THE ANXIETY LEVEL OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING STUDENTS IN ENGLISH FOR COMMUNICATION CLASS

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ABSTRACT

In order to compete in the global world where competitive and employable graduates are expected to be produced by higher education, students have to enhance their English proficiency. Although the students in Indonesia have studied English since they were in Primary School onwards, however, research have shown that the students still need to improve their English speech proficiency. The student still experience anxiety when doing an oral presentation using English despite their long engagement with English. Regarding to the point mentioned before then the aim of the study is to explore the level of anxiety of Mechanical Engineering students of Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang in English for Communication class. Moreover, it aims to see to what extent gender affect the oral presentation anxiety. In order to have a broad overview of the study, a questionnaire was conducted among 87 students who join the English Communication class. McCroskey's (1992) 'Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) is used to collect data on how the students feel in relation to giving an oral presentation. It is believed that knowing the level of the students' anxiety will help the teachers to arrange the material, set the tasks, and the most important thing is to help the students with their anxiety.

Keywords: *anxiety, oral presentation, speech proficiency.*

1. BACKGROUND

Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang (PNUP), which occupies the sixth position as the best polytechnics in Indonesia, targets its graduates to be able to compete globally and to become employable. The graduates are expected to be absorbed by the industries or any other institutions as soon as possible after the graduation. The shorter the time the graduates get a job after the graduation the better. This will lead to a positive impact for the study program in terms of accreditation form which plays important role in promoting the study program specifically and Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang in general.

Mechanical Engineering department is one of the departments among other five (5) departments in Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang (PNUP). The department has 7 study programs with almost nine hundred students makes it the second department with the most students after Electro Department which also has 7 study programs. Mechanical engineering department has four Diploma 3 study programs and three Bachelor degree study programs. English is taught in all study programs.

To achieve the target, Mechanical Engineering department keeps improving the curriculum of all the study programs regularly. In the process of improving the curriculum, the study programs involve all the stakeholder, such as the leaders, the teachers, the industries, and also the alumni. All the stakeholders are expected to contribute valuable recommendation, suggestion, and ideas regarding to the improvement of the curriculum. Involving the industries in the designing a curriculum of a study program is crucial since they become the source of the information of what kind of skills that the graduates need to have in order to work in their place.

The English material in Bachelor of Applied Science in Manufactures and Mechatronics is arranged based on the competencies that those study programs set based on the curriculum used. Being able to do oral presentation using English becomes the main learning outcome of studying English in those study programs. The students are expected to do many oral presentations for many purposes such as introducing themselves, telling about their plans for the future, and the most important thing is explaining about mechanical stuffs such as how the machines in the workshop work, describing objects or machines, telling about safety signs and describing the mechanical process. Based on the learning outcomes which focuses on enhancing oral presentation skill, then the material, complete with the tasks, are arranged for English subjects presented in those study programs. In second semester, the students in both Mechatronics and Manufactures study English for Communication which will support the students when they take English for Engineering in the third semester.

The reason behind focusing on oral presentation skill is that nowadays almost all profession need a good competence of public speaking where oral presentation becomes a part of it. Oral presentations have started to

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be recognized and emphasized, besides focusing on core subjects, in the other major disciplines such as engineering and medical fields. In engineering context, oral communication task such as oral presentation or design presentation have been part of formal and informal assessment and activities in engineering classroom. Moreover, there are numberless benefits of doing oral presentation especially when preparing the students for the real work situation. This type of task is important in which students are obliged to communicate their ideas effectively to the public. Beside that their soft skill can also be improved through this kind of task where they can involve in a better interaction and participation in class. The students also can improve their own presentation skill by observing their friends' presentation. All that have been mentioned before are the positive aspect of oral presentation.

However, oral presentation still becomes a distressing situation in the classroom. In a real classroom setting, the students come from different background in both life and educational. Not all students view the oral presentation from positive angle. Some students may have fears of public speaking because they never have this kind of activities in their previous schools. Some are afraid of being judged by their friends when doing oral presentation. While some are afraid because they do not master the material presented. As a consequence, they may not be getting the positive outcomes of the oral presentation.

