions which is classified into two main parts. The first part is identification of foreign language anxiety types experienced by the students in presentation seminar which found through observation checklist, video recording, field note and interview. The second part is investigation of factors causing foreign language anxiety of the students in classroom presentation through the data obtained from interview.

### **Types of language anxiety experienced by EFL students in classroom presentation**

After obtaining the data through audio recording, field note, observation checklist, and interview, the researcher found that there were three types of language anxiety experienced and showed by the EFL students in presentation namely facilitative, debilitating, and non-effecting anxiety. Those two types (facilitative and debilitating) of foreign language anxiety supported by the theory of Alpert and Haber (1960) which obviously points out the difference between facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety by pointing out that anxiety can be positive or negative. facilitating anxiety, this type of anxiety always encourages students to do things more efficiently and motivates students to make extra efforts to overcome feelings of anxiety. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety is said to be the opposite. Beside Facilitative and debilitating anxieties, another type of anxiety that the researcher found in classroom presentation was non-effecting anxiety. This type of anxiety happened if the students experience low level of anxiety. The analyses of the data was based on the sentence structure.

### ***Facilitative anxiety***

All the students were anxious in speaking related to their performance in seminar presentation, but some could control their moderate feeling as a facilitative anxiety while the others could not. In terms of actual language use, it is normal for second and foreign language learners to feel anxious. As stated by Khairi and Nurul Lina (Khairi Izwan Abdullah, n.d.2010) moderate feeling of anxiety in foreign and second language can assist students to build efforts to learn, propel and make students realize that they must strive harder to acquire the target language.

### ***Debilitative Anxiety***

Anxiety is sometimes a negative way of showing the feelings. This appears when the students face something really complicated, especially under a lot of pressure. Anxiety can affect the students in many ways, for instance, the way they think, the way they perform in public, and the way they speak. It was supported by Parker and Harrison (1995) cited in (Selvam et al., n.d.) , As they said that the destructive anxiety refers to "extreme levels of anxiety" which can provide a poor response when using a second language or a foreign language.

### ***Non-Effecting Anxiety***

Beside Facilitative and debilitative anxieties, another type of anxiety that the researcher found in classroom presentation was non-effecting anxiety. This type of anxiety happened if the students experience low level of anxiety. As the result, they may be so eased and having an easy-going mood that they do not really learn or acquire any new things.

### **Factors causing foreign language anxiety of the learners in presentation seminar**

The researcher found several factors inducing the students to feel anxious in their speaking ability, generally they were divided into two main factors, namely internal and external factors, but in the case of this study, the researcher found only internal factors, namely *fear of making mistakes, fear of facing questions from participants, fear of failing the exam, inability to use the appropriate vocabulary when explaining the presentation material, fear of being the center of attention or lack of self-confidence, inadequate in using English proficiently, lack of preparation and practice, poor of pronunciation, inferior feelings, and lack of presentation experience.*

## **Discussion**

### **Types of language anxiety experienced by EFL students in classroom presentation**

Alpert and Haber (1960) as cited in (Piniel & Csizér, 2013) proposed two types of foreign language anxiety which obviously points out the difference between facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety by pointing out that anxiety can sometimes be positive or negative. facilitating anxiety, this type of anxiety always encourages students to do things more efficiently and motivates students to make extra efforts to overcome feelings of anxiety. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety is said to be the opposite. Young (Dolly J. Young, 1986) stated that debilitating anxiety could lead to poor results in learning a second and a foreign language, while facilitating anxiety could lead to an increase in good results. Furthermore, the researcher found the new type of anxiety that experienced by a student namely non-effecting anxiety. This type of anxiety happened if the students experience low level of anxiety. When anxiety does not affect the students' feeling either

positive or negative affective especially in case of presentation, the researcher named it non-effecting anxiety.

Based on the previous findings, anxiety once again is normal symptom that could happen to everyone. As stated by Khairi and Nurul Lina (Khairi Izwan Abdullah, n.d.), moderate feeling of anxiety in foreign and second language could assist students to build efforts to learn, propel and make students realize that they must strive harder to acquire the target language. Students who experience high anxiety, they sometimes consider that learning a second and foreign language as a threat and they respond to the situation by showing poor learning outcomes. In case of this research, the researcher focused on student's classroom presentation in presentation seminar. The findings revealed that all students who participated in presentation seminar experienced language anxiety.

### **Factors causing foreign language anxiety of the learners in seminar presentation**

Subsequent finding from this study are the factors that cause foreign language anxiety in students in seminar presentations. When students were asked about the reasons for language anxiety in their presentation, they assumed that the anxiety could be related to various factors.

Given the fact that language anxiety is a psychological concept, it is most likely derived from two main factors. According to schwarts, (as cited in Tanveer, 2008) namely internal and external. The internal factor such the students' self perceptions or perceptions about others (peers, teachers, interlocutors, etc.), target language communication situations, the students' beliefs about second or foreign language learning and linguistics difficulties.

In addition, external factors such as different social setting, social status, relationships between speakers and interlocutors and gender differences are also important factors that cause language anxiety for EFL students. Based on the interview result, the researcher found ten internal factors causing language anxiety of the students in presentation seminar. The internal factors that the students stated were elaborated and corresponded with some theories and previous findings.

