



JURNAL ILMIAH PEURADEUN

The International Journal of Social Sciences

p-ISSN: 2338-8617
e-ISSN: 2443-2067

www.journal.scadindependent.org

Vol. 6, No. 2, May 2018
Page: 277-292

“Galak Sireutôh, Yö Siribé” for Speaking English Among the Student Teachers in Aceh

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Article in Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun

Available at : <http://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/217>

DOI : <http://dx.doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v6i2.217>

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Vol. 6, No. 2, May 2018

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Published by: SCAD Independent

SCAD Independent is an independent research
institute on democracy in Aceh, established in 2010
with the Notary Deed No. 01, dated 29 October 2012.



“GALAK SIREUTÔH, YÖ SIRIBÉ” FOR SPEAKING ENGLISH AMONG THE STUDENT TEACHERS IN ACEH

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Received: Jan 01, 2018

Accepted: April 02, 2018

Published: May 28, 2018

Article Url: <http://journal.scadIndependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/217>

Abstract

“Galak sireutôh, yö siribé” is a popular saying in Aceh, referred to the person who is anxious to do what he wants to. This study investigated the student teachers’ anxiety felt when using English orally during their learning. Using the adapted questionnaires from Young’s (1990), that has been adapted by Occhipinti (2009), it involved 46 students undertaking English Speaking in a higher education in Lhokseumawe, Aceh. The results show that the majority of the students like English very much; however, they spent little time for using it orally, ranging from 1 to 8 hours per week. Most of them also affirmed that their English speaking ability is bad. It was also found that most of the students were highly anxious when speaking English with high self-exposure, but less anxious when engaging in collaborative activities and when given enough time to prepare what they talk. Yet, several students seem to have trait anxiety as they are highly anxious in most learning activities. Most were highly anxious for speaking English individually. This is likely influenced by their contextual, social and cultural factors, such as people in Aceh are known as communal rather than individualistic society.

Keywords: Student Teachers’ Anxiety, Speaking English Publicly, Higher Education, Acehese Culture



A. Introduction

Using English orally is indispensable for every English learner and future English teacher. It is through which one can communicate in the language in social settings. And using English orally is the most effective way to improve one's speaking skills (Aljumah, 2011; Coskun, 2016). However, some students avoid to speak English during classroom learning process, as frequently happens in Aceh, Indonesia. They prefer to keep silent even though they have been invited to do so (Jarjani, 2015). For people in Aceh, a saying is commonly used "*Galak sireutôh, yö siribé*", meaning their willing is defeated by their worrying. In Aceh context, English is merely used in limited situations, such as during bilateral meetings or international forums or at some boarding schools that strongly regulate students to speak English daily or at least during the English weeks. Due to such limited use or exposure to a foreign language, learners may produce affective sense of uneasiness or anxiety when using English orally (Horwitz et al, 1986; Young, 1999).

Anxiety means a troubled feeling in their mind, creating tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry (Horwitz, 1986). Feeling anxiety, students are unable to participate actively during the teaching and learning process. As such, what teacher says is commonly accepted for granted. They are reticent to speak even though they have good knowledge on the learning materials under discussion. In this way, dialogic learning process as intended in the 2003 Act No. 20 on the System of National Education and the 2005 National Education Standard, article 19, point 1 (Pusat Kurikulum, 2010) is not easy to occur. According to Du (2009), those who feel anxiety tend to think of their failure when using English as a foreign language rather than using English as a way to communicate their ideas. This means that the feeling of anxiety to speak has bad effects on learning.

Anxiety has been categorized into three types, including trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. According to Scovel

(1978, as cited in Cui, 2011), trait anxiety refers to "a more permanent predisposition to be anxious." Trait anxiety, according to Spielberger (1983, as cited in Occhipinti, 2009) refers to "an individual's likelihood of becoming anxious in any situation" (p. 14). This is more permanent. State anxiety refers to the increasing feeling of uneasiness a person who suffers permanent anxiety when dealing with a particular state. The last one is situation-specific anxiety, which refers to a sense of uneasiness coming when one experiences some particular event or situation, such as prior to an examination (Aida, 1994; Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Clement, Dornyei & Noels, 1994; Spielberg, 1983, Tobias, 1986; Young, 1990).

Many studies have been carried out to uncover the factors that trigger anxiety to speak a foreign language. Among them are the feeling of being negatively evaluated by their peers or teachers, communication apprehension, and test anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013), too much focus on grammar rules when learning English, less overseas experience, less practice (Cosgun, 2016), and students' self-rated proficiency in and access to English (Liu & Jackson, 2009). With respect to this, Occhipinti (2009) analyzed early studies (e.g., Aida, 1994; Daly, 1997; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Young, 1990) and found that the causes are gender, negative self-perception and low self-esteem, competitiveness, attitudes towards the language, negative experiences, fear of taking risks, students' beliefs, exposure variables and time abroad, and in-class activities.