King (2002) stated that very often students are anxious with the presentation and communication skills that are important for a good presentation. Another study was conducted by Kho and Leong (2015) that not being prepared, linguistic and psychological are the most common factors of anxiousness in delivering oral presentations among the other students. While according to Al Harun, et.al (2016) stated that in an ESL/EFL classroom setting, the students of non-native speakers find it difficult to speak confidently during oral presentation especially to the students who do not expose with English in their everyday conversation.

Anxiety is interpreted as a state of discomfort of fear caused by the anticipation of something threatening. Furthermore, Kirkwood and Melton (2002) explained that anxiety disorders are among the most common mental disorders faced by public speakers. People who feel anxiety while speaking in public usually tend to avoid the situations where they have to do the oral presentation. When they do the oral presentation they experience an intense distress and anxiety.

Udomkit (2003) based on the research stated that the communication anxiety experienced by the students of Signal school at English classroom caused by some aspects such as an inadequate chance for all students in participating in classroom communication, lack of confidence when using English in the communication in the classroom. While the affective factors such as interpersonal evaluation, classroom activities and methods used by the teachers in the classroom also can cause anxiety among the students.

Some researchers such as William and Andrade (2008), Tutyandari (2005), and Na (2007) asserted that the language anxiety is mostly caused by the oral presentation activities in the classroom. Young (1991) stated that many students in the classroom feel more secured when they don't have to speak a foreign language in front of many people. The anxiety will occur when the students have to speak foreign language in front of the classroom or many people. In conclusion, there is a strong relation between fear of negative evaluation from public and self-perception to increase the level of anxiety of the students.

Some of the findings by the researchers are true to the situation of English for communication class in Mechatronics and Manufactures. Some students feel most anxious when they have to speak English in the classroom without preparation. This somehow will affect the interaction in the classroom, the students cannot directly respond to what the teacher asks. Other fears that the students face is being worried about the use of grammar and worried about being embarrassed by other students when making mistakes. The lack of confident of the students also contributes to the anxiety in English classroom.

Realizing the importance of the oral presentation for the students to prepare them for the real work situation after graduating, it is important to know the anxiety level of the students so that the teachers can design their material and plan the techniques and methods in the learning process of English for communication class in order to reduce the anxiety level. By knowing the anxiety level of the students, the teachers are able to set the strategies used in the learning process which will lead to the improvement of students' oral presentation skill.

2. METHODOLOGY

The method applied in this research is a description quantitative which used to describe the situations or the objects of the research. The data which is collected from the questionnaire that is used to measure the anxiety level of the students who become the sample of the research and also to compare the level of anxiety of male and female students.

The population of the research is the first graders of Mechanical Engineering Department of Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang who study English for Communication. The number of population is about 150 students which consist of 6 classes altogether.

The researcher takes only 4 classes among 6 classes that study English for Communication. Two classes will be from Mechatronics study program and the other two from Manufacture study program. The number of students who do the survey is 87 students.

To measure the anxiety in oral presentation of the participants, the study uses the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) survey developed by McCroskey. This survey is a validated scale strictly adapted for public speaking anxiety. Besides giving the PRPSA, the survey given to the students also include some backgrounds information of the students, such as: age, gender and education. It is important to pay attention to the backgrounds information since the research also aims to know whether any different between male and female anxiety in English for Communication class.

PRPSA is a survey which consists of 34 items, 5-likert scaled survey with an alpha reliability of higher than 0.90. The students who become the sample of the research are asked to rate from five (5) scales which are Strongly disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, or Strongly agree = 5 on various statements regarding to the oral presentation anxiety. The level of anxiety is considered high if the score is above 131, low if the score below 98, and moderate if the score is between 98 and 131.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The PRPSA survey contains 34 statements. Hsu (2012) labelled the statements into several kinds. He stated that the statements can be labelled as positive attitude towards speech anxiety, emotional consequences of speech anxiety, physical consequences of speech anxiety, insufficient preparation, feeling of helplessness, and the last one is perfectionist.

