

## EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD PUBLIC SPEAKING AND ANXIETY IN SPEAKING IMPROMPTU SPEECH

Ali Imron<sup>1,\*</sup> & Winda Candra Hantari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Tidar

\* Pos-el: alielshirazy@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine students' attitudes towards public speaking class and the possible causes that lead them to have anxiety in performing impromptu speech. A qualitative research design employing the in-depth semi-structured interview has been carried out with 23 students of Tidar Islamic Boarding School in Magelang, Central Java. The study involves a public speaking class consisting of 8 male students and 15 female students. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire was also given to the students to measure the level of their anxiety in performing impromptu speech. The findings show that the students have positive attitudes towards public speaking class. Meanwhile, the possible cause of anxiety are because they are not accustomed to speak in English, especially in front of many people, and the lack of vocabularies and confidence.

**Keywords:** public speaking; impromptu speech; student's anxiety

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui perspektif siswa terhadap kelas public speaking dan beberapa faktor yang dapat menyebabkan siswa mengalami kesulitan saat melakukan pidato dengan metode impromptu. Desain penelitian kualitatif dan menggunakan wawancara semi-terstruktur telah dilakukan dengan melibatkan 23 siswa Pondok Pesantren Tidar di Magelang, Jawa Tengah. Penelitian ini melibatkan siswa yang tergabung dalam kelas public speaking dan terdiri dari 8 siswa laki-laki, serta 15 siswa perempuan. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) digunakan dalam penelitian ini untuk mengukur tingkat kecemasan siswa saat melakukan pidato dengan metode impromptu. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki sikap positif terhadap kelas public speaking. Sementara itu, kemungkinan penyebab kecemasan mereka adalah karena tidak terbiasa berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris dengan jumlah audience yang banyak, juga kurangnya kosa kata dan rasa percaya diri.*

**Kata kunci:** public speaking; pidato impromptu; kecemasan siswa

## A. INTRODUCTION

The role of every individual as social beings is to interact and communicate with one another. In order to communicate, it requires strategy to get the message across and being received well. It is divided into two types, formal and informal. Formal communication means communicating information to the audience in a formal situation within specific themes and manners. Meanwhile, informal communication means informing the listener within informal situation. It can also be identified as public speaking or speaking in front of many people.

In many occasions, public speaking skill is important matter to be mastered. Activities nowadays, especially in academic environment tend to be formal like seminars which involve keynote speakers and is conducted in English. Therefore, the ability to speak in front of people in formal or informal way, is supposed to be mastered by academicians at present. Public speaking skill needs to be learnt and practiced constantly as it is not inherited only by the white collars such as presidents and officials. The skill is also required by every citizen (Sirait, 2008). It includes the students of Tidar Islamic Boarding School Magelang since modern Islamic boarding schools do not focus only on learning Islamic values from Kitab Kuning<sup>1</sup>.

Tidar Islamic Boarding School aims to prepare and guide the students to be knowledgeable Muslims who are religious and able to hold Islamic values endlessly. They are also expected to be individuals who are confident and believe in their abilities, as well as being valuable to their religion, community and nation. Moreover, they are also taught to be open minded Muslims who see worldly matters in a wider scope.

The improvement of technology and education in Indonesia has changed the worldview of Islamic scholars in Indonesia who have Islamic boarding houses and schools. Some decades ago, English was considered as not important. Islamic scholars used to focus only on Islamic teaching to their students. But now, modern Islamic schools and boarding houses realize that English is one of important tools that Islamic students or *santri* has to master in order to achieve their goals.

Based on the observation at Tidar Islamic Boarding School, the students who were involved in English public speaking class were having difficulties in performing public speaking. There were only a number of students selected as the master of ceremony for particular events. Meanwhile, every student should have the same opportunity to perform public speaking which means they have to be able to do so. However, the lack of instruction, guidance and training in public speaking subject affected the students' attitude towards public speaking.

There are some guidelines that may help the students to be confident in performing public speaking, as stated by Larasati (2009), which includes positive attitude, well preparation, starting as early as possible, persistency in practicing, reading constantly and being able to manage time effectively. Based on those explanations, understanding students' attitude towards the learning process of public speaking is fundamental. Thus,

---

<sup>1</sup> Islamic Javanese term for books containing lesson and teaching about Islamic values.

it will enable the teacher to modify the learning process according to the level of interest and difficulties that the students confront during the public speaking class.