Despite increasing interest in doing research on foreign language anxiety, research on how the student teachers in higher education in Aceh feel when need to use English orally and publicly is scant. Paying attention to the students' English speaking anxiety is crucial because, firstly, speaking is the most anxiety-provoking activities in the foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986; Ely, 1986; Young, 1990; Price, 1991; Aida, 1994). Secondly, the students are prepared for future English teachers, a career that needs to involve speaking English fluently and grammatically.



Thirdly, making the student teachers aware of their anxiety and of the types of activities that provoke anxiety is crucial, as, according to Young (1999), this can help reduce their anxiety. Finally, having recognized the students' high anxiety, teacher educators can design learning activities and strategies that are less anxious for students.

This study intended to fill in the gap, focusing on examining the rate of anxiety the student teachers feel when engaging in English learning activities in English speaking course in a higher education in Lhokseumawe (anonym of the university is used for confidentiality). To address the problem mentioned above, this study was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent are the students anxious to do English speaking-related classroom activities?
2. What are the factors that produce students' anxiety to speak English during teaching and learning?

B. Method

This study employed quantitative approach. The research was conducted in the English Department of a higher education in Lhokseumawe. However, only those who showed their consent to participants of this study were involved as the sample of this research. 46 students took part in this study.

To collect data about students' reactions to the rate of their anxiety and types of classroom activities, the questionnaires adapted from Young's (1990) that has been adapted by Occhipinti (2009) were utilized. The questionnaires are composed four sections; first section is composed their background questions, their personal perceptions towards their own speaking skills, and their interest in English, and hours spent for speaking English. The second section asks students to rate their anxiety level in respect to twenty-one in-class activities. They need to express their level of anxiety for each activity based on a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from



“Very Relaxed”, “Moderately Relaxed”, “Neither Relaxed nor Anxious”, “Moderately Anxious” to “Very Anxious”. The third section is composed of questions concerning with their general English class anxiety and to in-class activities. The students will be requested to express their level of anxiety using the five-point scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Neither Agree nor Disagree”, “Agree”, to “Strongly Agree”. However, of the four sections in Young’s questionnaire, three were adopted with small modification.

The data from the first section of the questionnaires were analyzed by counting the percentage of students’ answers to each question. The data from the second section were analyzed by calculating the means of students’ answers to each activity. The data of the third section were analyzed by counting their frequencies and the means. Through these ways of analysis, the tendency of the students’ anxiety levels and sources can be understood.

C. Research Finding

1. Students’ demography

In all, 46 students participated in the study. By gender, there were only 9 male and 37 female students. In other words, 80.43 percent was females and 19.56 percent was males.

2. Students’ self-evaluations

Table 1 Students’ self-evaluation of their own English skills

self-evaluations	Frequency	Percentage
Bad	32	69.56
Good	11	23.91
Very good	1	2.17
Excellent	0	0
Unrated	2	4.34



Table 1 above describes that 32 students rated their oral skills of English language as negative or bad, 11 students good, and 1 students very good. However, two students did not rate it. In other words, majority of the students (69.56 percent) feel that they are unable to speak English well. This may suggest that their self-evaluation of their own English speaking skills can be the source of anxiety to use it orally.

3. Weekly hours spent for speaking English

Table 2 Weekly hours spent for speaking English

Weekly Hours for Speaking English								
Hour(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Freq.	3	16	17	3	1	4	1	1
Percent	6.52	34.78	36.96	6.52	2.17	8.69	2.17	2.17

From the data in Table 2, it can be understood that most of the students rarely used English language in their social interactions. Only 4 percent of the students who said that they used English orally 7 or more hours a week. This can be one of the most common factors that result in anxiety among the students when using English publicly, especially during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. They should be encouraged to use English as frequently as possible in their daily speaking, at least when interacting with their classmates or colleagues in campus. As has been suggested in many studies (e.g., Aljumah, 2011), using English orally is the most effective way to improve students' speaking competencies.

4. How much students like English?

Table 3 How the students like English

Gender	Students' answer			No Answer
	1	2	3	
Males	0	0	5	1



Females	1	9	17	4
Not Identified	7	0	0	2
TOTAL	8	9	22	7
Percentage	17.39	19.56	47.82	15.21

The data in Table 3 indicate that majority of the students (67 percent) like English language. Only 8 students (17.39 percent) did not like English, suggesting that there were several students who choose English as their major not because of their own interest. In other words, they choose English as their major not because they want to but they have to. Unfortunately, 15 percent of them did not provide answer. Even though 8 students affirmed that they do not like English, this should have attention from English lecturers at the university in order to support them with special treatment or motivation in learning. Otherwise, the students will be incompetent in using English although they have spent years for learning it. Moreover, like or dislike, they are prepared for future teachers who must have good English competencies.