Table 3.1 PRPSA for all students

CATEGORY OF ANXIETY	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
High	12	13,79
Moderate	69	79,31
Low	6	6,90
Total	87	100

The main research aim is to find out the anxiety level of the mechanical students of Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang. It can be seen that the majority of the students from both study programs who join the study experienced moderate level of anxiety during the English Communication class. The number of the students who have moderate level of anxiety is 69 out of 87 which reached about 79.31%. The number of students who experienced high level of anxiety is 12 out of the total of 87; it is about 13,79%. While the number of students who have experienced low level of anxiety is 6 which is about 6.90%. It means that based on the analysis the anxiety level of the students is different based on the criteria set by PRPSA survey which are low level (the score is below 98), moderate level (the score is between 98 and 131) and high level (the score is above 131). As mentioned by Shumin (2002) that there are three level of anxiety which are low, moderate, and high level of anxiety.

The result above is similar to Lou (2014) who stated that the majority of the students in China experienced a moderate level of anxiety. The findings that revealed the majority of the students who join this study are experiencing moderate level of speaking anxiety are similar with the findings in the previous studies done by some researchers such as Cagatay (2015); Chan, Abdullah and Yusof (2012); and Lim and Budin (2014).

Below is the graphic of the survey results for all the students who join the study. It can be seen that it is about 79.31% of them experienced moderate level of anxiety. Though the students are at the moderate level of anxiety but their level score is different among them. Their level of anxiety might be different depending on the situation that makes them feel anxiety in speaking English. This is in line with Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) who stated that there are some situation that make the students experience the feeling of anxiety when speaking English. Some of them are shy to talk in front of many people while some are fear to a negative response or judgement from their teacher and friends in the classroom.

Table 3.2 The Survey Result
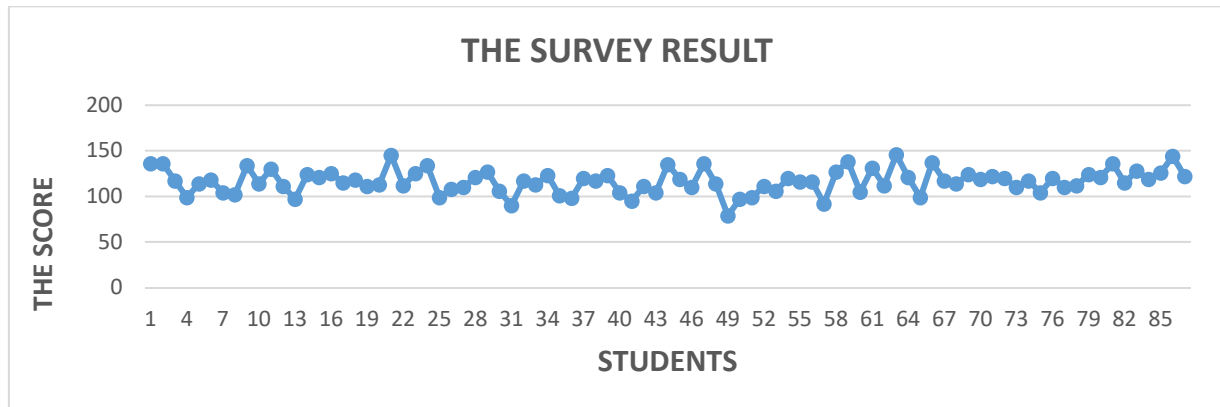
When talking about the level of anxiety of male compared to female students, the finding revealed that there are no any significant differences between them for high and moderate level of anxiety. The number of the male students experienced high level of anxiety is about 14,71% (10 students). While the number of the female students who have high level of anxiety is about 10,53% (2 students). For the moderate level of anxiety, male students reached the number of 76,4% (52 students) and the female students is about 89,47% (17 students). The number of female students joining this study is 19. In contrast the number of the male students is 68.the number of the male students is almost thrice the female students. This is a common composition in Mechanical Department of Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang. There are more male students to female students accepted in the department almost every year.

