



EFL Students' Coping Strategies for Speaking Anxiety During Online Learning

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ABSTRACT

The anxiety of learning a foreign language can be an obstacle in achieving the learning goals. Students of the English Education Study Program, FKIP UHAMKA were also dealing with the anxious experience when learning speaking conducted online. It appears that anxiousness is unavoidable particularly for English Foreign Language (EFL) students. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to investigate the coping strategies that most students use to overcome speaking anxiety during online learning. 62 students in the fourth semester of the English Education Study Program were respondents to this study. The data were then qualitatively collected using two types of questionnaires: closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, which described and tabulated the students' responses. After analyzing the closed-ended and open-ended responses, it is reasonable to conclude that the respondents mostly used the strategies of preparation, positive thinking, and peer seeking to cope with speaking anxiety in the context of online learning. In addition, based on open-ended responses, preparation was the most typically used strategy by them.

Keywords: Speaking, coping strategies, online learning

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Covid 19 pandemic affected the world in late December 2019, learning and teaching paradigm have dramatically changed (Alzamil, 2021). As explained in the Minister of Health's Decree No. 9, April 3, 2020 (Permenkes 9/2020), "Guidelines for the Implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in Accelerating Covid-19 Management" (Fitriani et al.,

2020), governments have initiated online learning globally, including Indonesia (Rizqiya et al., 2021). Many Indonesian schools and universities have agreed to conduct online learning for continuing education and preventing the transmission of coronavirus during the pandemic (Diana, 2021).

Online learning has risen to be a significant aspect of the world's supply of education material (Alzamil, 2021). It is a

learning system in which teachers provide materials and students interact on the web via the internet using varied technological devices or applications (Susilowati, 2020). Putri et al., (2021) mention that online learning refers to the use of an internet network with access, connectivity, and flexibility to bring up multiple learning interactions.

Powerfully, online platforms promote independent learning and inquiry-based learning since they enable student-teacher interaction even when they are not in the same location (Cakrawati, 2017). Hadi & Athallah (2021) explain that the provision of online material can be interactive, allowing learners to interact as a learning medium via technologies. Online learning, might increase students' tension and anxiety during the learning process (Rizqiya et al., 2021). It could be seen in the failure of many universities to adopt an online learning system (Fitriani et al., 2020).

Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are the four skills that students are expected to learn in terms of learning English. Following the other three skills, speaking is considered the highest level (Diana, 2021). Speaking is therefore one of the language skills students need to master. It is one way to communicate and present the speakers' ideas during a conversation or discussion (Prasetyaningrum et al., 2020). According to Nazir et al. (2014), English-speaking has always been a crucial skill for EFL students, and they consider the courage to speak English to be a complex task (Rafada & Madini, 2017). Diana (2021) also stated that the majority of foreign language students from all levels

of education in Indonesian English believe that speaking is a difficult skill to learn. In the sense that learning anxiety is unavoidable for students when learning a foreign language, particularly speaking.

As previously stated, English learning is a difficult skill, and students frequently experience anxiety when learning a language. According to Badrasawi et al. (2020), learning anxiety can arise from two sources. There are linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. In terms of linguistics, students were usually worried or anxious when they made grammatical errors, and they were sometimes worried about their lecturers' comments. The students were also worried when they made grammatical mistakes during the conversation.

In a non-linguistic context, the students seem to be unable to speak English in public because of their negative perceptions of the audience. Vielhaber (1983) also illustrated the anxiety level as a non-linguistic aspect. The highest anxiety level is visible when the students have a vibrating sound or shaking hands rather than a gesture. Lucas (1984) claims that communication apprehension is more common in some cultural environments. It is similar with Mak (2011)'s finding that a negative self-evaluation of important factors causes speaking anxiety in class.

It is a stress-related symptom in which students are more anxious for social interaction with their classmates, which can have an impact on their academic performance in ESL classes (Pappamihel, 2002). This statement is supported by Horwitz et al. (1986) that anxiety can influence students' communication strategies in language

classes. The more anxious students tend to avert difficulty or personal messages in the target language. So that, the atmosphere of the class should be created in friendly condition and told to them that they are not the only ones facing anxiety when learning a foreign language (Al-khasawneh, 2016).

Nurfirdaus & Mohd (2019) confirmed that while many studies have been conducted to investigate the factors of foreign language anxiety, studies on coping strategies for foreign language anxiety are still sadly lacking. There is still a limited resource of empirical research on students' coping strategies for dealing with language anxiety. Prasetyaningrum et al. (2020) stated that strategy is defined as a series of outcomes designed to achieve a specific goal. That's why, university students must develop their capability to create strategies to solve problems such as anxiety in learning a foreign language (Kao & Craigie, 2013). This is supported by Prasetyaningrum et al. (2020) that one way to solve the students' problems is they must be able to use specific strategies to encounter the problems they face in their speaking class.

Kondo & Yang (2004) found 70 basic strategies for dealing with anxiety in a second language, which can be summed up into five strategies: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation. Marwan (2007) also proposed four strategies that students frequently use to cope with foreign language anxiety: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, and peer seeking. Liu (2007) analyzed several strategies that can reduce speaking anxiety based on her participants'

responses. According to their responses, more practice and better preparation can contribute to overcoming their fear of talking and the creativity of English teachers is important to overcome their fear of speaking, and the creativity of English teachers is important to create a familiar and supportive school environment.

Several studies on coping strategies have been conducted in facing anxiety. He (2017) conducted research to identify the strategies used by Chinese college students to cope with foreign language anxiety and the effectiveness of these strategies in reducing students' anxiety in speaking. 302 university students from two different universities in China were participants in this study. The result of this study showed that the most dominant strategies used by the students were doing relaxation, talking with other students to reduce their nervousness, and trying to relax when learning speaking. The interview showed that the most common strategies used by students are foreign language practice, good preparedness, and the courage to speak English.

A recent study by Nurfirdaus and Mohd (2019) proposed identifying common strategies used by ESL students to deal with speaking anxiety and identifying any significant differences in the strategies used to reduce speaking anxiety between males and females. The findings of the survey showed that all respondents chose the same strategy for dealing with their anxiety, which is permitting classmates to work in small groups to cope with their anxiety when speaking. Therefore, based on the above-mentioned reasons, the purpose of this

research is to find out what types of general strategies students use to cope with their speaking anxiety and which strategies are frequently used by students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used for this study was descriptive qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis was applied to investigate what types of strategies respondents used to cope with their speaking anxiety, as well as which strategies commonly appeared on them to overcome their speaking anxiety in speaking class when learning online in this pandemic era. To get the data about coping strategies, the researchers adopted Marwan (2007) theory as the instrument of this research.

There are two kinds of questionnaires that were used; they are close-ended questionnaires and open-ended questionnaires. These two kinds of questionnaires are applied for considering not restricting the respondents' responses. The respondents were expected to respond more freely to obtain detailed information on the coping strategies they used while learning online. The Likert scale has been used to analyze data from different kinds of questionnaires. The data were divided based on the study's objectives; they are the most common strategies used by respondents and the most frequently seen in overcoming their speaking anxiety while participating in online learning.

The data was analyzed using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). Meanwhile, the

second questionnaire was used to get more detailed information about the respondents' coping strategies while participating in online learning. Google Forms were used to distribute both questionnaires. The data were described from the close-ended questionnaire and then followed by the open-ended questionnaire.

A. Coping Strategies Using a Close-ended questionnaire

The data from the close-ended questionnaire are presented in the following tables. According to the responses, the strategies that respondents commonly used to cope with speaking anxiety are 5 indicators, namely, Preparation, Relaxation, Positive Thinking, and Peer Seeking, with 15 five-point Likert scale items about Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety coping strategies.

Table 1. Interpretation Preparation

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	27	43.5	43.5	43.5
Disagree				
Agree	35	56.5	56.5	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 showed that 56.5 percent of respondents agreed to use a preparation strategy to deal with their speaking anxiety – i.e., they prepare it all study the day before the class begins.

Table2. Interpretation Relaxation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	39	62.9	62.9	62.9
Disagree				
Agree	23	37.1	37.1	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 on relaxation showed that 62.9% of respondents did not agree with relaxation as a strategic approach for dealing with anxiety. It means relaxation is not a good way to deal with the anxiety of speaking. Therefore, only some of them doing so.

Table3. Interpretation Positive Thinking

	Frequency	Perce nt	Valid Perce nt	Cumulati ve Percent
Valid	26	41.9	41.9	41.9
Disagree				
Agree	36	58.1	58.1	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Positive Thinking is mentioned in Table 3. The result showed that the Positive Thinking strategy is used by 58.1% of respondents to deal with their anxiety. Positive thinking means that you can stay focused on your attention. It can assist a great performance in speaking class.

Table4. Interpretation Peer Seeking

	Frequency	Perce nt	Valid Perce nt	Cumulati ve Percent
Valid	28	45.2	45.2	45.2
Disagree				
Agree	34	54.8	54.8	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

The result for Peer Seeking strategy above in table 4 showed that 54.8% of respondents agreed to use it. When they were feeling nervous in speaking class, they were looking for friends who can make them overcome their nervousness.

