

I Feel Anxious When Communicating: Questioning Students' Learning Readiness

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Abstract: When learning process occurs, the educators expect students' fully participation. However, learners experience various obstacles in their participation efforts, such as feelings of anxiety during presentations and discussions. This study aims to investigate students' anxiety predictors when doing communication during the dynamic learning. There are 2 males and 2 female participants (4 participants) involved. Their anxiety problems in communication will be explored using qualitative approach. In order to obtain data on factors triggering participants' anxiety, researchers used participation-observation techniques on each of participant's activity and behavior in the classroom and conducted in-depth interviews to reveal what experiences contributing to participants' anxiety. The results found that factors that cause the participants to feel anxious when communicating are: 1) Limited mastery of the material, 2) Ignoring the activity of self expression in the learning, 3) Lack of confidence, 4) Being trapped in traumatic sense, and 5) Crisis of appreciation toward learning effort from the peers.

Keywords: [Anxiety; communicating; learning readiness]

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning activities should mediate learners to recognize their abilities and competencies through a various approaches, models, methods, and strategies. This shift of conception begins to appear in this modern era, educators who initially dominate all learning activities begin to change their roles, in which they are present only to facilitate, mediate, and evaluate learning processes and interactions.

Learners begin to teach and be trained as individuals who "have" learning class so that it seems that learners who dominate the the learning activities as the effort to optimize learners' outcomes holistically. Starting from leading prayers, doing observations, composing papers, analyzing, discussing, presenting results to evaluating learning outcomes. As learners will later become

educators who manage learning (if the time comes), then through learning in higher education (university), they should be trained and familiarized to undertake, apply, and develop teaching and educational experiences during the study as an early form of preparation.

Apparently this role shift (from educators to learners) has not involved the readiness of all learners yet. Some learners respond positively actively and participatively in the classroom, but some still feel awkward to participate actively. They are reluctant to do an effort based on self-development yet are more comfortable to be lectured by educators.

The passive group still assumes that learning activities are centered only on educators. Therefore, to do efforts to follow up learning tasks and initiatives to find solutions is still minimal during the activity of learning. It is characterized by the ignorance of the task of finding a

journal, of composing less analytical and critical papers, and of not being prepared when delivering material to other classmates (excessive anxiety, such as tremble and sweat). Because of their unpreparedness, anxiety always dominates the presentation activities so that the process of developing the quality of self is often disrupted and even hampered.

Anxiety becomes an individual's subjective experience of mental tension and tends to be troubling because it implies the inability to face problems (Kartono, 2012). Communication anxiety is categorized as social anxiety disorder (Payton & Scott, 2013), including social phobia disorders as well as social anxiety disorder. Individuals tend to be afraid of situations relating to their performance and interactional situations with others (McCroskey, 1977).

Anxiety that comes suddenly causes sense of discomfort resulting in self-anxiety. (Haryanthi & Tresniasari, 2012). These feelings of anxiety then make learners want to avoid problems or hinder their ability to successfully perform in classroom (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Wahyuni, 2015). Moreover, the anxiety that arises when conducting interpersonal communication will ultimately lead learners to try as little as possible to engage in communication activities. Learners prefer to avoid situations of communication and the avoidance causes them to be less active and participative (Mayasari, 2015) during the study.

People have higher levels of anxiety in social communication with strangers than acquaintances, and people have more social communication with an acquaintance than they are friends (Wrench, Brogan, McCroskey, & Jowi, 2006). Feelings that are flexible and relaxed in communicating will be different when learners meet their

friends, acquaintances, and strangers according to him. Thus, the form of social relations in the learning interaction is one of the variables that make learners become anxious.

There is a feeling of fear and discomfort with the "new" situation in communication in which learners will participate and there is generally a tendency to withdraw from those various situations (Villar, 2010). Emotional attachment is not limited to introductions, but with the facilitation from educators, learners can get acquainted so that they do not feel strange to each other. Another thing that educators can do is that by approaching learners when reviewing a task or making something memorable so that he does not feel awkward with the presence of educators who can trigger excessive anxiety during communication.