In term of low level of anxiety between male and female students, there is a slight difference in number. The number of the male students experiencing low level of anxiety is about 8,82% (6 students). While the number of female students experienced low level is 0%. It means that female students only experience two level of anxiety, high and moderate level of anxiety. The findings are in line with the result of the study conducted by Hsu (2012). He mentioned that the female students have longer time preparation of speech and higher public speaking anxiety compared to male students.
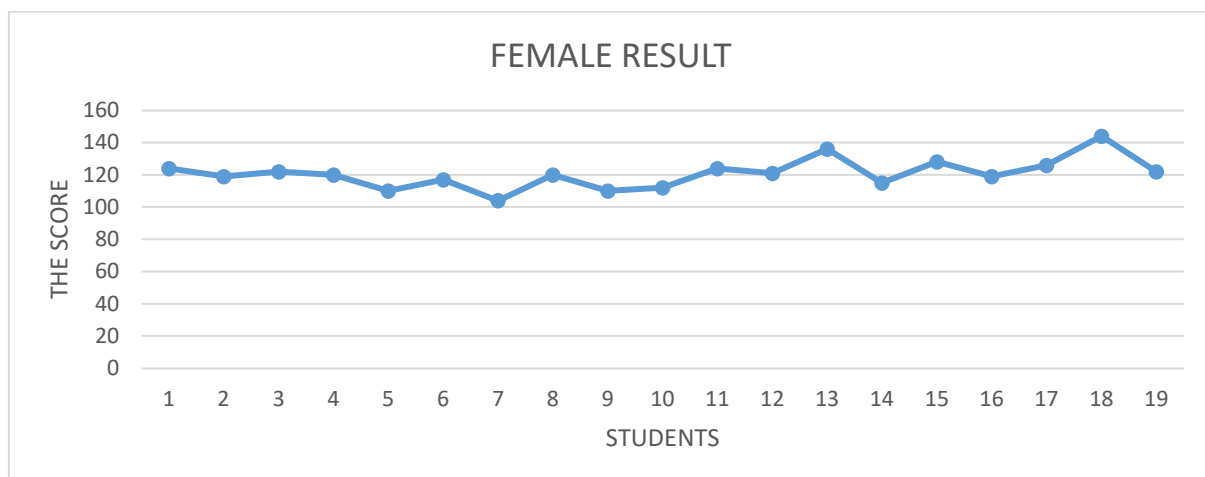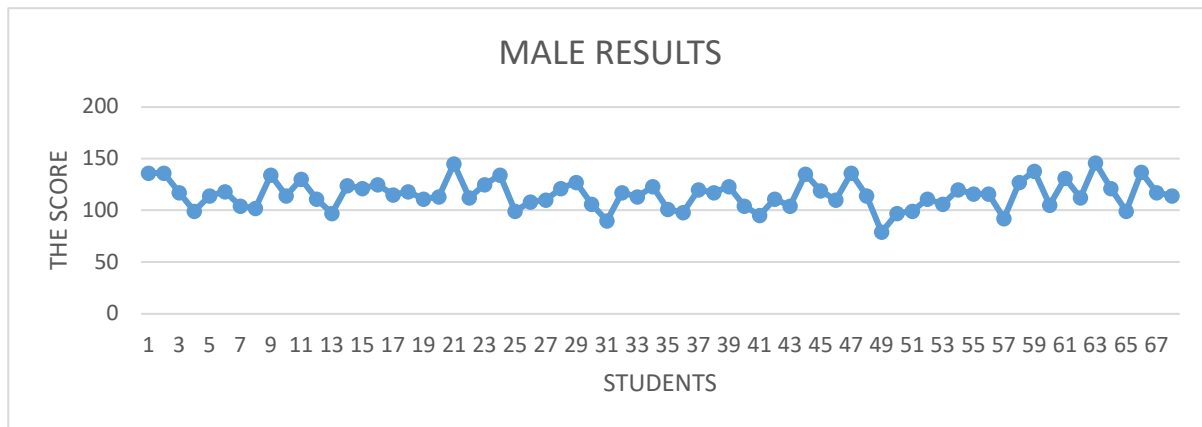
Table 3.3 Female results

Table 3.4 Male results

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the survey conducted among 87 students of Mechanical Department of Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang has some results. The level of the students' anxiety is divided into three levels; they are low level, moderate level and high level of anxiety. The majority of the students, male and female, experienced moderate level of anxiety in speaking English in the classroom. However, when it comes to the low level of anxiety, the male students reached about 8,82% while the male is 0%.

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6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT