

WHEN BLENDED LEARNING IS FORCED IN THE AMID OF COVID-19:

WHAT HAPPEN ON EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING ANXIETY?

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: June 2021 Revised: July 2021 Published: July 2021	<i>The existence of Covid-19 has forced the migration of the teaching and learning paradigm from face to face interaction to online learning and to the combination of both known as blended learning. Blended learning is believed to provide opportunity for students to interact with each other with anxiety put at the lowest. This research was aimed to know 1) to what extent is the EFL Learners' anxiety influenced by blended learning approach in this covid-19 pandemic?; 2) What factors contribute to student' anxiety during Speaking activities in class in the Covid -19 age?. Mix research method was employed in this study as the data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. This study was conducted at second semester students of English department at Mandalika University of Education. The findings show that most students were anxious when communicating with each other. Factors like lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary, low English proficiency, lack of practice, fear of being unable to follow and understand others were the primary causes of their anxiety.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

Corona Virus found in 2019 (Covid 19) has generated profound impact to entire sectors of life, education system is no exception. One of the adverse impacts of this pandemic is the unprecedented decision numerous nations have made that is to close schools and colleges. Extreme transient disturbance is felt by numerous families around the globe for which there is no model to anticipate it (Ivanov, 2020).

The existence of Covid-19 has forced the migration of educational system from face to face interaction to the usage of information and communication technology (ICT) or online learning. In this 21st century, being able to work with information and communication and technology is categorized into a skill as what is stated by Thrilling and Fadel (2009) that Information literacy, Media literacy, Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy is considered as the 21st century skill rainbow. Online learning is the use of internet and some other important technologies to develop materials for educational purposes, instructional delivery and management of program (Fry in Adedoyin and Soykan, 2020). Online learning is defined as "learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access (Singh & Thurman in Dhawan, 2020). Conklin & Dikkers (2021) found that connecting with online students through multiple tools, responding in a timely manner, and integrating empathic facilitation within messages either through video, synchronous contact, or text is recommended. Online coursework represents an indispensable strategy in postsecondary education, as it improves flexibility for both students and institutions (Xu and Jaggars in Salman and Haider, 2021). In responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, the utility of online

learning is no longer option but it becomes a compulsory. This condition insists on the utilizing of online learning in which the students will only interact with the teacher through electronic media. The usage of the media like e-learning, email, zoom meeting, WA, Google meet, Google form, you tube, etc. can successfully as an alternative for face to face classes (Basilaia in Dhawan, 2021).

However, sometimes some challenges encountered during the implementation of this online learning such as technology, Socio economic factor, human and pet intrusion, digital competence, assessment and supervision, and heavy workload (Adedoyin and Soykan, 2020). Online learning in its entirety is dependent on technological devices and internet. The robust of IT Infrastructure is a prerequisite for online learning. Infrastructure needs to be so strong that it can provide unhindered services during and after the crisis (Ayebi-Arthur in Dhawan, 2021). Pertaining to these challenges, the blended between face to face interaction in the classroom and online learning system is needed. Face-to-face learning model plays an important role where the instructor or teacher could interact with students physically and emotionally (Sun, et al, 2008).

Blended learning is the most logical approach to be used in this Covid-19 pandemic condition as it offers the opportunity to integrate the virtual and traditional learning model. Thorne (2003) states that blended learning is a mix of multimedia technology; CD ROM video streaming; virtual classrooms; voicemail, email and conference calls; online text animation and video-streaming. The usage of multimedia in a classroom was very helpful for the learners and easy to follow (Winiastiti, 2013) as this method emphasizes that learning does not only happen in the classroom face-to-face but also outside the class through online media (Zainuddin and Keumala, 2018). Using blended learning can motivate self-directed learning and enhance the research skills and provides flexibility and autonomous learning for the learners (Gunawan et al. 2016). Blended learning can also create learning patterns that are more effective, efficient, and attractive following the interests of pre-service teachers towards the use of interactive media such as laptops and smart phones (Yustina et al. 2020). Garcia (2020) argues that Generating a blended learning training model, that pedagogically organises the teaching-learning process surrounding in-person and online activities, implies adapting and allowing for more flexibility in the workspace (classroom and virtual environments) and the learning time (class hours and previous study time outside the classroom), in a way that allows for a greater group interaction, a better social collaboration, and, definitively, the efficient construction of knowledge and the improvement of academic achievement. When having face to face interaction in the classroom, any correction and feedback directly from the teacher and other students is also very important for the students. As what was found by Muhsin (2016) that the students agreed when the teacher give some correction and feed back for the error they have made.

