EFL Students' Perception on the Use of Voice Note to Reduce Their Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak has forced our education process into online learning. Unfortunately, the suddenness has left both teachers and students unprepared, causing students to experience some degree of anxiety, particularly in foreign language speaking skills. This study aims to investigate students' perception of voice notes to reduce students' speaking anxiety. This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey study and used a questionnaire as the instrument. The participants of this study were tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Malang who took extra English class as their cross-interest subject in high school. This study showed positive responses regarding using voice notes in a speaking activity conducted in ELT class as students thought it could reduce their speaking anxiety. Voice note then provides a new learning media that is less stressful and pressuring on ELT in an online setting.

Keywords:
ELT, online learning, speaking anxiety, voice note

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 outbreak started in late 2019 has been becoming a phenomenon that changes many aspects of our lives, including education. The virus's rapid spread has forced many countries to shift their educational systems, traditionally done through face-to-face learning, into online learning. *Online learning* can be defined as a learning experience that utilizes various devices such as mobile phones, laptops, and others equipped with internet access. This activity can be held synchronously or asynchronously. Online learning has proven beneficial as it offers both teachers and students flexibility (Singh & Thurman, 2019). The use of ICT tools employed in online learning has supplied a growing range of possible solutions for advancing learning and teaching inputs, processes, and outcomes (Pardede, 2012). However, according to Irawan, Dwisona, & Lestari (2020), the sudden implementation without well-thought preparation has resulted in some downfalls, such as students' experiencing moderate to severe depression, stress levels, and anxiety. Because of its complexity, there has been no consensus on a definition of anxiety (Zhanibek, 2001). The state of anticipation, fear, tension, and emotions of uneasiness are all similar aspects of anxiety provided by various experts (Brown, 1994; Scovel, 1991). According to Ehrman (1996), these attributes are linked to people's negative judgments of their behavior. For whatever reason, they become too concerned about failing, feel constrained, and avoid completing activities such as homework, tests, and even speaking in class. People may be apprehensive in certain settings or have particular experiences in various cases.

Anxiety itself comes in various forms, including the anxiety that stems from personality traits, known as trait anxiety. Some people are always nervous, and this anxiety is persistent and constant; it is a personality trait (Brown, 1994). Another sort of anxiety, according to Brown (1994), is anxiety temporarily triggered by stimuli. From those two kinds of anxiety, Aydin (2001) then stated a strong link between state and trait anxiety, with persons who have trait anxiety being more likely to experience state anxiety. Another sort of anxiety, known as scenario-specific anxiety, has been described in the literature (Woodrow, 2006). Anxiety triggered by the circumstances of a particular situation is known as situation-specific anxiety (Wang, 1998). Regarding language learning, situation-specific anxiety refers to apprehension caused by a learner's lack of language expertise. (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). That situation-specific anxiety in language learning is called Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) defined it; as a result, the one-of-a-kind nature of the language acquisition process evoked a distinct complicated emotion of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. Those things happen when students cannot fulfill their self-made assumption of being a good communicator in the foreign language they are trying to learn, making them reticent, shy, afraid, or panicked.

In addition, speaking is believed to be the most crucial skill out of the four skills that are usually used as a parameter to measure someone's ability and performance in language. People seem to think someone is more capable in a specific language when they are fluent, so they like to highlight how they speak rather than what they speak (Pakhapan, 2020). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), this mindset makes speaking become the most

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anxiety-provoking skill. Other researchers also found that anxiety affected students' performance and achievements (see Azher et al., 2010; Horwitz, 2001; Luo, 2014).

Based on the problem stated above, there have been several attempts to find various teaching techniques or media to help EFL students reduce their speaking anxiety, such as using a mobile messaging application and its features. For example, Shamsi (2019) stated that using a mobile messaging application to learn speaking can decrease the amount of anxiety in speaking English as a foreign language. Similarly, Kartal (2019), in his empirical studies related to the mobile messaging application, WhatsApp, found that teachers can use the said application to improve not only one but four language skills. Furthermore, this study also found that this method effectively increases motivation and language attitudes, fosters learner autonomy, increases interaction, and, most importantly, lowers foreign language anxiety.