## **B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **1. Public Speaking**

Public speaking means delivering an address to public audience (Yadin, 2002, p. 4). It is an activity that is related to the process of conversation being carried out in the public. It also involves the process of performing speech regardless the method used either with or without any preparation. Docan-Morgan & Nelson (2015, p. 4) say that the speaker is the person who initiates a speech transaction. Furthermore, they explain that many people often mistakenly think about public speaking as formal situations in which a speaker is 'on stage' in front of a large audience. Public speaking is not only about speaking on a stage in front of people for formal occasions. It will depend on the goal of the speaker as whether to speak in front of large audience or just for small informal group, it will need the same skills. This gives clear description how as human beings who need to deliver messages in daily activities, public speaking skills have to be mastered.

### **2. Impromptu Speech**

Impromptu speech gives different experience for the speaker. It is because the speaker has to perform a speech without any preparation, notes, or other additional materials. As previously explained how people mistakenly define public speaking as a prepared speaking, doing impromptu speech will more likely takes place. Basic communications in daily life of human beings happen without any text or note prepared before. This is exactly the same with impromptu speech. Mbeh (2017) defines impromptu speaking as giving an unprepared talk. A person simply takes the floor, selects a subject, and begins. A fundamental principle is that the ideas voiced are unrehearsed and unprepared. Speaking impromptu means the speaker deliver messages to the listener without any preparation.

For students, impromptu speech is taught to give them basic skill needs in public speaking. The students are given certain topics to be delivered in their speech. There are 5—7 minutes for every student to gather their perspectives toward the topic as well as facts and data to support the arguments presented in the speech. In a very limited time, the students need to enrich their knowledge about the topic. They are also expected to be insightful regarding certain happenings that occur around them. After that, when giving speech, they are expected to think fast and survive in delivering their message to the audience.

### **3. Theories of Self-value**

Rosenberg (1995) believed that self-value is individual's positive evaluation or pride regarding their capabilities. It is a part of affective domain that may influence the student's attitudes towards the learning process because of their emotional state and feeling of doing well in class. Brown (2000) also stated that there is no successful learning

process that influence the student's cognitively and affectively without any self-esteem, self-values and self-confidence about their own ability to perform certain activities. Self-values is important to be analyzed to figure out problems faced by students in performing oral communication since its scope is internal factor of the speakers (students)

### **C. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study implemented the qualitative research design through in-depth interviews with 23 students of Tidar Islamic Boarding School. The method was chosen after several meetings had been done. The feedback of students during teaching-learning process in class gave assumption that in-depth interviews are the best method to get the data from students. During teaching-learning process, there was gap seen between some students who were talkative and the other students who were passive. The amount of students who were passive during class were eight times than those who were active.

Several interview questions were organized along with Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) proposed by Horwitz et al.'s (1986), in related to the objectives of the study. 8 male students and 15 female students engaged in public speaking class were selected. The interview consisted of several questions attempted to acquire the students' attitudes towards public speaking class. Meanwhile, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was distributed to the students in order to examine the possible causes of their anxiety in performing impromptu speech.

### **D. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

#### **1. The Students' Attitudes towards Public Speaking Class**

The questions given to the students attempted to examine their interest in continuing their English public speaking learning. There are three elements in regards to the students' level of awareness, encouragement, and self-value concerned to frame the questions.

First, the writer asked the students about the importance of learning English in general. Their responses showed that they were aware of the benefits in learning English. Primarily, they considered learning English would be beneficial towards their communication aspects because it could be a means to speak with different people from other country. S4 stated: "When we know English, we can speak to tourists". This kind of answer was given by most students. Some other students believed that learning English makes them appear more knowledgeable and able to help others. S5 stated: "After we know English, we can help people and teach them new knowledge."

The writer then asked the students regarding the encouragement. Encouragements from parents, teachers and friends apparently play a great role towards their attitudes in learning English public speaking. Six of the students even stated that their motivation in learning English is their parents or teachers. S11: "They say I speak English good, and brave."