Communication anxiety is a form of normal behavior for learners that need to be controlled appropriately. Anxiety does not always have a negative impact on the learner, but anxiety is useful if the learner can motivate himself to study harder by preparing as early as possible before performing. Anxiety is usually abnormal when its level does not match the proportion of threats (Wahyuni, 2015). Excessive anxious happens to a learner because he has never deliver presentations before (Wrench, Brogan, McCroskey, & Jowi, 2006), and he feels that he is being watched by others when performing (Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013).

Actually Blegur (2017) has provided evidence that students' anxious feelings can be replaced with feelings of joy and enthusiasm when they are completed and successful sharing information and knowledge with others. Therefore, educators should help learners recognize the behavior and distorted interaction so that they help learners perform optimally in each task as an interesting and

memorable learning experience. Thus, these feelings of anxiety become a motivational tool and encourage the high curiosity of learners.

2. METHOD

2.1 Procedure

Researchers expect to get information, or responses about the sources of participants' anxiety in learning activities. It begins with observing or investigating participants' anxiety during a presentation and then is followed by in-depth interviews to find the originality of the participants' answers.

Another procedure employed is to utilize non-formal situations when conducting interviews, in order to avoid the participants' awkwardness to view the source of their anxiety in the learning process. Researchers ensure the confidentiality of information during the study, in which the names of participants and their data are only used in the research process, not for other purposes.

2.2 Participant

Participants were 4 students of Physical Education, Health, and Recreation of Artha Wacana Christian University who were determined by using purposive sampling. Participants include: Keray E. P. (22 years), Indu N. A. Y. (20 years), Tingga F. (22 years), and Fobia J. (20 years). They are chosen because they show an excessive level of anxiety when delivering the material, either when asking, supporting, or presenting material for class discussion.

Tense, sweating excessively, tremor, monotonous, rigid so that the message conveyed has not been fully well received by the audience, this causes the learning class to be less stable, less than the maximum, and less impact. The

determination of participants is intended to explore in depth the experience of anxiety during the class (what factors becomes predictors of unprepared learners).

2.3 Data COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data were elicited by doing participant observations and in-depth interviews. Participation observation focuses on evidence of statements or feelings that participants respond in accordance with their behavior or not. This can be seen when giving opinions or behaviors he does in the learning process.

While in-depth interviews were used to invest sources of participants' anxiety, they may include the use of teaching methods, the application of feedback, proportional tasks assigned by educators, or about mockery behaviors in the classroom. The data analysis the researchers use refers to John W. Creswell analysis model in 2009 that offers 7 segments of analysis, from data collection process to data interpretation into a meaningful theme.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Limited Mastery of the Material

The presentation process is designed in a individual presentation model, in which each learner becomes a presenter for their discussion material. Preparatory steps are taken by dividing the learners in small groups (2 to 4 persons in a group), where each group discusses a single topic of a joint paper. Prior to presentation, they work on and organized the material during 4 to 6 meetings while educators correct and accompany them until they are ready to present the material with the support of learning resources (proceeding, national journal, and book/text).

The strategy is aimed to that the learners acquire the skills in writing and thinking to really understand and master the material so that when the material is diffused, it is beneficial to the audience. Learners are expected to give an interesting presentation to encourage peers' curiosity, such as information on the subject matter and tips on the skills of presenting the material well so that it is useful to the lerners their selves and others.

The learners' readiness in learning is still limited, they have not yet focused on completing the material. Assistance has not benefited learners so that they have not been maximal when doing communication. Though various guides for presentation have been given before they prepare the presentation and moreover the material had been prepared six weeks earlier. Keray (Male, 22 years old) explains his experience that: "My preparation is limited, because when I was asked on the material I do not master, I can not answer."

Learners know that the discussion process is mandatory, and at that time they will be responsible for their own material in the classroom. The discussion makes them anxious, because when they are unable to answer the questions of the audience (Kartono, 2012), they become uncomfortable and ashamed of themselves and colleagues. Educators have urged presenters to avoid excessive anxiety, because making serious efforts is important in learning process however they always feel anxious because the reason is that they do not master meterial for discussion and this condition makes them to avoid the discussion process.

