

A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN STRESSFUL AND NON-STRESSFUL LEARNING TESTS TOWARDS STUDENTS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Aghnia Amalia N., Hery Yufrizal, Feni Munifatullah

ningaghnia@gmail.com

English Department, University of Lampung

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti i) apakah ada perbedaan signifikan antara tes pembelajaran yang menyebabkan stres dan tidak stres terhadap keterampilan berbicara ii) apakah ada dampak signifikan dari kecemasan terhadap keterampilan berbicara. Desain penelitian ini adalah *Ex-post facto*. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 69 siswa kelas sebelas SMA yang terbagi menjadi dua kelas. Tes berbicara dan tes kecemasan digunakan sebagai alat pengumpulan data. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan *Independent Sample T-Test and Anova*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan signifikan antara keterampilan berbicara siswa melalui tes pembelajaran yang menyebabkan stres dan tidak stres dengan tingkat signifikansi 0.05, dan ada dampak yang signifikan dari kecemasan terhadap keterampilan berbicara. Hal ini menandakan bahwa perbedaan kesulitan tes dapat menyebabkan perbedaan tingkat kecemasan siswa dalam berbicara.

Abstract. The objectives of this research were to find out whether i) there was a statistically significant difference of students' speaking performance between stressful and non-stressful learning tests and ii) there was a statistically significant impact of anxiety towards students' speaking performance. The design of the research was *Ex-post facto*. The subjects were 69 students of the eleventh grade of SMA which decided into two classes. The speaking tests and the anxiety test were used to collect the data. The data were analyzed by using *Independent Sample T-Test and Anova*. The result showed that there was a statistically significant difference of students' speaking performance between stressful and non-stressful learning tests with the significant level 0.05. Furthermore, there was a statistically significant impact of anxiety on students' speaking performance. This suggests that different test difficulties result in different level of students' anxiety on speaking.

Keywords: *Speaking performance, stressful learning test, non-stressful learning test, anxiety.*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak in English is the primary goal of learning English as a foreign language. Speaking seems easy to do when someone speaks using his/her first language, but it will be difficult when he/she speaks using a foreign language. In addition, Indonesian students consider English, as a foreign language, as a hard subject, thus they cannot understand instantly the sounds and pronunciation, recall the vocabulary well, and produce sentences.

Aside from mastering the structures that construct words in speaking, speaking also is influenced by the psychological state within a person. Klein (2015) states that the psychological state is the current emotional state or mental disposition that an agent is in. The psychological state represents the idea that each individual experiences the environment by his/hers uniqueness. Moreover, Abu-Rabia (2004) states that learning an additional language is both cognitively and emotionally demanding. Thus, it can be concluded that the psychological state is related to the feeling that affects human's success in learning speaking as a foreign language.

One of the most well-documented psychological states in learning is anxiety. Anxiety is a negative way to present human feelings. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986, p.125) states that anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Foreign language learners, who feel anxious, face symptoms such as sweating, palpitations, worry, forgetfulness, and difficulties in language learning. Anxious foreign language students identify speaking in the target language as the most frightening language skill. Therefore, it is often reported that they feel stressed and even start to "freeze" when they have to act out a role-play or deliver a speech.

Anxiety in English speaking learning is caused by many factors. Young (1991:426) states that language testing is one of the six possible sources of anxiety in language classroom. Thus, stressful/difficult learning test to test English speaking ability is one of factors effects anxiety. Matthew (2006) says

that when tests are stressful and difficult, students will get negative effect to their cognition, worry, and lack of control. In addition, Krashen (1981) states that low anxiety relates to success in second language acquisition. In learning English, the tests chosen are crucial things to make students understand and well perform the target language.

Moreover, students in Indonesia are obligated to learn English for twelve years from Elementary School up to Senior High School without considering the psychological state within the students. The students are required to get good score in every subject that it leads them to be anxious and stress. In addition, as the highest level of basic education in Indonesia, the students are in their adolescent period when they study in Senior High School. Thus, they are expected to be able to communicate fluently in English. In fact, anxiety is a serious problem for adolescents. Mathyssek (2014) finds that anxiety disorders are the most frequent mental health problem in adolescents. In addition, Twenge (2015) says that high school students today have more anxiety symptoms and are twice as likely to see a mental health professional as teens in the 1980s. To sum up, the students as adolescents in Senior High School are facing difficulties in mastering English related to their anxiety.