Another answer coming from students show how pride contributes to the motivation of students in learning English speaking. The Islamic boarding school regularly join competitions which require active English skills like public speaking. S14 said: "I like

English because I usually join speaking competitions and also events like camping with other Islamic boarding schools and giving English speech is usually one of the competition in there.”

This is also strengthened by the statements of the teacher which inform their annual activities require Speaking skills. The Islamic boarding school holds an event called *Pentas Muharram*, among other events, when the MC speaks in other languages, Arabic and English.

Student’s perspectives towards their own ability also contribute to their attitudes in learning public speaking. It enables them to be more optimistic and able to motivate themselves. Most of the students agree that their preference contributes best to their moods and willingness in learning public speaking.

S22: “Because I like English, and learn.”

S9: “Sometimes I have to like how the teacher teach first, before learning in class.”

**2. Student’s Possible Causes of Anxiety in Performing Impromptu Speech**

In order to analyze the causes of student’s anxiety in performing impromptu speech as one of the learning objectives in public speaking class, the writer adapted the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) proposed by Horwitz et al.’s (1986). The statements questioned to students were given not in written form. The writer had to explain in a very detail way to get the real understanding from the students about the questions. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Result of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)**

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English in speaking class.	5	11	2	4	1
2	I don’t worry about making mistakes in speaking English in speaking class.	1	5	8	7	2
3	I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on to speak in English.	0	6	4	9	4
4	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	6	2	3	10	2
5	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in speaking class.	5	13	0	5	0
6	I worry about the consequences of failing my speaking class.	9	6	3	4	2

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7	In speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	7	8	4	2	1
8	I would not be nervous speaking in English with native speakers	3	4	6	7	10
9	Even if I am well prepared for speaking class, I feel anxious about it.	9	11	3	2	7
10	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in speaking class	0	6	3	8	7
11	I don't feel pressured to prepare very well for speaking class	0	4	12	10	2
12	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students	4	5	9	11	3
13	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in speaking class	9	7	3	4	5
14	When I'm on my way to speaking class, I feel sure and relaxed	1	10	5	6	0
15	I get nervous when I don't understand very word the lecturer says	13	5	3	2	0
16	I get nervous when the lecturer asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance	7	3	1	2	4
17	I get nervous when I do not read the note that I made before the impromptu speech	8	9	1	3	2
18	I get nervous when I do not understand about the topic given by my teacher when doing impromptu speech	9	4	0	3	7
19	I get nervous about the time given in impromptu speech	3	5	0	14	1
20	I feel diffidence to become the first person who speech impromptu speech in front of the audience	14	2	0	4	3

Based on the result, the student's level of anxiety in performing impromptu speech is high. The number of the students' answer reflect their level of anxiety. Through the analysis of the score stated in Table 1, the writer tried to identify the possible causes of student's anxiety in performing impromptu speech.

**a. Self-value**

Self-value influences the speaker's perspective on how they picture themselves. The feeling of being nervous is commonly controlled by the level of self-value. The students need to take into consideration that being able to do public speaking depends on how they imagine their abilities. When the students believe and being confident to do things they are aware of, they would likely overcome other problems such as fear, tension and even anxiety while performing public speaking. Unfortunately, most of the students were not confident enough with their ability which then made them face many difficulties in speaking.

**b. Discomposure**

Most of the students were afraid to give speech in front of the class. Some of them were experiencing the fear of committing unsuccessful speech, afraid of being asked, afraid of being ignored by the audience, afraid of being unable to remember the material, afraid of being ashamed of smarter audience, and afraid of embarrassment. These fears caused the students of feeling discomfort in performing speech.

Anandari (2015) assumed that discomfort appeared because of one's cultural background. The students must be encouraged by a good supporting environment in order to enhance them for being comfortable performing public speaking. It is also supported by Cutrone (2009) that believed students' cultural background gave a large influence on the students' speech production.

Speaking English hasn't been culture at the Islamic boarding house, neither in the surrounding area. Students usually communicate in Indonesia and Arabic language. When asked about their background, most of them were from families that English is not used at all. This factor makes them easily feel inconvenient when they are asked to speak in English.