Learners with minimal preparation tend to dodge the questions during the discussion (Tlonaen & Blegur, 2017), because they feel confused choosing words or rebutting if the discussion becomes tough. They also want to end

their presentations so that they no longer feel a sense of responsibility. Because they feel anxious when communicating, learners expect that there will be no follow-up questions after question is answered.

Besides, anxious learners also tend to feel the questions asked by colleagues seem to "try and trap" them. They are generally aware of that the level of material mastery is low so that various ways are done to avoid performance tasks or avoid problems and ultimately this condition has an impact on their chances of success (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Wahyuni, 2015). At the same time anxiety also contributes to the reduction of cognitive capacity needs by different tasks (Tobias, 1985).

3.2 Ignoring the Activity of Self Expression in the Learning

Teaching and sharing with learners a various information and knowledge is important, but educators sometimes need to be reminded that teaching is not limited to the cognitive area, yet there are other aspects that play an important role, such as affective and psychomotor. Various teaching methods and strategies should pay attention to all elements of learning outcomes, so that learners easily convey the purpose well in classroom.

They should be accustomed to diffusing their ideas as a form of accountability for their knowledge and skills. When the knowledge has been well learned, yet attention to mental readiness is less, then certainly the result is less satisfactory. This is why the experience of self-expression is one of the essential elements to prepare learners to control excessive self-anxiety.

Presentation as a limited medium for self expression makes learners feel anxious when communicating. It was expressed by Fobia (Female, 20 years): "Legs and hands shake when standing in

front of the class. it is not because of the material, yet I was not get used to perform in front and serve as a presenter”. Meanwhile, according to Indu (Female, 21 years), “I feel anxious is because I faced many people, and they always pay attention to every word (sentence) and behavior I show”.

The deficit of presentation skills and maladaptive personality leads to excessive communication anxiety for learners (McCroskey, Daly, & Sorensen, 1976; Woodrow, 2006), as well as the limited experience of self expression proves to be one area contributing to a poor learning experience such as the difficulty self-presentation in front of others (Horwitz, 2011). Therefore, presentation skills need to be practiced continuously in order to soften the motor responses and mental readiness of learners to perform in front of audiences (McCroskey & Andersen, 1976).

In any level of communication, learners feel anxiety, but through high intensity people will reduce anxiety periodically. Educators should not be comfortable to apply learning methods centered on learning activities such as sitting, listening, being silent, and following like a robot who is just waiting for “command”. Ignoring self expression activities means that educators do not appreciate students’ self potential. It seems that educators want learners to live in the “shadow” of the educators, without new, challenging learning experience orienting to the quality development of students themselves.

Self-expression is form of presentation of learning methods that integrate a set of learning results together (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor). Encouraging and improving self-expression methods is a strategy to reduce learners’ communication anxiety (Blegur, 2017). When sharing information with peers in front of the

class, learners feel that discussions and presentations are things challenging but rewarding.

3.3 Lack of Confidence

Confidence is defined as the optimistic attitude that arises in a person for all the abilities he has. Lack of confidence makes learners to have “dependence” on the performance and learning results of others. Suppose Keray (Male, 22 years old) who is always anxious when delivering material because he is afraid of being asked by other peers who are smarter than him. Such perceptions have been shaped and preached before presenting the material, thus he becomes unfocused, is not energetic, and is lack in the presentation.

While feeling not confident that is experienced by Indu (Female, 20 years) is: “I felt less confident when the audiences stared at me sharply when starting the presentation. It makes me to look at outside the classroom or at up the ceiling”. Fobia (Female, 20 years old) shares another experience that she always asks her peers about the results of her presentation when returning to the seat. Learners who are lack of confident is often sensitive to other people’s responses and the more worrying is that they often feel that other people are better than them (comparing ability).

Learners with lack of confident are also the consequence of the lack of preparation and of mastery of discussion material. They realize that the result will not be maximal, raises many questions, and certainly gets reprimands from peers and educators. Before the material is delivered, anxiety surrounds the emotional state of the learners, they talk stiffly, the word placement becomes irregular, and takes a long time from one sentence to another so the class becomes “saturated”, because other peers pay much attention.