One of the features offered by the mobile messaging application that can be used to reduce students' speaking anxiety is voice notes, as stated by two prior studies that can be found. Nurazzizah et al. (2019), for instance, looked into how teachers used WhatsApp voice notes to teach speaking on narrative texts, as well as the perspectives of both teachers and students on the use of voice notes to improve students' speaking skills. The study was carried out at a senior high school in West Java. The researchers found that voice notes provided by WhatsApp can be used successfully to improve students' pronunciation and speaking skills by lessening their speaking anxiety, making the learning process enjoyable, and increasing students' enthusiasm to be actively involved in the learning process. Next is Fatimah et al. (2020), whose study was aimed to improve students' speaking skills by reducing their speaking anxiety. This study was done on tenth-graders in one senior high school in Jakarta using classroom action research. This study was conducted in three cycles. This study then found that voice notes provided by WhatsApp can be used successfully to improve students' pronunciation and speaking skills by lessening their speaking anxiety, making the learning process enjoyable, and increasing students' enthusiasm to be actively involved in the learning process.

Overall, the studies review that voice notes have positively impacted and contributed to lessening the speaking anxiety experienced by students. Even so, the previous studies mostly only ask the students to imitate examples then observe the result as their parameter of improvement on their speaking skills. However, speaking is a process of interaction to share and receive information between listener and speaker, not just an ability to utter some words in a proper way (Nazara, 2011). Therefore this study will be focused on students' speaking ability for more spontaneous use that enhances not only their pronunciation but also their critical skill and broaden their vocabularies so that students can use the said skills in a proper conversational situation. This study also sets to investigate more about the utilization of voice note feature from students' perception so teachers can understand different viewpoints from students and be able to determine the effectiveness of this feature.

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METHOD

This research used a quantitative approach and survey as the design. There were 31 students of class X LM 1 which was a mix of students from eight science department classes. They were interested in learning English more than the rest of tenth-grade students as they chose English as their cross-interest subject. It is a subject that students can take that is not in their department's required courses (Panjaitan, 2014). This research used a questionnaire with numerically rated items from the Likert scale, ranging from 1 - 5 from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There are thirty-three items within the questionnaire divided into two parts. One part is about students' anxiety and the causes, adapted from Balemir (2019), with slight changes to match the actual condition. This part covered the causes of speaking anxiety in students, such as grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, personal reasons, learners' beliefs, teachers' manners, also teaching and testing procedures. The second part was made by adding the variable of voice notes into language anxiety and achievements (Horwitz, 2011), which covered approach, motivation, and expectation. The data for the analysis was collected by distributing a questionnaire that was created in Google form online. Students were asked to fill in the items provided. After the students complete the questionnaire, the data is evaluated using descriptive statistics by analysing the mean and the standard deviation to study the respondents' perspectives. Mean was used to know the measure of central tendency of the data, while standard deviation was used to know measure of variability. The measure of central tendency will show the average of the data and measure of variability will show how the data collected is distributed within the set.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents for the questionnaire are X LM 1 students of SMAN 1 Malang with the demographic as follow:

Table 1. *Demographic data of the respondents*

Particulars	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	6	19.35%
	Female	25	80.65%
Age	14	1	3.22%
	15	9	29%
	16	21	67.74%
Length of studying English	1 – 3 years	5	16.12%
	4 – 6 years	6	19.35%
	7 – 9 years	5	16.12%
	10 years or more	15	48.38%

Based on Table 1, the respondents consist of six male students and twenty-five female students. The age range is fourteen to sixteen, with more than half over sixteen and only one fourteen. Their English length also differs; five students stated they only got one to three years of studying English seriously, then six claimed they got four to six years, and

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five claimed to have seven to nine years. However, most said they studied English for ten years or more in school as English has been a required subject since elementary school.

