

ANXIETY IN ORAL PRESENTATION AMONG ENGINEERING AND NON-
ENGINEERING STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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ANXIETY IN ORAL PRESENTATION AMONG ENGINEERING AND NON-
ENGINEERING STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

HAIRUNNISA BINTI IBRAHIM

A project report submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Education (Teaching English as a Second Language)

School of Education
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
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JUNE 2019

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled “*Anxiety in Oral Presentation among Engineering and Non-engineering Students in English Language Classrooms*” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family, who always give me support and encourage me to become a better person in life. It is also dedicated to my beloved husband that teach me to always stay strong, stay positive and never give up.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All Praise to Allah S.W.T the Almighty, for giving me the blessing, the strength, the chance and the courage to complete this study.

I am grateful to be able to complete this journey and I could not complete this study without full support from my entire family. My deepest gratitude would be to my beloved husband, my two sons and finally to my parents. Their endless support and continues pray have made me more strong in completing this study. This is truly a meaningful life long journey for me and it really encourages me to be more creative and be positive in life.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Nur'ain Balqis binti Haladin for her patience in guiding and encouraging me throughout this journey. I really appreciate all her advice to make me a better person and a better teacher.

ABSTRACT

Oral presentations are one of the most common tasks given in university especially for undergraduate's students in English as a second language classes. Students in all fields desire to disseminate the new knowledge they produce, and this is often accomplished by delivering oral presentations in class or in public lectures. Therefore, learning to deliver effective presentations is a necessary skill to master both for college and further endeavors. Fear or anxiety in the oral presentation can prevent you from taking risks to share your ideas, to speak about your work, and to present solutions to problems that affect many people, and as a result, it can affect how much you grow personally and professionally. At the same time, any negative public speaking experiences will make it less likely that you will speak in public in the future because fear teaches you to protect yourself from risky situations. The purpose of this study is to investigate the comparison of the anxiety-related problem between engineering and non-engineering students during their oral presentation. There were 120 students of two different faculties from a public university in Johor who participated in this study. Alongside class observation on student's oral presentation in class, qualitative approaches using structured interviews were done over selected students and lecturers. The interviews were conducted between 5 students and 5 teachers to get clear evidence of anxiety occurrences during an oral presentation in the ESL classrooms. Based on the findings, there are no significant differences in the level of anxiety between engineering and non-engineering students. The major factors causing speaking anxiety during oral presentation in ESL classroom based on the overall analysis from the class observation show that both engineering and non engineering students have no proper eye contact with the audience, lack of knowledge of the target language, limited vocabulary repertoire, no appropriate body gestures, lack of stage presence, too nervous, stumble in the middle of presentation and low self confidence that leads to anxiety problem.

ABSTRAK

Pembentangan lisan adalah salah satu tugas yang paling biasa yang diberikan di universiti terutamanya untuk pelajar sarjana dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris. Pelajar dalam semua bidang ingin menyebarkan pengetahuan baru yang mereka hasilkan, dan ini sering dicapai dengan menyampaikan pembentangan lisan di kelas atau kuliah umum. Kebimbangan dalam pembentangan lisan boleh menghalang anda daripada mengambil risiko untuk berkongsi idea dan mengemukakan penyelesaian anda kepada masalah yang mempengaruhi banyak orang, dan akibatnya, ia boleh menjejaskan perkembangan secara peribadi dan profesional. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji perbandingan masalah yang berkaitan dengan kebimbangan antara pelajar kejuruteraan dan bukan kejuruteraan semasa pembentangan lisan mereka. Terdapat 120 pelajar daripada dua fakulti yang berlainan di sebuah universiti awam di Johor yang mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Di samping pemerhatian kelas mengenai pembentangan lisan pelajar di kelas, pendekatan kualitatif menggunakan temuduga dilakukan terhadap pelajar dan pensyarah terpilih. Wawancara dilakukan antara 5 orang pelajar dan 5 orang guru untuk mendapatkan bukti kebimbangan yang jelas semasa pembentangan secara lisan di dalam kelas. Berdasarkan penemuan ini, tidak terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam tahap kebimbangan antara pelajar kejuruteraan dan bukan kejuruteraan. Faktor utama yang menyebabkan kebimbangan semasa pembentangan lisan dalam kelas berdasarkan analisis keseluruhan dari pameran kelas menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua pelajar kejuruteraan dan bukan kejuruteraan tidak mempunyai hubungan interaksi dengan penonton, kekurangan pengetahuan bahasa, kosa kata yang terhad, tiada gerak badan yang sesuai, terlalu gugup, dan keyakinan rendah diri yang membawa kepada masalah kebimbangan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL	-	English for Second Language
EFL	-	English for Foreign Language
SA	-	Speaker Anxiety Scale
FLACS	-	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
Q&A	-	Question and Answer session

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Language is important because it is one of the most important ways of communicating and interacting with other people. English is an example of the importance of a language because it is the international language and for people in many parts of the world it has become the most important language. It is most commonly used in communication around the world and is also spoken in many countries as the first language. In many sectors such as education, medicine, engineering, and business, English plays an important role. There are many reasons why English is the world's most important language. In the tertiary level, students must deliver oral presentations in the ESL classroom using the foreign language English. The process of delivering ideas and to convey information through speech in oral communication is one of the important roles in the student's life.

Unfortunately, students were not able to give good oral presentations using the foreign language because of their anxiety problem. Speech anxiety in communication is the fear of speaking in public or a simple fear of uncertain things that happen to them. Most people experience anxiety when speaking to an audience in a formal setting. The idea of speaking in public usually makes us feel uncomfortable and everyone tends to avoid it. These feeling can be seen in themselves by physical reactions such as feeling dizzy, sweating or even they will start mumbling during their oral presentation. Starting from these physical reactions, they start to fail to recall what is the content of their presentation, feeling uncertain and do not have the self-confidence to have eye contact with the audience and finally they just want to end the bad experience in doing the oral presentation. Even so, there are many ways to reduce the feeling of anxiety during an oral presentation, so

that they can improve their presentation skills with more effective ways to deliver and convey their information and ideas with confidence.

1.2 Background of Research

This research is to compare the anxiety problem in oral presentation between engineering and non-engineering students in the ESL classroom. Oral communication skills are essential for the academic success of a student and for a better opportunity in their future career. In the challenging environment, every student needs to excel not only in the academic aspect but also other skills that required them to improve to be used for their employment prospect. Communication skills are a type of interaction that requires a dynamic process because of the involvement in the social interaction between two or more people. The major purpose of communication is to convey and deliver belief and ideas to someone else. The objective of the acquisition of language is communication skills: "the ability of a person to communicate his message with acceptable speed and accuracy using what he considers to be the most appropriate linguistic coding device" Nakuma, (1997). Good communication skills at all levels are needed in today's time and age. According to Raja (2013), "communication is one of the hallmarks of social solidarity, social ranking, and professional skills, and most language components are learned through this medium".

Therefore, this research was conducted to discover the anxiety-related problem and other factors that affect engineering and non-engineering students in presenting their oral presentation in the ESL classroom. While there were similar researches have been done among researcher from other engineering universities, it is hoped that this research will add new knowledge and information towards what others have found in context with this issue.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Many students have the same ability to speak in any language as they really know the language and therefore, they find that the purpose of learning a language as learning on how to speak and use the language, as Nunan (1991) wrote, "success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (foreign) language." Therefore, it is important for the students to be given the opportunity to speak the language in the classroom so that they will learn to use the language. If they are not given an opportunity to speak and practice the language, the students will feel demotivated and lose their interest in learning the language. If the right teaching method being used in the ESL classroom, speaking activities in the classroom can be motivating and also fun to the students. It will help the students to have a better environment to practice to use the language and reduce the anxiety when speaking the English language.

The anxiety of speaking in public is a feeling of fear and nervousness that people experience before, during and after giving a speech in front of others. Speech anxiety in communication is interchangeable terms used to describe a similar phenomenon. According to Brydon and Scott (1987), "speech anxiety refers to the feelings of discomfort experienced in public before or during speaking". Meanwhile, DeVito (1999) defines anxiety in communication as a "feeling of fear or anxiety about a situation in which one has to communicate, " especially when the communication activities take place in an open forum. Therefore, the term of speech anxiety is used throughout this primary as referring to both concepts. There are a lot of factors that lead to anxiety to occur during an oral presentation. The engineering and non-engineering teachers need to be aware of the cause of anxiety during student' oral presentation in ESL classroom, so they are able to understand their struggle and to stop criticizing the students for failing to meet the expectation in-class presentation.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of the research is to find out the anxiety problem and the comparison between engineering and non-engineering undergraduates students in doing the oral presentation in the ESL classrooms. Since there are many factors related to the student's performance of the oral presentations, especially in the ESL classes, it is important to determine which factors really affect the performance of the oral presentation. This research is conducted to help students discover the effects of anxiety on their own performance and also to help the educators to find a solution to be able to guide students in the future and able to deliver better skills and techniques in their oral presentation.

1.5 Objective of the Research

The research aims to:

- (a) Investigate the existence of anxiety problems between engineering and non-engineering students in the ESL classroom during oral presentations.
- (b) To know the differences between engineering and non-engineering students' level of anxiety and the factors that influence the anxiety in an oral presentation.
- (c) Explore the teachers' perception of anxiety in oral presentations between engineering and non-engineering students.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the objectives, there are three research questions that have been formulated. The research questions are as follows:

- (a) What are the differences between engineering and non-engineering student's level of anxiety towards oral presentation in the ESL classroom?
- (b) What are the factors that develop anxiety in the ESL classroom?
- (c) What is the perception of the teachers on the level of anxiety between engineering and non-engineering students?

1.7 Significance of the Research

It is challenging for some people to speak in front of other people or an audience because of the feeling of anxiety during the presentation. This kind of anxiety can be intimidating for English language learners in the ESL classroom because they speak a new language as well. It is important for students to have a better class environment so that it can help to improve students' presentation skills in the ESL class. There are several advantages to introducing students to have a better and positive classroom environment. This will actually help the students to be more focus on the way they pronounce each word clearly during the presentation, so it will help to improve their self-confidence. It is important for these students to reduce their anxiety and have a better presentation skill in order to excel better during their studies and future career.

The students also need to be given an opportunity to take the risk in a more supportive and collaborative environment. According to William and Robbert (2011), it is important for ESL students to practice the language and they also need to acquire the language in a meaningful way for academic purposes or even social context. It has also been found that teaching students to develop their effective oral presentation skills can support their quality of thinking and producing a well-organized presentation. This research will help students to identify which factors lead to their anxiety in oral presentation and thus to identify the causes and effects of their own anxiety-related problems in oral presentations for improvement.

1.8 Scope of the Research

The research was conducted between 2 different courses of engineering and non-engineering students in UTHM Johor. The engineering students were students from the Faculty of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Bachelor of Electrical Engineering) and the non-engineering students were those from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education (Bachelor of Vocational Education in Catering). As for this research, second-year undergraduate students were selected as they have already been exposed to oral presentation skills and have experienced doing the oral presentation even if they are not able to master the proper skills and technique. The oral presentations were observed for both engineering and non-engineering ESL classroom with an observation checklist to be filled and analyzed at the end of the observation. A total of 10 random students and ESL teachers were interviewed and about 150 students of engineering and non-engineering were chosen to be observed during their oral presentation in ESL classroom. The feedback of these participants provide answers to all the research questions. Their responses could represent a quarter of the university's population of engineering students and non-engineering students.

1.9 Operational Definition of the Key Terms

This operational definition of the key terms is intended to assist in understanding commonly used terms and concepts when reading, interpreting, and evaluating this research.

1.9.1 Anxiety

A feeling of fear, nervousness, or a feeling of uncertainty about something. Everyone has anxiety at some point in their life—you may be worried and anxious to sit an exam or to speak in public or in a job interview. Anxiety disorders are one of

the most common mental disorders experienced by speakers, according to Kirkwood and Melton (2002).

1.9.2 Oral Presentation

A form of giving explanation, sharing knowledge or idea on certain information or particular topics and subjects to the audience. There will be someone as the evaluators to assess and evaluate the quality, skills and the method used to present the overall content. The most anxious situation to all university students is the oral presentation, it is a common task in academic activity but it really gives an impact to all students. (Woodrow, 2006; King, 2002, Woodrow & Chapman, 2002)

1.9.3 English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners

Someone who learn English as a second language in a community where their native or spoken language is other than the English language. It is included spoken and written task to be done throughout the programs. ESL learners will be exposed to the use of grammar, vocabulary repertoire and other contextual topics related to the English language.

1.10 Conclusion

The necessity of public speaking skills is increasing due to the need of every individual to excel in their academic and also their career in the future. They tend to implement oral presentation skills in a classroom presentation, seminar, meetings and also in a conference so that they can give their own opinion, justification and related explanation regarding related issues. However, due to public anxiety, some people become restless and suffer from sleeping disorders when they have to speak to the audience. This research identified the existence of anxiety problems between

engineering and non-engineering students in ESL classroom during oral presentations. This research showed the differences between engineering and non-engineering students' level of anxiety and factors that influence the anxiety in an oral presentation.

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