Poor self-confidence makes the learning motivation of the learners becomes weak (Benabou & Tirole, 2002), experiencing poor performance in competitive nuances is due to the anxiety (Hanton, Mellalieu, & Hall, 2004; Park & Lee, 2005), reducing the intensity of communication or discussion among learners (Cheng & Furnham, 2002), ultimately causes student dissatisfaction in the learning process (Smith & Roehrs, 2009).

Communication anxiety triggered by self-esteem causes learners to no longer have an effort to learn, he becomes discouraged to every behavior he presents during a presentation, this can be displayed in behavior that should not be. The learner feel not comfortable to communicate as he is lulled by his negative thoughts (Benabou & Tirole, 2002) that undermine his own potential (Lenney, 1977), even without “pressure” from outside.

Before presenting the material, learners already think of that there would be a lot of questions. It is learner’s own understanding that weaken him in communicating, he himself was not sure of his ability in delivering the presentation. He then compares himself to the others and think of that the others must be better than him. (Lenney, 1977). In fact, there is no guarantee that explains his thought, why? To be like that? Because there has been no action taken. Because of not confident, learners reduce their own expressiveness without any intervention from others, including communication anxiety.

3.4 Being Trapped in Traumatic Sense

In contrast to the learning situation in general, learning is a medium that brings together learners and educators to jointly improve themselves for the better (from not being able to to being able to).

Efforts of improvement can include changes from fear to boldness. Learners experience communication anxiety because he is afraid of doing wrong or mistakenly doing his responsibilities.

Fobia (Female, 20 years old) stated that: “I feel anxious when communicating because I am afraid of saying or conveying wrong idea”. Tungga (Male, 22 years old) also states the same as Fobia. “Fear of wrong in arranging words and the words or sentences are not in accordance with the material or of explaining the material but not in accordance with the question.” Learners have been reminded that the problem of learning is not about correct or incorrect, but it focuses on the courage to try new and useful things and on logic responsibility. However, the fear of doing mistake seems to be the experience that shakes the soul of the learners.

A number of poor learning experiences has established a traumatic sense for the learners about the learning activities. The real learning is enjoyable activity but then turns into a frightening activity, because learners are terrorized by the various pressures such as do not do a mistake and do not be wrong. In addition, they also have a very limited opportunity to provide a view to “enliven” the learning process (Blegur & Tlonaen, 2017).

As the result, learners feel anxious so that it causes uncomfortable when performing in front of the class (Haryanthi & Tresniasari, 2012) due to the fear of being reprimanded, scolded, or even punished for negligence or mistakes they make. They finally anticipate reprimands and punishments by showing their communication anxiety (McCroskey, 1977). Although communication anxiety is seen as a common feature of their irregular personality process (Lohr, Rea, Porter, & Hamberger, 1980), learners feel

comfortable because it effectively avoids reprimands and punishments from educators.

Students who are anxious when communicating do not always refer to their unpreparedness to share information, but they get less supportive attitude from educators for their performances. Orientation of evaluation based on justification makes learners feel that what is done is wrong. Moreover, almost half of the learning experience is passed with justifications that require the learners to be “perfect” in the classroom.

Mistakes and negligence done by learners are not tolerated and changed into a worthwhile effort. Whereas the efforts the learners have done need to be respected (Blegur, Wasak, & Manu, 2017) to help them perceive themselves positively (Cheng, 2002; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009) so that they feel no worry when encountering performance tasks, such as discussions and presentations. This sense of trauma not only makes the students anxious, but they become uncritical, not creative, and not productive because they prefer the “comfort zone” during studying in the classroom.

3.5 Crisis of Appreciation toward Learning Effort from the Peers

Classroom learning is seen as a “comedy stage” when there are students who do a mistake when delivering the material. Why does it happen? Because when a mistake occurs, spontaneously other students (peers) smile and or laugh freely without any burden. This is the condition that happens at the same time

causing mental health (who laughs) and at the same time damage the mental health of the presenters (who is laughed).