Sources of Speaking Anxiety

Table 2. *Source of speaking anxiety*

Sub-dimension	Statements	Mean	SD
Grammatical Competence	1. I get nervous when there are many terminologies in English class that I don't understand.	3.32	0
	2. I feel anxious because I have to mastered grammatical competence (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation).	3.25	1.41
	3. The sheer number of grammatical rules I have to memorize makes me feel overwhelmed.	2.83	1.41
Discourse Competence	4. When I am unable to communicate myself in English successfully, I am concerned.	3.58	.707
	5. I become nervous when the teacher asks me a question I haven't thought about.	3.25	2.12
	6. Even though I am adequately prepared for the scheduled content, speaking English makes me nervous.	2.8	1.41
Sociolinguistic Competence	7. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my English class.	2.54	2.82
	8. I get frustrated when I am asked to discuss with classmate in English in short period of time.	2.54	1.41
	9. I feel nervous using the English outside of the class.	2.64	0
Strategic Competence	10. If the class were smaller, I would feel more comfortable speaking in English.	3.67	1.41
	11. When I know there will be an oral activity, I am more willing to communicate in English.	3.48	.707
	12. I am not afraid of being laughed at because I know that everyone makes mistakes when speaking English.	3.35	1.41
	13. When I know someone, I feel less scared about speaking English in front of them.	3.87	.707
Personal Reasons	14. In my English class, I get nervous when I meet classmates who are better than me.	3.19	0
	15. When I think I won't talk well in front of other students, I get nervous.	3.74	0
	16. In my English class, I'm afraid of speaking words poorly.	3.48	0
Learners' Beliefs	17. I don't think learning English is necessary.	1.35	2.82
	18. I don't think I have the capability to learn English.	2.77	0
	19. To be successful in language acquisition, I believed we needed to be talented.	3.7	2.82
Teacher's Manner	20. Because of being corrected by my teacher in front of others, I am afraid of speaking in front of the class.	2.9	.707
	21. When the teacher requests other students to correct my oral errors in class, I feel uneasy.	2.96	2.12
	22. I don't like being called to answer question out of my will.	3.25	2.12
	23. When the language teacher gives us a lot of work to do in a short amount of time, I get nervous.	4.09	1.41
Teaching and Testing Procedure	24. I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher asked me to perform in front of others.	4.03	1.41
	25. I get upset due to the method of testing in the English class.	1.77	1.41

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Speaking, like writing, is a productive skill, although it differs from writing in grammatical, lexical, and discourse patterns. *Speaking* can be defined as a productive and interactive skill in its most basic form (Carter & Nunan, 2001). As speaking can be counted as a complex skill, Shumin (1997) then went on to say that studying a foreign language demands the development of communicative competence. The complexity of communicative competence, including grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence, may be one source of learners speaking difficulty. Aydin (2001) found other causes of speaking anxiety: the learners' personal reasons, the teacher's manner in the classroom, learners' beliefs, and the teaching and testing procedures.

The first cause of students' speaking anxiety is grammatical competence which, according to Shumin (1997), refers to a learner's command of specific grammatical elements (morphology, syntax, vocabulary and mechanics). The first statement stated that students get nervous when there is much vocabulary they do not understand, with $M = 3.32$ and $SD = 0$. The next statement has 41.9% of students agree that mastering grammatical competence is anxiety-provoking. It has $M = 3.25$ and $SD = 1.41$. The last statement for grammatical competence is "I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in English," with $M = 2.83$ and SD = 1.41. The first sub-dimension of speaking anxiety causes shows that 41% of students positively view two out of three statements provided. Still, they disagree that the amount of grammatical rules they have to learn is a major problem. Brown (1994) stated that one of the reasons students are afraid of speaking English in public is that they are unable to relay information in a coherent manner, which can be called discourse competence. Therefore, statement number four received a positive response with $M = 3.58$ and $SD = 0.707$, indicating that 54.9% of students feel anxious when they when they are unable to successfully explain their ideas in English. Statement regarding what students feel when teachers ask them a question they have not prepared receive $M = 3.25$ and $SD = 2.12$. Then 42% of students disagree to feel anxious about speaking English even when they have already prepared in advance, proven by $M = 2.83$ and SD = 1.41. Like the previous sub-dimension, students positively respond to the first two statements and disagree with the last even though the number is insignificant.

The third sub-dimension is sociolinguistic competence, or the students' ability to find the appropriate language usage according to the social context used (Brown, 1994). Statement number seven stated that students afraid to speak up or ask questions in English class have negative responses, with $M = 2.54$ and higher standard deviation, $SD = 2.82$. The following statement receives $M = 2.54$ and $SD = 1.41$ indicates 51.6% of students disagree that they get upset when prompted to discuss with classmates in a short amount of time. Then statement number nine states that students are nervous about using English outside the class with $M = 2.64$ and $SD = 0$. This result showed that the overall opinion about sociolinguistic competence is negative, and students disagree with all the statements provided. Next is strategic competence, which refers to the ability of students to maintain their communication despite the lack in several aspects that they may have (Brown, 1994). Based on table 2, the average score for statement number ten is $M = 3.67$ and $SD = 1.41$, which stated that they should speak English in smaller classes with

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fewer people. The mean of the following statement that asserts students are more willing to speak in English when students are aware of the upcoming oral activity is $M = 3.48$ with $SD = 0.707$. The subsequent statements with an average of $M = 3.35$ with $SD = 1.41$ also have positive responses for students who are not afraid of being laughed at because they understand that when speaking English, everyone makes mistakes. The last statement about strategic competence also receives positive responses. A pretty high average score with $M = 3.87$ and $SD = 0.707$ means students acknowledge that they are less hesitant about speaking English in front of others when they are familiar with them. For this sub-dimension, unlike the previous one, students mostly have a positive light for this sub-dimension of speaking anxiety causes.

Students' ability to self-assessment and self-comparison to others can be referred to as personal reasons. A positive assessment will help develop their language skills. Even yet, a negative evaluation is thought to be a significant source of anxiety. (Kitano, 2001). Presented with $M = 3.19$ and $SD = 0$, more than one-third of the respondents agree with the statement, "I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my English class." Statement number fifteen receive $M = 3.74$, and $SD = 0$ indicates that students believe that they get anxious when they feel they are unable to speak well in front of other students. The next statement has an average score of $M = 3.48$, meaning it also has a positive response; 54.8% agree that they fear mispronouncing words in English class. The standard deviation for this statement is $SD = 0$, making personal reasons have 0 standard deviations in all three accounts. Following the previous sub-dimension is learners' belief means students' expectations of the language learning process. It is related to Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and speaking anxiety because when the students' expectations do not meet reality, they may feel anxious. Students who feel highly anxious may underestimate their capability and must be gifted to succeed in language learning. Learners' beliefs provide three statements to find out what students' perception of their own belief is one of the reasons for their speaking anxiety. Statement number seventeen stated that students do not think learning English is necessary to have negative responses, with $M = 1.35$ and $SD = 2.82$. The next statement also receive negative responses with $M = 2.77$ and $SD = 0$. There is 45.2% of the respondents disagree that they think they cannot learn English. The average score for statement number nineteen is $M = 3.7$ and $SD = 2.82$, indicating that most respondents positively respond to this statement. Specifically, 64.6% of respondents believed that one must be gifted to be successful in language learning. Altogether this sub-dimension has a varied opinion; students disagree with the first two statements and agree with the last one.

Making a mistake is something that normally happens in the language learning process. In this case, the way teachers deal with students who make mistakes plays a big part in the students' speaking anxiety level. Teachers' attitudes and methods in correcting those mistakes, if done incorrectly, may promote anxiety (Aydın, 2001; Bekleyen, 2004). This explanation leads to the next sub-dimension, which is the teacher's manner. Based on the table, the average score for statement number twenty is $M = 2.9$ with $SD = 0.707$, which indicates that most of the respondents have negative responses because of being corrected by the teacher in front of others, making them afraid of speaking in front of the class. The next statement has $M = 2.96$ and $SD = 2.12$. More than one-third of respondents disagree that they feel unesy when the teacher asks other pupils to correct

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their oral mistakes in class. Statement number twenty-two with $M = 3.25$ and $SD = 2.12$ received positive responses from the respondents means they agree with the statement; "I do not like being called to answer a question out of my will." The last statement about teachers' manner also receives positive responses. Having a pretty high average score with $M = 4.09$ and $SD = 1.41$, 74.2% of respondents acknowledge that they feel nervous when the language teacher assigns them a lot of work to perfom in a short amount of time. The last sub-dimension is teaching and testing procedures. Speaking activities usually consist of students' showing their speaking capability in front of others. A study conducted by Cheng in 2005 found that a major anxiety-provoking factor is speaking in front of the class. In addition to that, a testing situation becomes terrifying for students when it is not up to their expectations. Statement number twenty-four stated that students become frightened and confused when the language teacher asked them to perform in front of others have positive responses, with $M = 4.03$ and $SD = 1.41$. The next statement with $M = 1.77$ and a slightly lower standard deviation $SD = 1.41$ showed that this statement has negative responses. 81.1% of respondents disagree that they get upset due to testing in the English class.