The implementation of blended learning will give any opportunity for students to show their performance in the classroom. Uzur & Senturk (2010) stated that the blended learning is learning that combines face to-face learning and online learning optimally to improve the satisfaction of teachers and learners. Students' speaking anxiety is one of crucial factors should be aware by the teachers to make the EFL learners to be more active in the class. To help reduce student anxiety, first and foremost, English teachers themselves should be aware of the existence of anxiety among EFL learners and show empathy to them in class (Lie. M, 2007). Anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object (Scovel, 1991). Horwitz et al in Marwan (2008) advocate that language anxiety is a distinctive complex of self perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. Students who are socially anxious, not only report poor grades, but tend to avoid situations, and potentially

units and ultimately career choices which might require public speaking Strahan (2003). Ansari (2015) also added that students with debilitating speaking anxiety tend to display avoidance of involvement in tasks by remaining silent, sitting in the back row, avoiding eye contact with the teacher. Anxiety affects students' oral performance (Suadiyatno, et.al., 2020) as students with high anxiety speak carefully but sometimes it makes students feel uneasy to produce the target language fluently in classes (Buhari; 2019).

Concerning the explanation above, this study examines about the EFL learners' speaking anxiety in this Covid-19 pandemic era when blended learning is implemented. To direct this study, the research questions proposed are;

1. To what extent is the EFL Learners' anxiety influenced by blended learning approach in this covid-19 pandemic age?
2. What factors contribute to student anxiety during oral English lessons in the Covid -19 age?

Blended Learning

In e-learning, the learning only focuses on the online or long-distance interaction without face-to-face interaction. Online learning only limits the instructor or teacher to assess virtually (Zainuddin, and Keumala, 2018). However, face-to-face learning model plays an important role where the instructor or teacher could interact with students physically and emotionally (Sun, et al., 2008). Bawaneh (2011) argues that blended learning is learning that combines face-to-face activities and a variety of online activities. Blended learning is commonly associated with the introduction of online media into a course or program, while at the same time recognizing that there is merit in retaining face-to-face contact and other traditional approaches to supporting students. It is also used where asynchronous media such as email, forums, blogs or wikis are deployed in conjunction with synchronous technologies, commonly text chat or audio (Macdonald, 2008). According to Porter, et al (2014) mixed learning has contributed to building strong interactions between learners and teachers, as well as among fellow learners. Blended learning also does not neglect traditional learning because face-to-face interaction in the classroom and online outside of the classroom remains done (Halili & Zainuddin, 2015).

Thorne (2003) explains that Blended learning is the most logical and natural evolution of our learning agenda. It suggests an elegant solution to the challenges of tailoring learning and development to the needs of individuals. It represents an opportunity to integrate the innovative and technological advances offered by online learning with the interaction and participation offered in the best of traditional learning. It can be supported and enhanced by using the wisdom and one-to-one contact of personal coaches. Furthermore, he states that Blended learning is a mix of multimedia technology; CD ROM video streaming; virtual classrooms; voicemail, email and conference calls; online text animation and video-streaming (Thorne: 2003).