5. Students' thought about "embarrassment" in speaking English

Table 4 Students' thinking about "embarrassment" in speaking English

Gender	Students' answer		No Answer
	Yes	No	
Males	3	0	1
Females	20	6	8
Not Identified	6	0	2
Total	29	6	11
Percentage	63.04	13.04	23.91

Table 4 above shows that most students (63 percent) thought about embarrassment when speaking English. Only 13 percent or 6 students stated that they did not think about embarrassment. This suggests that



their anxiety to speak English publicly is due their feeling of embarrassment. Therefore, it is necessary to link the feelings the students experience to their social and cultural habits. The students should be informed about the ways on how to escape from such a feeling of embarrassment for the deeds not right for being embarrassed.

6. Students' feeling during in-class activities

The means of each statement are depicted in tables 5 and 6 below.

Table 5 Types of in-class speaking-related activities

Question No	Types of in-class speaking-related activities	Anxiety means
9	Speak in front of the class.	3.11
10	Make an oral presentation or skit in front of the class.	3.02
4	Role play a situation spontaneously in front of the class.	2.78
2	Speak individually with the instructor in his/her office.	2.69
1	Open discussion based on volunteer participation.	2.65
8	Present a prepared dialog in front of the class.	2.61
7	Role play a situation.	2.56
5	Repeat individually after the instructor.	2.33
3	Repeat as a class after the instructor.	2.28
6	Interview each other in pairs.	2.04

Note:

1 = very relaxed; 2 = moderately relaxed; 3 = neither relaxed nor anxious; 4 = moderately anxious; 5 = very anxious.

Table 5 above shows that the mean of anxiety of the student participants is different from one another. Most of the mean are between 2



and 3, and only two types of in-class speaking-related activities are above 3, including speaking and an oral presentation or skit in front of class. This means that most students dreaded when involved in high self-exposure such as speaking (Activity 6) and an oral presentation or skit in front of class (Activity 10) are the most provoking activities that produce anxiety. However, their anxiety lessened for such activities as “Repeat individually after the instructor” (Activity 5), “Repeat as a class after the instructor” (Activity 3), “Interview each other in pairs” (Activity 6). This may suggest that the students are comfortable studying in a lecturer’s led instruction and when working with their classmates.

Table 6 Questions for in-class speaking-related activities

Respondents	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
1	2	3	2	3	1	1	2	1	3	3
2	3	3	2	4	3	3	4	4	4	3
3	2	1	2	3	3	2	3	4	4	3
4	1	2	2	4	1	1	5	4	4	4
5	3	3	3	4	4	2	2	2	2	3
6	3	3	1	4	2	2	1	5	5	3
7	3	5	3	3	2	4	3	4	4	3
8	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	1	2
9	3	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	1	2
10	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	3	3	3
11	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
12	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
13	3	1	1	3	4	2	3	4	5	4
14	4	4	2	2	1	3	3	3	4	3
15	2	1	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	1
16	3	2	1	2	1	1	2	3	3	3
17	3	4	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	3
18	2	4	2	2	4	1	4	1	4	3
19	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1
20	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3
21	3	4	1	1	3	4	2	2	4	3
22	2	3	1	3	1	3	1	2	3	4
23	2	2	2	4	1	2	2	2	3	3



24	4	3	4	2	5	3	5	2	4	5
25	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
26	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	5	2
27	3	4	1	1	3	2	3	3	3	3
28	3	3	4	3	2	1	2	3	5	2
29	2	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	2	3
30	4	4	4	5	2	3	3	4	4	4
31	1	4	1	5	1	2	4	3	4	5
32	4	3	1	3	5	2	2	1	1	4
33	3	4	2	2	5	3	2	3	2	4
34	3	2	3	4	2	2	2	4	1	2
35	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	3
36	2	4	3	3	2	1	2	3	3	2
37	3	4	4	3	1	2	3	2	4	3
38	3	3	4	5	4	1	3	3	3	4
39	3	1	3	3	3	1	1	2	3	4
40	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	4	4	4
41	3	4	4	3	4	1	3	2	5	4
42	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	3
43	3	2	2	2	1	3	4	2	3	2
44	4	3	3	2	2	4	4	4	4	4
45	4	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	5
46	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
Means	2.65	2.71	2.28	2.78	2.33	2.04	2.57	2.61	3.11	3.02

Table 6 above shows that students’ reactions to the in-class activities range from 1 to 5, meaning that their feelings start from very relaxed to very anxious when dealing with the activities related to speaking English. However, of the 46 students, their feelings vary from one student to another. There are several students who chose no 4 and 5 several times, like students no 2, 7, 30, 40, 41, 44, and 45, indicating that they probably have what Scovel (1978, as cited in Cui, 2011) as a trait anxiety. It is somewhat permanent. This suggests that it be necessary for English lecturers to further identify them and apply a specific treatment to those students when engaging in learning process, or use learning strategies that produce less anxiety of those students.



7. Student reactions to in-class activities

The results of the students' reactions to classroom activities are presented in Table 7 in order to be able to see the means based on their rankings.

Table 7 Students' reaction to in-class activities based on means

Question No.	Student Reactions to in-Class Activities	Means
13	I feel comfortable in class when I come to class prepared.	4,09
6	I would be more willing to volunteer answers in class if I weren't so afraid of saying the wrong thing.	4,07
21	I enjoy class when I can work with another student.	4,04
1	I would feel more confident about speaking in class if we practiced more.	4,02
20	I would be less nervous about taking an oral test in English if I got more practice speaking in class.	3,91
3	I feel very relaxed in class when I have studied a great deal the night before.	3,85
19	I am more willing to participate in class when the topics we discuss are interesting.	3,80
2	I would feel less self-conscious about speaking in class in front of others if I knew them better.	3,74
12	I would feel better about speaking in class if the class were smaller.	3,70
15	I am less anxious in class when I am not the only person answering a question.	3,67
10	I am more willing to speak in class when we discuss current events.	3,65
11	I enjoy class when we do skits in class.	3,63
14	I am more willing to speak in class when we have a debate scheduled.	3,63
16	I like going to class when we are going to role-play situations.	3,61
7	I enjoy class when we work in pairs.	3,57
22	I would feel uncomfortable if the instructor ever corrected our mistakes in class.	3,54



5	I think I can speak the foreign language pretty well, but when I know I am being graded, I mess up.	3,48
18	I prefer to be allowed to volunteer an answer instead of being called on to give an answer.	3,37
8	I feel more comfortable in class when I don't have to get in front of the class.	3,33
9	I would enjoy class if we weren't corrected tall in class.	3,33
23	I feel uneasy when my fellow students are asked to correct my mistakes in class.	3,24
4	I am less anxious in class when I am not the only person answering a question.	3,17
17	I would not be so self-conscious about speaking in class if it were commonly understood that everyone makes mistakes, and it were not such a big deal to make a mistake.	3,09

Table 7 above clearly shows the means (average) of the students' reactions to each statements pertaining to their anxiety when using English. Most of the means fall in between 3 (neither agree nor disagree) and 4 (agree) and some fall into 4 and more as in no 13, 6, 21, and 1. This means that they would feel more confident about speaking in class if they have practiced more, were not afraid of making mistakes, have prepared before coming to the class, work with another student. All those may suggest that providing enough time for students to be prepared and working in group may reduce their anxiety to speak English publicly.

D. Discussion

After having analyzed the data, it is necessary to discuss them by revisiting the previously mentioned research questions.

The data analyzed demonstrated that in general students' opinions on their rate anxiety to use English orally fall into the middle level, that is between 2 (moderately relaxed) and 3 (neither relaxed nor anxious). However, as indicated in the questionnaires in sections 2 and 3, individually the students are different in terms of anxiety. There are some

students who selected option no 4 and 5 for some questions, which means that they are moderately and very anxious for those activities. Respondent no. 2, for instance, selected 4 for the activities 4, 7, 8, and 9, meaning that they are moderately when doing role play, presenting a dialogue, and speaking English in front of class. High anxiety is also felt by respondent no 30, who are moderately anxious (level 4) to do nearly all the activities listed in the table, except no 5, 6, and 7. The findings also showed that the activities collaboratively done such as interviewing each other produce less anxiety of the students. This is likely related to communal culture of the people in Aceh. Working together to do public work has been common in Acehnese society.

The second question regarding the factors that dominantly produce the students' anxiety when speaking English can be answered by relying analyzed data from the first section of the questionnaires. Among them are due to their self-evaluation of their own English at bad level and their rare use of English weekly, even though they like it very much. This confirms previous research findings that less exposure to a foreign language can create anxiety when using it (e.g., Horwitz et al, 1986; Young, 1999).

E. Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the research. They are; first, the rate of the students' feeling of anxiety vary, depending on the type of learning activities they engaged in as well as their personal traits. However, some students might experience trait anxiety so their rate of anxiety is higher in many activities. Second, their anxiety for speaking English during the teaching and learning process is partially related to their seldom use of English daily. Third, most of the students are not anxious when using English orally to do collaborative work. The findings may be linked to the sociocultural contexts of Aceh in which people live communally rather than individualistically and teacher-centered learning which position students as knowledge recipients transferred by teacher.



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