The first finding from factors causing the students to feel anxious in presentation seminar was fear of making mistakes. According to Ur, Penny (2000) as cited in (Yabarmase, 2013), Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom, worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or loosing face, or simply shy the attention that their speech attracts. The fear of making mistakes is one the reasons of why students are not able to communicate with use of English and feel anxious. Students fear to make mistakes increase especially when they speak to a critical audience. At the college level, especially for graduate program students, they are generally the critical audience. In this case, the student was anxious for she was afraid of making mistakes in front of her examiners and the students as the audiences where they are supposed as the critical audiences.

The second finding from factors causing the students to feel anxious in presentation seminar was fear of facing the unpredictable questions. In the last part of seminar presentation, there is always question and answer session where in this session, the participants or audiences are allowed to ask some questions to the presenter related to his/her topic. In that situation, the student who presents the seminar usually feel unpleasant and anxious for being asked. When the researcher asked the student about the factor made him feel anxious in his presentation performance, the

student revealed one of the factors that made him feel anxious was the question from the audiences.

The third finding from factors causing the student to feel anxious in presentation seminar was fear of failure in the exam.

The fourth finding of factors causing the student to feel anxious in presentation seminar was inability to find proper words to express idea. From the results of students' interview, the researcher found that the student felt anxious for she worried if she could not call the name of the objects which must be transformed into English.

The fifth finding of factors causing the student to feel anxious in presentation seminar was lack of self-confidence or fear of being the focus of attention. As Nunan (1999) as cited in (Januariza & Hendriani, 2016) said that students who lack confidence naturally suffer from fear in communication.

The sixth finding of factors causing the students to feel anxious in presentation seminar was the lack of proficiency. EFL students will be required cognitively to make presentations in English. In addition, they need to consider the idea and content of the presentation while first translating the idea and content from Bahasa into English. Conversely, for EFL students whose speaking abilities have good standards that come up like native speakers in delivering presentations in English, they don't need to spend more time translating ideas or presentation content. In this case, the ability of students in English is still far from the level and standards like native speakers because they still pay too much attention to the processing and translation of presentation ideas. Therefore, students consider the level of English language skills to be the main factor that can cause anxiety to speak in class.

The seventh finding of factors causing the students to feel anxious in presentation seminar was the insufficient preparation and practice. In extract 32, the student mentioned three factors caused him to feel anxious when presenting his proposal, one of them was the lack of preparation or practice, the consequence of it may lead him to be anxious.

The eighth finding of factors causing the students to feel anxious in presentation seminar was the poor of pronunciation. It can be seen from the student's statement in extract 33, In the interview session, the researcher asked the student whether he felt confident before doing his presentation, and the student asserted that he was not really confident. The reason why the student did not feel confident was because his pronunciation was not quite good.

The ninth finding of factors causing the students to feel anxious in presentation seminar was the student's perception about examiners or feeling inferior to others. Based on the result of the interview, which was conducted to the students, it was found that the student felt anxious was because of two significant reasons.

The last finding of factors causing the students to feel anxious in presentation seminar was insufficient experience in doing presentation.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings and the discussions in the previous section, it can be concluded that there are three types of anxiety experienced by the students of Graduate Program State University of Makassar at class G in EFL classroom presentation. The EFL students experienced three types of

anxiety namely facilitative, debilitating and non-effecting anxiety. Facilitative and debilitating anxiety based on the theory of Alpert and Haber (1960) as cited in (Negari & Rezaabadi, 2012) where they have obviously pointed out the differences between facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety by pointing out that anxiety can be both positive and negative effects on performance.

Meanwhile, the researcher found a new type of anxiety experienced by the student during classroom presentation. The new type of anxiety that the researcher found was non-effecting anxiety. As the researcher mentioned about facilitating anxiety, this type of anxiety always supports students to perform more efficiently and propel students to make additional efforts to overcome feelings of anxiety. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety is said to be the opposite. On other hand, non-effecting anxiety can be identified when the students were not really stimulated to work harder to prepare themselves in doing such presentation and were not stimulated to perceive a foreign language as a threatening to them.

The students' anxiety in speaking especially in classroom presentation was caused by several factors. Those are fear of making mistakes, fear of facing the questions, fear of failing the exam, inability to find proper words to express, lack of self-confidence, lack of proficiency, insufficient preparation and practice, poor pronunciation, the students' perception about examiners or feeling inferior to others, insufficient experience in presentation.

Based on the conclusions that have been put forward above, the following implication and a recommendation for further related research are really suggested by the researcher. All English teachers are expected to know and to be aware about the differences of their student's anxiety, where anxiety does not only cause the negative effect (Debilitative) to the student learning task especially in speaking and classroom presentation but also can be a positive effect (Facilitative) where facilitative anxiety always supports learners to perform more efficiently and it encourages learners to make additional effort to achieve their goals.

By knowing the types of anxiety experienced by the students, the teacher expected to be able to transform their students' anxiety into a motivation (facilitative anxiety) which can cause the students to work harder. Teachers should set up the confidence class atmosphere to reveal risk takers. Because, the students need teacher's recompense and deference to change their anxiety into motivation. If this atmosphere is applied by the teachers in their classrooms, feeling of anxiety in learning a foreign language can be transformed into facilitative anxiety, also, they can be risk-takers in many situations especially when doing presentation or share their ideas,

This study can be a guide for EFL learners and English teachers to size and assess students' anxiety in speaking. This can also be used as a reference to create a better teaching and learning environment. To explore more deeply about problems related to language anxiety, it is necessary to conduct further research

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