Table5. Interpretation Resignation

	Frequen cy	Perce nt	Valid Perce nt	Cumulati ve Percent
Valid	33	53.2	53.2	53.2
Disagr ee				
Agree	29	46.8	46.8	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Based on table 5 above, showed that 53.2% of respondents disagreed about using resignation as a strategy in coping with speaking anxiety. Few of them ignore the people around them when speaking in class, so they can focus and not feel disturbed. Whereas, others don't use this strategy to overcome their speaking anxiety. From all description above shows that general strategies that respondents used to cope their speaking anxiety are Preparation, Positive Thinking, and Resignation. Those are effective coping strategies for speaking anxiety used by them (Yasuda & Nabei, 2018).

B. Coping Strategies Using Open-ended Questionnaire

The open-ended questionnaire was designed to get various answers about the coping strategies the respondents use to cope with their speaking anxiety. From 62 respondents, they gave various interesting answers. They provided several unique strategies in coping with their speaking anxiety. The open-ended questionnaire used was translated and classified. Then, the data were thematically analyzed and categorized related to the basic strategies used to deal with speaking anxiety for EFL students. It was based on Kondo & Yang (2004). The most dominant points that appeared in coping strategies can be seen below:

Table 6. Preparation

Most participants mentioned	Frequency
• I prepare myself better	30
• I practice English in my mind	7
• I study hard	6
• I try to obtain good summaries and take notes	3

• I try to get using English	2
• I try to perform my best	1
• I check my dictionary	1
Total	50

I prepare myself before class begins. practice before speaking class. I try my best in class. I study one day before class. I try to speak mixed languages in Indonesian and English language.

50 EFL respondents used preparation strategy seeing as preparing everything the day before, such as practicing more, can help them reduce their anxiety in speaking during online learning.

Table 7. Positive Thinking

Most participants mentioned	Frequency
• I try not to think of people around me	9
• I try to be confident	7
• I believe in myself	7
• I try to enjoy English class	4
• I think positively	3
• I pray	3
• I tell myself that it's OK to make mistakes	2
• I try not to think of the consequences in class	1
• I tell myself that I am better than the others	1
• I tell myself that I'm OK	1
• I think of some pleasant	1
• I tell myself to study harder for the next Speaking class	1
Total	40

I try to be confident in Speaking class. I pray to god. I think of something pleasant. I think positively. I believe in myself. I try to ignore people around me. I tell myself to study hard for the next Speaking class.

40 respondents said that Positive Thinking helped them a lot to control their minds so that they could focus on speaking class and minimize distracting negative thinking.

Table 8. Relaxation

Most participants mentioned	Frequency
• I take a deep breath, inhale	15

exhale	
• I try to calm down	14
• I try to relax	7
• I play with my hands	1
Total	37

I take a deep breath. Inhale and exhale. I try to relax before I speak. I try to calm down so that when I speak, I don't stutter. I usually hold things like a pen or pencil to reduce my anxiety.

37 total respondents mentioned that taking a deep breath, inhaling, exhaling, and trying to calm down were very helpful when they felt anxious in speaking class during online learning.

Table 9. Peer Seeking

Most participants mentioned	Frequency
• I look around	1
• I ask students around me if they understand the lesson	1
• I look for others who are having difficulty controlling their anxiety	1
• I talk with my friends around me	1
Total	4

I anticipate speaking first and waiting for someone else to answer first. I ask to my friend how to pronounce the word. Light talk with friends. I saw my friend who made a mistake.

Four participants believed that looking for friends who make the same mistakes in speaking class was one way to reduce their speaking anxiety. So, they don't feel like they made their own mistakes.

Table 10. Resignation

Most participants mentioned	Frequency
• I give up in class	2
• I don't make useless resistance	1
• I stop paying attention	1
Total	4

Actually, I can speak first but I can't respond it well. I don't speak in class at all. I don't get involved in discussions that I don't know about. I don't do anything else so I don't get distracted.

Based on table 10, only four respondents said that having given up and accepting the situation in class was one way to manage their speaking anxiety during online learning. Preparation was the most effective strategy that the respondents used when the anxious feeling came up while speaking through online learning during a pandemic.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated EFL students' coping strategies for dealing with speaking anxiety during online learning in a pandemic era. Closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires were used to collect data. It was held at the Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA University in Jakarta. 62 students have committed to participate in this study. Based on the research findings, the respondents used five coping strategies for speaking anxiety: preparation, positive thinking, relaxation, peer seeking, and resignation. However, in the era of online learning, three coping strategies are most commonly used by students: preparation, positive thinking, and peer seeking. They usually use them when they are anxious in speaking class.

According to the students' responses toward an open-ended questionnaire, they mostly use Preparation as a coping strategy for speaking anxiety. It seems to be the only way to help students overcome their public speaking anxiety during online learning. They have to prepare all things before the class begins and to practice constantly. Finally, it is suggested that more research into learning coping strategies is required to provide a more

comprehensive result. The significant findings of the following study may be useful either theoretically or practically in terms of the advancements of the teaching-learning process, particularly for English as a foreign language during online learning.

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