**c. Preparation time**

Based on the result in Table 1, the students were lack of time management. Furthermore, most of the students revealed that they experienced more anxiety when they had to perform earlier than the other students. Some of them were also having difficulties in understanding the particular topic. This caused distress and anxiety while the students were performing the speech.

This has something to do with their mastery of other English skills. English hasn't been taught in a proper way at Tidar Islamic boarding house. Students' lack of vocabularies is the main contribution to this problem as when they know no word they cannot say anything even regardless of grammatical matters.

This also brought the writer to analyze further about the English teaching at Tidar Islamic boarding house which finally resulting in the suspected main cause of student's anxiety in public speaking.

**d. Familiarity**

Students were occasionally concerning distress after being given a particular topic to be performed through their speech. Their familiarity towards the topic also contributes to their self-assured. This would likely cause the students to discourage themselves in attempting a successful speech when they lack information, facts or data. Tidar Islamic boarding school is a small institution. Students haven't been supported by proper tools in learning English. The institution lacks means of information like magazines, newspapers, etc. which makes the problems faced by students in public speaking even worse.

**E. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results and discussions of this study, it can be concluded that student's anxiety in performing impromptu speech was caused by several variables, such as self-value, discomposure, preparation time and familiarity. These factors could be the resistor in learning public speaking. In regards to the student's anxiety, it is necessary for teachers and also the owner of Tidar Islamic school to encourage them and provide a supportive environment to learn public speaking. The supports need to build a good environment for students to learn public speaking and English in general are rather many as almost all aspects at Tidar Islamic boarding school haven't been in appropriate conditions. Students need to be used to using English or at least be in an environment which English could be seen anywhere. For example, the lack of vocabularies could be significantly solved by providing students with books, magazines, or newspapers in English. When they read something interesting but they don't know the meaning, it will motivate them to look for the meaning. The more they read, the more they know English vocabularies. This situation is also for other aspects. It is believed that good environment will enable the students to have more positive attitude in learning public speaking and English in general.

**REFERENCES**

- Ajeng, G. D. (2016). The Possible Causes of Indonesian EFL Students' Anxiety in Speaking Impromptu Speech. *The Fourth International Conference on Education and Language (4thICEL)*. ISSN 2303-1417. Universitas Bandar Lampung (UBL), Indonesia
- Amalia, R. N., & Hidayati, F. (2013). *The Effect of "Speak Up" Training Toward Apprehension of Speaking in Front of Public (Experimental study in SMK Negeri 8 Semarang with Social Worker Major)*. Retrieved from <https://ejournal3.undip.ac.id/index.php/empati/article/view/7428>
- Anandari, C. L. (2015). Indonesian EFL Students' Anxiety in Speech Production: Possible Causes and Remedy. *TEFLIN Journal*, 26(1), 1-16.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. San Francisco State University: Longman.



- Cutron, P. (2009). Overcoming Japanese EFL Learners' Fear of Speaking. *University of Reading Language Studies Working Papers*, 1, 55-63
- Gustaman, W. W. (2015). The Correlation Between Students' Self –Esteem and Their English-Speaking Competencies (A study of Eleventh Grade Students at a Public Senior High School in Cimahi). *Journal of English and Education* 2015, 3(2), 121-137.
- Larasati. (2009). "Panduan Berpidato untuk Siswa SMP Kelas IX". Hasil Penelitian Tesis FBS Unnes. Tidak Dipublikasikan.
- Mbeh, A. T. (2017). Impromptu Speaking and Authentic Assessment in English Language Teaching/Learning. *International Journal of New Technology and Research (IJNTR)*. 3(3), 11-16. Retrieved from [https://www.ijntr.org/download\\_data/IJNTR03030042.pdf](https://www.ijntr.org/download_data/IJNTR03030042.pdf)
- Docan-Morgan, T. & Nelson, L. (2015). *The Benefits and Necessity of Public Speaking Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332974615>
- Rosenberg, M., Schooler, C., Schoenbach, C., & Rosenberg, F. (1995). Global Self-Esteem and Specific Self-Esteem: Different Concepts, Different Outcomes. *American Sociological Review*, 60(16), 141-156.
- Sirait, B. C. (2008). *The Power of Public Speaking: Kiat Sukses Berbicara di Depan Publik*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