Anxiety

Anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object (Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 1971 cited in Scovel, 1991: 18). Anxiety, in general, can be associated with threats to self-efficacy and appraisals of situations as threatening (Papamihel in Marwan, 2008). Leibert and Morris in Wodrow (2006) states that anxiety reactions can be categorized as reflecting worry or emotionality. Emotionality refers to physiological reactions, such as blushing or racing heart, and behavioral reactions, such as, stammering and fidgeting. Worry refers to cognitive reactions, such as self-deprecating thoughts or task irrelevant thoughts (Zeidner 1998; Naveh-Benjamin in woodwrow; 2006). Worry is seen as the more

debilitating of the two because it occupies cognitive capacity that otherwise would be devoted to the task in hand, for example, speaking a foreign language (Tobias in Woodrow: 2006). Pappamihel in Marwan (2008) divides the anxiety into two types: state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety is a type of anxiety which occurs because learners are exposed to particular conditions or situations. Horwitz and Cope (1986) identified three components of foreign language anxiety; 1) Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear of anxiety about communicating with people; 2) Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure. Students with test anxiety often demand more of themselves than they are capable of achieving and worry about their performance; 3) Fear of negative evaluation involves apprehension about others evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situation and the exception that they would evaluate oneself negatively.

RESEARCH METHOD

The combination of Quantitative and Qualitative research techniques was employed in this study known as mixed methods research (Ary; 2010). The study involved some sources of data; quantitative data from the Second Language Anxiety Speaking Scale, and qualitative data from group discussion, interactions on situation-based spoken English, and direct observation. This study was conducted at second-semester students of the English department at the Mandalika University of Education. The existing instrumentation used to measure language learning anxiety was based on Horwitz and Cope (1986) because it was considered appropriate because it reflects the second language environment of the sample. The questionnaire consists of thirty-three items on a five-point Likert-type scale. The items were measured by the extent to which the participants strongly agreed, agree, neither agree (nor disagree), disagreed, and strongly disagree with the statements. Besides, for the qualitative data, group discussion, interactions on situation-based spoken English and direct observation were used to triangulate the data and to provide further insights into perceived stressors in speaking English in a second language environment. The participants were asked about whether they experienced second language speaking anxiety, in what situations they felt anxious, and how they felt. Meanwhile, to support the result of the EFL learners' speaking anxiety questionnaire, open-ended questions were also delivered to students pertaining to their response or opinion about their anxiety when blended learning is implemented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Anxiety Levels

Table 1 discusses the students' responses to the FLCAS items based on the components of foreign language anxiety advocated by Horwitz and Cope (1986), namely 1) Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear of anxiety about communicating with people; 2) Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure. Students with test anxiety often demand more of themselves than they are capable of achieving and worry about their performance; 3) Fear of negative evaluation involves apprehension about others evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situation and the exception that they would evaluate oneself negatively.

Table 1
FLCAS Items of Students Selecting Each Alternative (N = 35)

No	Item	N	SA	A	NA	D	SD
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	35	9	14	5	6	1
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	35	3	7	9	13	3

3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	35	5	7	8	4	1
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	35	13	14	3	4	1
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	35	6	10	17	2	0
6	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	35	3	16	10	5	1
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	35	16	11	6	1	1
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	35	1	10	15	8	1
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	35	12	17	5	1	0
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class	35	18	12	4	1	0
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	35	5	18	10	2	0
12	In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	35	6	18	6	4	1
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	35	4	19	8	4	0
14	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	35	2	6	20	5	2
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	35	10	14	9	2	0
16	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it	35	5	21	7	2	0
17	I often feel like not going to my language class.	35	0	2	7	20	6
18	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	35	1	6	25	3	0
19	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make	35	3	11	9	9	3
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class	35	5	22	8	0	0
21	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get	35	3	8	14	9	1
22	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	35	5	13	12	4	1
23	I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do	35	17	12	4	2	0
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students	35	3	16	14	2	0
25	Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind	35	9	19	5	2	0
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	35	3	11	13	8	0
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	35	3	21	9	2	0
28	When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed	35	1	14	14	6	0
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	35	4	21	6	3	1
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	35	5	12	13	5	0
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language	35	9	11	7	8	0
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language	35	7	13	13	2	0
33	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance	35	7	21	4	3	0

