

INDONESIAN ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPEAKING ENGLISH AND ARABIC ANXIETY: A COMPARISON

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Abstract

This article reveals the phenomenon of speaking anxiety in two foreign languages, Arabic and English, simultaneously studied by students of Islamic junior high school in Indonesia. It is aimed at analyzing the differences of level, causes as well as coping strategies of speaking anxiety in Arabic and English faced by the respondents. A survey inquiry was conducted by employing questionnaires to gather the data of respondents' level, causes and coping strategies of speaking anxiety. The analysis indicates a similarity of speaking anxiety level of the two languages, yet some major differences regarding the prominent causes occur.

Keywords: *Speaking anxiety; Arabic; English; Indonesian students*

1. INTRODUCTION

Most foreign language learners highly expect to acquire the speaking skills in order that they can use the Target Language (TL) as a means of communication. Nevertheless, it is unlikely easy to achieve the goal due to the complexity of speaking skill which require them to produce the language orally and to interact with others using the TL (Carter & Nunan, 2001). One of the biggest hurdles is the spontaneous nature of the spoken language. This means that with very limited time, utterances are processed and produced by the speakers. As a result, of the four language skills, they think speaking is the most stressful one (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). They do not feel convenient to express their ideas using the TL. Moreover, they may feel tense and feel anxious. Such phenomenon is called Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) that is outlined as feelings of worry, fears or nervousness during oral communication activities experienced by learners in a foreign language setting (He, 2018).

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In fact, anxiety significantly affects the performance of language learners, especially in speaking activities (Salehi & Marefat, 2014). They may not be able to perform as well as they should be due to the psychological pressure they undergo. The emergence of anxious feelings in second or foreign language learning is caused by various reasons. The case of one individual student may differ from the others. It may even be different for one particular student in different situations. On one occasion, this particular student can be anxious due to a certain reason, but at another time anxiety arises because of another reason. In general, these reasons can be classified as internal and external causes. Some reasons can be related to their personality traits, their learning circumstances, the teachers, or the teaching and learning practices. It is also possible that it emerges because of the types or level of difficulties of the oral activities. In particular, these reasons include gender, lack of self-confidence, competitiveness, negative attitudes towards TL, bad previous experience, not wanting to be laughed at, incompetence, limited exposure, difficult task and lack of preparation (Occhipinti, 2009; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Yami, 2015).

Researchers from many countries have conducted investigations of FLSA from various perspectives. Some of the previously conducted studies of speaking anxiety were carried out by employing quantitative methods to reveal the contribution or correlation of such factors as gender, proficiency level, earlier training, type of school (Gopang, Bughio, Umrani, & Lohar, 2015; Karatas, Alci, Bademcioglu, & Ergin, 2016; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). More studies were using qualitative methodology to disclose the manifestation, extent, causes, impacts and coping strategies of speaking anxiety (Akkakoson, 2016; Anandari, 2015; Çağatay, 2015; Chowdhury, 2014; Indrianty, 2016; Mukminin et al., 2015; Occhipinti, 2009; Rafieyan, 2016; Suleimenova, 2013; Timina, 2015; Wang & Roopchand, 2015; Zhiping & Paramasivan, 2013). Mixed methods study was also utilized to address this issue. Woodrow investigated the relation of speaking anxiety and oral performance, the extent of speaking anxiety inside and outside the class, and speaking anxiety sources (Woodrow, 2006).

Regarding the foreign language involved in the study, most research was conducted focusing on English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and a great number of the inquiries have been reported (Çağatay, 2015; Gopang et al., 2015; Mukminin et al., 2015; Rafieyan, 2016; Suleimenova, 2013). Conversely, until

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now very limited research has been accomplished involving other foreign languages. Among others are Spanish(Horwitz et al., 1986), French(Fiadzawoo, 2015), Chinese (Luo, 2014)as well as Arabic(Goukh, 2013).

The literature review reveals that previous investigations of FLSA were concentrated on exploring a sole foreign language which is learned by a group of subjects in a particular country. The present study is examining two foreign languages that are obliged to take by all students of Islamic junior high school in Indonesia. According to the state regulations, they have to take both English and Arabic subjects from the first up to the third year of study(KMA, 2014; Permendikbud, 2014). As a matter of fact, these two subjects are presented proportionately, yet they may cause the varied extent of obstacles to the pupils.