It should be underlined that the condition of learning is a condition in which learners are rectified from negligence and mistakes over the efforts he makes, so that it would be very naive if the effort was used as a joke. The joke makes Tungga (Male, 22-year-old) felt that he was not respected, as he stated: “When I mistakenly argue or present the material, my colleagues laugh and this seems to belittle and disrespect me whereas I’ve been trying to present well”.

Jokes are important to be used to merge learners’ feelings from the tiredness of learning activities (Blegur, Wasak, & Manu, 2017). However, through this educator’s initiative, it can be tricked, for example a funny story or behavior done by educators or learners will not cause anxiety and exaggerated perception, because the goal is that to make people laugh. However, it will be different when laughing with the aim to “mock and/or punish”.

The presenter who is over laughed is a symbol of the crisis of appreciation for the learning effort. It makes the learner to feel anxious and unable to concentrate. The moods of learners also get worse and become more agitated by the excessive negative evaluation of their peers (Lohr, Rea, Porter, & Hamberger, 1980; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). As a result he became anxious to communicate and it affects the success of his academic management and social relationships among his own peers (Daly, 1986).

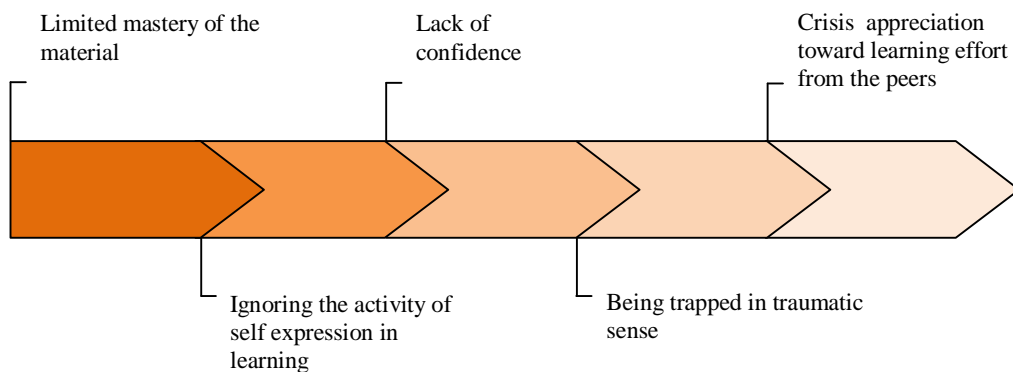


Figure 1. Source of anxiety irritate in learners' communication

The crises of appreciating behavior for the learners' efforts are also marked by the destructive comments of peers after presenting the material, such as "Your presentation is still not good or you answer the question is not appropriate". Learners who are still eager to hear the results of their performance, even buffeted with negative revelation so that he became anxious and down. He feels treated unworthily to undermine his self-esteem (McCroskey, Richmond, Daly, & Falcione, 1977).

This situation makes learners choose protective attitude and less interested in other peers who give negative responses (McCroskey, Richmond, Daly, & Cox, 1975). Giving input is very necessary and the inputs seem honest and true. Evaluators need to pay attention to the right time and are preceded by a constructive revelation, such as: "Your presentation is good, you just need to improve your body language and to make it perfect". It motivates learners to improve themselves because their efforts are rewarded.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Excessive anxiety has guaranteed poor performance of the students in the classroom. For this reason, educators and

learners collaborate with their respective capacities in finding solutions to such anxiety. The effort to give maximum solution begins with the process of identifying the sources of learners' communication anxiety.

Participants have proved that they feel communication anxiety. Limited mastery to the discussion material, not yet supported by intense learning methods of self-expression, lack of trust in personal abilities, being trapped in traumatic feelings, and crisis of appreciation from the peers toward the learning efforts that have been done become the background of the anxiety.

Based on these results, educators should provide learning oriented on learners' improvements such as the process of preparing the discussion material, enrich the experience in presentation, encourage self-confidence, and give understanding to the colleagues about the meaning of an effort to not to underestimate others' effort (presenter). This strategy is done so that learners are better prepared to engage in a quality and useful learning design.

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