Note:

SA=Strongly Agree

A=Agree

NA=Neither Agree

D=Disagree

SD=Strongly Disagree

According to table 1, the students' response towards the FLCAS items indicating the students' communication apprehension in speaking class. Majority of the students showed tangible inefficacy when speaking in class. As well, significant number panicked when asked to speak before making preparation. Some others explained that they felt severely apprehensive when to speak. In contrast, the students rejected statements like "I feel confident when I speak English in class (item 18)" shows that there were 1 student prefer (strongly agree), 6 (agree), 25 (neither agree), and 3 (disagree). "I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front other students (item 24)" shows that there were 3 students who prefer (strongly agree), 16 (agree), 14 (neither agree), 2 (disagree), and 0 (strongly disagree). Anxious students reported that they were afraid to speak and felt deeply self-conscious when asked to risk revealing themselves by speaking English in front of other people.

The fact that anxious students were afraid that they would not understand all the language input was also consistent with communication apprehension. The data on the table above shows a lacks number of students worried to the teachers talk when unnoticed. In addition, their distress raised up for not understanding every words their teachers uttered. The students indicate that they believed will understand what the teacher message of the target language if they understand any single word spoken by the teacher.

Anxious students were also worried or afraid of being less competent than other students are or being negatively evaluated. About two third of the students had assumption that their English was poorer than the others, and other students speak English better than them. Similarly, over half of the students agree and strongly agree that volunteering in English class is embarrassing. Meanwhile, 85% said they were afraid with the consequence of being failed in English class. Conversely, most of the students did not agree that making mistakes is nothing to worry about. Yet, slightly less than a half agree not to be corrected on every single mistake they make.

Student responses to four FLCAS items shows that half of the students felt overwhelmed by the number of rules they have to learn to speak English. Besides, regarding the students' feeling more tense and nervous in their English class than in their as other classes shows that two third of the students were nervous when the English class is started.

Based on the description of the students' foreign language anxiety on the table 1, it can be summed up that most of the students' feeling to speak in English was anxious. This result of the students' anxiety questionnaire was further supported by the interview result with the lecturer and the students. The interview explored the students' anxiety after the implementation of blended learning in the amid of COVID-19. The following questions were delivered to the students and lecturer to explore students' speaking anxiety as follows:

Table 2
List of questions delivered for the interview

No	Questions
1	Are you getting more confident to talk with your friends, lecturers, or others after the implementation of blended learning in the amid of covid-19? Why?
2	Do you feel worry or afraid of making mistake when talking with your friends, lecturers, or others after the implementation of blended learning in the amid of

	covid-19? Why?
3	Through the implementation of blended learning in the amid of covid 19, is your speaking skill as good as your expectation? Why?
4	How do you think of the students speaking anxiety in the amid of Covid -19 after the implementation of blended learning?
5	How are the students' learning motivation in the amid of Covid-19 after the implementation of blended learning? Why?

The students and lecturer response of the questions from table 2 shows that for the questions no 1. Most of the students were not getting more confident to talk with their friends, lecturers, or others after the implementation of blended learning in the amid of covid-19 as most of the students were worried and nervous and not confident when talking with others because the students rarely have a chance to interact with other in the classroom. In practicing the skill of speaking, the students need to have some partners to interact and communicate one another. The lack of interaction to practice their skill such as pronunciation and fluency leads the students' confidence to speak were not well improved. Low self confidence made the students easily get anxious (Marwan, 2008). In this covid-19 pandemic, the teaching and learning process is much depending on the utility of technology and insist the students on becoming an autonomous learners as they have to study from home. the . This makes the students depend on the connection and if the pulse or signal is bad, the topic will not be well delivered

The students' response for the question no 2 from the table 2 shows that almost all of the respondents state that they feeli afraid and worry when having a conversation in English with other. Having Lack of vocabulary is one of the crucial things lead the students to be afraid and worried. The students were afraid if they make mistake in pronouncing some words. They also worried and afraid if they don't know an appropriate word to used when talking with other. The students often became nervous in oral class due to a limited vocabulary (Liu, 2007). However, even though almost all the students were worried and afraid of making mistake in communicating with others, they have strong curiosity and spirit to fight against their worry and nervous because they believe that they will not be able to speak in English well if they don't do a lot of the practice. Students' curiosity will help the students to lose their worry and nervous because as an English department students, they have to be able to communicate well in English.