In addition, it is true that some of the students might have learned English and Arabic before either by taking an additional lesson in or out of school, yet many (if not most) of them are first introduced to the subjects in the 7th grade, the very 1st year of studying at junior high school. It means that these early teenagers are apt to be exposed to the provoking-anxiety lessons while within themselves from the early stage of adolescence is already enduring certain psychological problems including anxiety (Nicolson & Ayers, 2004). Apparently, EFL teenagers in Indonesia, especially in Islamic junior high school, are facing a psychologically tough situation for having simultaneously two different dimensional pressures, internal and external aspects.

As such, a particular study to explore the speaking anxiety experienced by the students who have to learn English and Arabic simultaneously is necessarily carried out. This research is, then, intended to disclose the answers to the questions below.

1. To what extent do students of Islamic junior high school feel anxious to use English and Arabic for oral communication?
2. Why do they feel anxious about using English and Arabic orally?

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The current study is a survey inquiry which is employed to gather data that can be used to ascertain the typical characteristics of the subject(Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Further, in this sort of study, the researcher attempts to discover the subjects' beliefs, opinions, characteristics and behavior (Ary, Jacobs, &

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Sorensen, 2010). In short, disclosing the phenomenon being investigated is the main concern of the study.

There are three kinds of data collected from the respondents: level of anxious feelings in using English and Arabic orally, causes of the anxious feelings, and ways to overcoming the anxious feelings of using the two foreign languages orally. 400 respondents took a part in this research. They were the 7th graders from four different state-owned Islamic junior high schools in the Province of Lampung including MTsN 2 Bandar Lampung (Group 1), MTsN 1 Lampung Tengah (Group 2), MTsN 1 Way Kanan (Group 3), as well as MTsN 1 Lampung Barat (Group 4). Some 100 students from each school were randomly selected to be the respondents.

All data were collected using questionnaires. The FLCAS questionnaire (Horwitz et al., 1986) was modified and adjusted to the purpose and context of the study by picking only the questions related to speaking anxiety and translating them into Indonesian. There were 18 out of the 33 original items were included in the instrument. It is in the form of Likert scale with a five-point format: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The score ranges from 18 to 90. A low score means low anxiety level and vice versa. The level of anxiety is classified with the following category: score of 18 to 53 means low anxiety; a score of 54 to 71 means moderate anxiety; and for a score higher than 71, it means high anxiety. To explore the anxiety of speaking English and Arabic, two questionnaires were utilized in the study, one for English anxiety and the other one for Arabic anxiety. Besides, two additional questions were inserted to reveal the alternative causes of the anxiety as well as the possible ways to alleviating it.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Level of Speaking English and Arabic Anxiety

a. Speaking English anxiety

The mean score indicating the degree of the anxious feelings of using English orally suffered by each group of the subjects is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Level of speaking English anxiety

Group of Respondent	Mean Score	Degree
Group 1	69	moderate
Group 2	76	high
Group 3	77	high
Group 4	75	high
Ave.	74	high

This table displays that with the mean score of 69, respondents from Group 1 (MTsN 2 Bandar Lampung) suffer moderate anxiety of speaking English. Compared to the other groups, it is the lowest one. The highest mean score belongs to the respondents from Group 3 (MTsN 1 Way Kanan) with a mean score of 77, which falls into the category of a high speaking anxiety level. The other two groups of respondents, Group 2 (MTsN 1 Lampung Tengah) and Group 4 (MTsN 1 Lampung Barat), also highly feel anxious about using the TL orally. On a whole, respondents of the study suffer a high degree of anxious feelings of using English for oral communication, and the average of the mean score of the anxiety is amounting 74. It is slightly above the criteria of a high anxiety ≥ 72 .

b. Speaking Arabic anxiety

The mean score indicating the degree of the anxious feelings using Arabic for oral communication suffered by each group of the subjects is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2. Level of speaking Arabic anxiety

Group of Respondent	Mean Score	Degree
Group 1	73	high
Group 2	79	high
Group 3	78	high
Group 4	79	high
Ave.	77	high

On a whole, all groups of respondents are likely to feel very anxious about using Arabic for oral communications. The average mean score of 77 is far above the criteria of high anxiety, ≥ 72 . When analyzed individually, respondents of Group 1 (MTsN 2 Bandar Lampung) got the lowest score (73), whereas Group 2

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(MTsN 1 Lampung Tengah) and Group 4 (MTsN 1 Lampung Barat) obtained the highest one (79). Still, with the high level of anxiety, the rate achieved by Group 3 (MTsN 1 Way Kanan) is 78.

Causes of Speaking English and Arabic Anxiety

a. Speaking English anxiety contributing factors

Table 3 below displays the contributing factors of the respondents' anxious feelings of orally using English as a foreign language.