Referring to the explanation above, the researcher considers that it is important to find out (1) whether there is a significant difference of students' speaking performance between stressful and non – stressful learning tests, and (2) whether there is a significant impact of anxiety towards students' speaking performance. Therefore, the finding of this research is expected to give some contributions to language teaching.

METHODS

This research was a comparative study. The design was ex-post facto design. The populations of the research were students of the eleventh grade of SMA Al – Kautsar Bandar Lampung and the samples of the research were XI MIA 6

consisting of 35 students and XI MIA 7 consisting of 34 students. The instruments used were speaking performance test and anxiety test. In analyzing the data, Independent Sample T-Test was used to prove the hypothesis 1 and Anova was used to prove hypothesis 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The result of speaking through stressful learning test showed that the highest score was 76.5, the lowest score was 55.5, and the average score was 67.2. There were 71.4% students who are 'good' and 28.6% students who are 'fair' in speaking performance through stressful learning test. On the contrary, the speaking through non – stressful learning test showed that the highest score was 90, the lowest score was 71.5, and the average score was 78.8. There were 2.9% students who are 'excellent' and 97.1% students who are 'good' in speaking performance through non – stressful learning test. The following table shows the group statistics of stressful and non-stressful learning tests classes.

Table 1. Group Statistics

Group Statistics					
Class		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Stressful Learning Test	35	67.2143	6.20043	1.04806
	Non-stressful Learning Test	34	78.8529	3.26953	.56072

The criterion for hypothesis 1 is accepted if the result of sig.(2-tailed) value is lower than 0.05 (sig. < 0.05). In accordance with table 1, it showed that $p = .000$. Thus, p is lower than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$). In other words, H_{01} was rejected and H_1 was accepted. Therefore, it could be stated that there was a significant difference in students' speaking performances between stressful and non – stressful learning tests.

The results of anxiety test showed that most of students in stressful learning test class had high anxiety level. There were 30 students in high anxiety level, 4 students in moderate anxiety level, and only 1 student in low anxiety level. While in the non – stressful learning test class, most of students had moderate anxiety level. There were 4 students in high anxiety level, 26 students in moderate anxiety level, and 4 students in low anxiety level. The following tables show descriptive statistic of speaking means scores based on anxiety levels and the result of ANOVA.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptives								
Speaking								
Anxiety Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
High	34	67.7500	7.20716	1.23602	65.2353	70.2647	55.50	81.00
Moderate	30	77.9333	3.82084	.69759	76.5066	79.3601	71.50	90.00
Low	5	78.4000	3.38009	1.51162	74.2031	82.5969	72.50	81.00
Total	69	72.9493	7.66588	.92286	71.1077	74.7908	55.50	90.00

Table 3. Result of ANOVA

ANOVA					
Anxiety	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12753.717	2	6376.858	108.076	.000
Within Groups	3894.225	66	59.003		
Total	16647.942	68			

The criterion for the hypothesis 2 is accepted if the result of F value is higher than F table ($F_{\text{value}} > F_{\text{table}}$). In accordance with Table 3, the result of the variant analysis showed $F_{\text{value}} = 108.076$, while $F_{\text{table}} = 3.14$, thus ($F_{\text{value}} > F_{\text{table}}$). Then the analysis also showed that each group has different mean and each mean

has also different standard deviation. It can be seen that there was a different anxiety between speaking performance through stressful learning test and speaking performance through non – stressful learning test with the coefficient significance 0.000 ($p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$).

In addition, the researcher analyzed to follow up One – Way ANOVA by using post-hoc Scheffe test, due to it had an approximately similar sample and different treatment (equal and unequal). The mean results showed that among high, moderate, and low anxiety level were significant at the 0.05 level. Moreover, the coefficient significant was 0.000 ($p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, it is clear that there was a difference in anxiety between speaking performance through stressful learning test and speaking performance through non – stressful learning test. In other words, it can be said that there was a significant impact of anxiety towards students' speaking performances.