The following is the summary of the students' opinions for question no 3 from table 2. Most of the respondents state that their speaking skill was not well improved through the implementation of the blended learning in the amid of covid-19. Face to face interaction in the classroom was conducted with health protocol such as Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, and use of masks in schools. This makes this approach is not really effective for the students to improve their English. The implementation of blended learning in the amid of covid-19 was not able to make the students' speaking well because this approach doesn't give the opportunity for the students to be active in the class. The lack of opportunity for the students to practice their speaking skill leads them to be afraid and worried to express their idea when interacting with others.

The students' opinion about the implementation of blended learning in the amid of covid 19 regarding the students anxiety was in line with the opinion from the speaking class lecturer. There is scarce opportunity that the students have to practice their speaking skill. It may be due to technological issue or the students' low attendance. These are some possible factors which contribute to the students' high level of anxiety. During the class time, the students prefer listening to the lecturer attentively rather than asking any questions related the immediate lesson.

Factors Contributing To EFL Anxiety

The findings show that most of EFL learners' anxiety level is considered into high level anxiety. The students were anxious when communicating with others. Factors like lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary, low English proficiency, lack of practice, fear of being unable to follow and understand others were the primary causes of their anxiety.

Concerning the EFL learners' self confidence, it reveals that the students were not used to communicating in English with other as they are feeling shy and afraid of making mistakes. Low self confidence made the students easily get anxious (Marwan, 2008) because shyness is characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people known as communication apprehension (Horwitz, Horwitz, Cope: 1986). Lack of vocabulary also was claimed as the main cause for students' anxiety in oral Communication (Yanti). Liu (2007) also found that the students often became nervous in oral class due to a limited vocabulary. This claim was also supported by Pappamihiel in Marwan (2008) who argues that learners' limited competence in foreign language use, such as lack of vocabulary, can contribute to their FL anxiety. Another factor contributing the students' speaking anxiety is their low English proficiency. Martina stated that she is feeling afraid and nervous when interacting with other due to her low or basic English proficiency as she is just a new English learner. Similar to previous study (Liu: 2007) low or poor English proficiency level was indicated as the trigger of students' anxiety to communicate in English. The existence of Covid 19 made the students have a Lack opportunity of practicing their English speaking skill. Face to face interaction is done once a month with very limited time and under the overshadowed of the spread of Covid-19 (Sayuti). As a result, lack of practice provoked much anxiety in many students when speaking English to others in class (Liu:2007). Another primary cause of the students' anxiety was the fear of being unable to follow and understand others. Sastra share his opinion that bravery or confidence to speak in English was still low. Feeling afraid or worried that the sentenced produced was misunderstood by the listener was the cause of her anxiety when interacting with English. In line with the previous research (Zhiping and Paramasivam: 2013) found that one of the concerns as a source of anxiety shared by Iranian and Algerian students in classroom is their bad feeling of speaking the language inaccurately with mistakes and not being able to find exact words.

CONCLUSION

Covid 19 has made the implementation of blended learning cannot work as it should be since the implementation of the lecturing is still dominated by online classes. The implementation of face-to-face lectures cannot be maximized because it is still overshadowed by the fear of the spread of Covid-19, so that face-to-face lectures are carried out with strict health protocols such as keeping the distance and wearing the masks. This makes the opportunity for students to practice speaking is very limited. Furthermore, the EFL learners' anxiety is still in high level due to their proficiency level is still low.

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