Table 3. Causes of anxiety in speaking English

Causes	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Ave.
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Gender	45	57	59	58	54 ^b
lack of self-confidence	90	94	93	85	91 ^c
competitiveness	32	14	20	22	22 ^a
attitudes toward TL	25	18	14	16	19 ^a
bad experience	82	76	88	87	83 ^c
fear of being laughed at	93	85	96	91	91 ^c
lack of competences	95	95	92	97	95 ^c
lack of exposures	63	55	35	63	54 ^b
difficult tasks	58	51	47	39	49 ^b
lack of preparations	86	87	85	86	86 ^c

Note:

^aLower contributor

^bMedium contributor

^cHigher contributor

The research participants mostly picked five items of possible causes of speaking English anxiety. Bad experience, unpreparedness, reticence, worry about ridicule, and incompetence were selected by 83%, 86%, 91%, 91%, and 94% of participants respectively. These five items are, then, classified as higher contributors to anxiety in speaking English.

Another category is the medium contributor to anxiety in speaking English which goes to such factors as difficult tasks, lack of exposures, and gender. These items were chosen by as much as 49%, 54% and 54% of the participants

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respectively. To add, 19% and 22% of the participants decided to choose attitude toward TL which belong to lower contributor to anxiety in speaking English.

b. Speaking Arabic anxiety contributing factors

Table 4 below exposessome alternative causes of anxious feelings of using Arabic orally chosen by the respondents.

Table 4. Causes of anxiety in speaking Arabic

Causes	Group 1 (%)	Group 2 (%)	Group 3 (%)	Group 4 (%)	Ave. (%)
Gender	24	18	33	45	30 ^a
lack of self-confidence	95	96	94	89	94 ^c
competitiveness	20	30	16	22	22 ^a
attitudes toward TL	20	24	9	17	18 ^a
bad experience	37	40	30	28	34 ^a
fear of being laughed at	95	93	95	94	94 ^c
lack of competences	92	94	94	93	93 ^c
lack of exposures	36	56	67	56	54 ^b
difficult tasks	64	72	60	63	65 ^b
lack of preparations	51	65	68	54	60 ^b

Note:

^aLower contributor

^bMedium contributor

^cHigher contributor

Obviously, such aspects as incompetence, reticence, and worry about ridicule were mostly picked by the respondents. 93%, 94% and also 94% of the respondents respectively chose these items which make them fall into the category of a higher contributor to anxiety in speaking Arabic. Then, lack of exposures, lack of preparations, and difficult tasks which were chosen by 54%, 60% and 65% of the respondents respectively can be categorized as the medium contributor of anxiety in speaking Arabic. The last category, lower contributor to anxiety in speaking Arabic, is occupied by bad experiences, gender, competitiveness, and attitude towards TL. These four items were selected by 34%, 30%, 22% and 18% of the participants respectively.

Discussion

The Comparison of Anxiety Level of Speaking English and Arabic

Table 7 below presents participants' degree of anxious feelings of using English and Arabic for oral communications. It compares the mean score indicating the level of anxiety achieved by each group of the research subjects.

Table 5. Comparison of speaking English and Arabic anxiety level

Respondents	Mean and Degree			
	English	Degree	Arabic	Degree
Group 1	69	moderate	73	high
Group 2	76	High	79	high
Group 3	77	High	78	high
Group 4	75	High	79	high
Ave.	74	High	77	high

It is clearly noticeable that, on a whole, the respondents of the study feel anxious in speaking both English and Arabic. Moreover, despite the fact that there is a slight difference of the mean score between the two foreign languages (English = 74 and Arabic = 77), the level of their speaking anxiety is considered high. In addition, it can be disclosed that there is a regular pattern of both foreign language speaking anxiety. The respondents overtly tend to feel more anxious to speak Arabic compared to speaking English. This occurs consistently to all groups of the respondents. Interestingly, all of the mean scores of both English and Arabic anxiety obtained by all groups of the respondents fall into the category of high level, except the speaking English anxiety at Group 1 (MTsN 2 Bandar Lampung) which belongs to the moderate level.

After conducting a deeper analysis, especially the supplementary data of the respondents' experiences of learning English and Arabic before they entered the junior high school level, it was found out that generally there are more participants who have previously learned English than Arabic. Let us take Group 1 (MTsN 2 Bandar Lampung) as an example, 64% compared to 40% of the participants from this group have learned English and Arabic during their primary school period. Other groups of respondents also indicate similar facts: 10% compared to 6% in Group 2 (MTsN 1 Lampung Tengah), 7% to 6% in Group 3 (MTsN 1 Way Kanan), and 7% to 5% in Group 4 (MTsN 1 Lampung Barat) who

own prior experiences of learning English and Arabic. This may explain why the rate of speaking English anxiety is lower than that of speaking Arabic. It can be inferred that respondents who own prior learning experiences of English and Arabic are likely to be more proficient and, thus, have lower anxiety level.