Discussions

The results of speaking performance between stressful and non – stressful learning test showed statistically significant difference. The average speaking score in stressful learning test was 67.2, while the highest speaking score in non – stressful learning test was 78.8. Students in non – stressful class felt more enjoy and less anxious than in stressful class. It made students to be more confident and fluent in their speaking performance. This result support the statement from Young (1991:426) who says that language testing is one of the six possible sources of anxiety in language classroom, and also Matthew (2006) who says that when tests are stressful and difficult, students will get negative effect to their cognition, worry, and lack of control.

The result of anxiety test between stressful and non – stressful learning test also showed statistically significant difference. In stressful class, most of students had high anxiety, while in non – stressful class; most of students had moderate anxiety. However, along with these findings, the influence of anxiety within two different learning classes cannot be excluded. Different difficulties in learning tests created different anxiety in students' speaking performances. In line with the results of the students' speaking and anxiety tests, there was a significantly negative correlation between anxiety and students' speaking performances both in stressful and non – stressful learning test classes. Having analyzed the result, the researcher found that the average score of speaking test in stressful in stressful learning test class was lower than the average score of speaking test in non – stressful learning test class.

Overall, each class had a different experience in speaking performance. In stressful learning test class, most of the students felt stress and anxious, thus they could not perform well. This is in line with Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986: p. 126) mention that an anxious student tends to be less concentrated, forgetful, heart beating, and sweating that may lead to the negative behavior such as avoiding the class or procrastinate their homework. In the end, these behaviors will affect their cognitive competence because high-anxiety students will perform and achieve lower than those who have low-anxiety in the class. Moreover, this phenomenon of anxiety at the eleventh grade students is in line with Twenge (2015) who says that high school students today have more anxiety symptoms and is twice as likely to see a mental health professional as teens in the 1980s, and Mathyssek (2014) who finds that anxiety disorders are the most frequent mental health problem in adolescents. While in non – stressful learning test class, most of the students enjoyed the class, thus they felt less stress and they can perform better than in stressful class. This result supports Krashen (1981) theory who states that low anxiety relates to success in second language acquisition. Therefore, these conditions showed that when the student's anxiety is high, his speaking performance is low. In contrast, when the student's anxiety is low, his speaking

performance is high. To sum up, there was a statistically significant impact of anxiety towards students' speaking performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

In line with the data analysis and discussion, the conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. There is a statistically significant difference of students' speaking performance between stressful and non – stressful learning tests.
2. There is a statistically significant impact of anxiety towards students' speaking performance.

Suggestions

Derived from the conclusions above, the writer proposes two major suggestions as follows:

1. For the Teacher

The teacher should consider students' anxiety in designing learning material.

The teacher also should motivate students in learning English, especially in speaking, to be able to perform speaking without feeling anxious in front of the audience.

2. For the Future Researcher

The future researchers are suggested to conduct the study about students' anxiety in the other English skills, like reading, writing, and listening. Thus, the later results will be helpful for teacher in teaching English.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Rabia, S. 2004. Teachers' role, learners' gender differences, and foreign language anxiety among seventh-grade students studying English as a foreign language. *Educational Psychology*, 24(5): 711-721.

- Horwitz, E.K. , Horwitz, M.B. & Cope, J. 1986. Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2): 125-132.
- Klein, S. 2015. The feeling of personal ownership of one's mental states: a conceptual argument and empirical evidence for an essential, but underappreciated, mechanism of mind". *Psychology of Consciousness: Research, Practice, and Theory* (2): 355–376.
- Krashen, S.D. 1981. *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Prentice-Hall International.
- Mathyssek, C. 2014. *The development of anxiety symptoms in adolescents*. Published Thesis. Rotterdam, The Netherlands.
- Matthews, G. 2006. Emotional intelligence, personality, and task – induced stress. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 12(2): 2, 96-107.
- Twenge, J.M., 2015. Time period and birth cohort differences in depressive symptoms in the U.S., 1982–2013. *Social Indicators Research* 121(2): 437-454.
- Young, D. J. 1991. “Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: What does language anxiety research suggest?” *The Modern Language Journal*. 75 (2): 426-439.