There are inconsistencies of previous research findings related to this matter. This particular result of the study seems to be dissimilar to several earlier investigations (Balemir, 2009; Çağatay, 2015; Luo, 2014) reporting that level of speaking anxiety is unlikely to be affected by language competency levels. It is even in contrast to the finding of another study mentioning that participants with better proficiency feel more anxious (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). Nevertheless, some previous inquiries reveal that participants who have fewer experiences of TL tend to have a higher level of speaking anxiety (Karatas et al., 2016; Tianjian, 2010).

Additionally, the learners' speaking performance can be affected by their anxious feelings (Woodrow, 2006). Therefore, if they have a high level of anxiety, they will not be actively involved in the speaking exercises and tasks carried out in the classroom. They will take the position of being quiet to calm down their stressful feelings. This may end up with their failure to attain the objectives of the speaking lesson. As a matter of fact, Indonesian students find it hard to communicate orally using the TL (Irfani, Meisuri, & Rohmatillah, 2018).

Causes of Anxiety in Speaking English and Arabic

Table 8 below describes the alternative contributing factors of anxious feelings in speaking English and Arabic.

Table 6. Comparison of causes of speaking English and Arabic anxiety

Causes	Ave. (%)	
	English	Arabic
Gender	54 ^b	30 ^a
lack of self-confidence	91 ^c	94 ^c
competitiveness	22 ^a	22 ^a
attitudes toward TL	19 ^a	18 ^a
bad experience	83 ^c	34 ^a
fear of being laughed at	91 ^c	94 ^c

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lack of competences	95 ^c	93 ^c
lack of exposures	54 ^b	54 ^b
difficult tasks	49 ^b	65 ^b
lack of preparations	86 ^c	60 ^b

Note:

^aLower contributor

^bMedium contributor

^cHigher contributor

In general, 'lack of self-confidence', 'fear of being laughed at', and 'lack of competences' become the prominent causes (higher contributors) of anxiety in speaking English and Arabic. Besides, for speaking English anxiety, two more major causes can be added to the list including 'bad experience' and 'lack of preparations'. Conversely, the aspects of 'competitiveness' and 'attitudes toward TL' contribute very little to the respondents' anxiety to speak English and Arabic, and another lowly contributing factor for speaking Arabic anxiety is 'bad experience'. Other factors are considered medium contributors of either speaking English or speaking Arabic anxiety. In particular, 'lack of competences' is seemingly the most influential aspect to cause the anxiety in speaking English, while 'lack of self-confidence' and 'fear of being laughed at' are the most significant causes of anxiety in speaking Arabic.

In spite of the dissimilarities regarding the highest rate of the causes and also the number of the items belonging to higher contributor category, there are three similar factors which mostly provoke anxiety in speaking both English and Arabic. They include 'lack of confidence', 'fear of being laughed at', and 'lack of competences'.

Results of previous studies investigating the aspects which cause students to feel anxious in speaking are quite varied. The diversity of findings is attributed to the different nature of the subjects as well as the learning circumstances. The factor of 'lack of competences' which includes such aspects as lexis, grammars, enunciations as well as oral skill is also reported by previous authors as a major cause of speaking anxiety. It is mentioned that lack of vocabularies (Akkakoson, 2016; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017), low mastery of grammars and vocabularies (Mukminin et al., 2015), and also poor language mastery (Melouah,

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2013)contribute a lot to the emergence of anxiety in using the TL for oral communication.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the respondents' speaking anxiety of English and Arabic is quite similar. Apparently, they feel highly anxious to perform orally using both foreign languages, English and Arabic. Prominent causes of speaking English anxiety include 'lack of competences', 'lack of self-confidence', 'fear of being laughed at', 'lack of preparations, as well as 'bad experience'; while 'lack of competences', 'lack of self-confidence', and 'fear of being laughed at' become the major contributing factors of speaking Arabic anxiety. To cope with the anxious feelings of using English orally, four strategies are recommended by the respondents including 'support each other' (peer action), 'create less stressful atmosphere' and 'give student more chance to practice' (teacher action), as well as 'practice more' (self-action); whereas 'support each other' (peer action) and 'create less stressful atmosphere' (teacher action) are the two most recommended ways to overcome anxiety in speaking Arabic.

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