Student Perception on Using Voice Note

The second half of the questionnaire was created by incorporating the voice notes variable into the language anxiety and achievement, which according to Horwitz (2011), includes approach, expectation and motivation. The data is presented in the tables below:

Table 3:
Students' Perception on Using Voice Note

Sub-dimension	Statements	Mean	SD
Approach	26. I prefer conducting lesson, especially if it's related to speaking skill, through voice note.	3.74	0
	27. I can understand the material better through voice note as I can re-play it multiple times.	3.74	0
Expectation	28. With the less pressure than doing direct test, I feel like I can perform better.	3.64	0
	29. Conducting speaking test or interview via voice note is better as I can repeat the questions multiple times.	4.22	.707
	30. I feel more at ease answering question through voice note because I can re-do it if I made mistakes.	4.32	.707
Motivation	31. When I use voice note to do my speaking assignment, I feel motivated to study harder.	3.87	.707
	32. Using voice note to record myself speaking is better than doing direct video call and made me feel at ease.	4.25	1.41
	33. Voice note is less pressuring to do compared to video call, hence I prefer voice note.	4.32	1.41

The first sub-dimension of students' perception of the use of voice notes is approach. There are two statements; the first one is, "I prefer conducting lesson, especially if it's related to speaking skill, through voice note." This statement receive $M =$

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3.74 and *SD = 0*. The next statement also receives identical results with *M= 3.74* and *SD = 0*. The result indicates that students mostly agree with this sub-dimension and that the data is homogenous. Students' expectation in the usage of voice note for their speaking activity is in a positive light. Based on table 3, the first statement has an average score of *M = 3.64* and *SD = 0,* meaning it has positive responses. 54.9% agree that making voice note have less pressure than doing a direct test; hence they feel like they can perform better. The next statement, "Conducting a speaking test via voice note is better as I can repeat the questions multiple times," also gains positive responses. Presented with *M = 4.22 and SD = 0.707*, more than half of the respondents agree with the statements. Statement number thirty, having *M = 4.32* and *SD = 0.707*, the students admit that they feel more at ease answering questions through voice notes because they can re-do it if they made mistakes. Statement number thirty-one that stated, "When I use voice notes to do my speaking assignment, I feel motivated to study harder," gains positive responses. Presented with *M = 3.87 and SD = 0.707*. The next statement also received positive responses with *M = 4.25* and *SD =1.41* implies that students agree that using voice notes to record them speaking is better than doing direct video calls and made them feel at ease. The average score for the last statement is *M = 4.32* and *SD = 1.41*, which indicate that majority of the respondent have a positive response to this statement. Specifically, 83.8% of respondents acknowledge that voice notes are less pressure than video calls; hence, they prefer voice notes.

Discussion

Based on the findings, this study is consistent with Shamsi (2019), who claims that utilizing a messaging application for speaking might reduce speaking anxiety in EFL. Furthermore, in line with related literature (Kartal, 2019), the messaging application also effectively increases motivation and language attitude, encourages student autonomy, increases interaction, and most significantly, reduces foreign language anxiety. This study also found a similar result following Nurazzizah et al. (2019), who reported that speaking English using WhatsApp voice notes is an easy, attractive, and positive learning activity. Similarly, Fatimah et al. (2020) found that voice notes can be used successfully to increase students' pronunciation and speaking skills. By reducing their speaking anxiety, making the learning process fun, and raising students' eagerness to participate actively in the learning process. This claim was proven by the rise of active participation in speaking class when conducted by doing voice note assignments in this study.

However, this study also has some differences from the previous studies. Balemir (2019) and Aydin (2001) stated that the sources of speaking anxiety are; grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, personal reasons, learners' beliefs, teachers' manners, also teaching and testing procedures. Yet, based on the findings, respondents did not consent to sub-dimensions, such as sociolinguistic competence and learners' belief. Sociolinguistic dealing with the mastery of the cultural principles of use and discourse that apply to various languages, which most of the students did not think of as a crucial aspect. It is because they only intended to use their English skills inside the classroom for educational purposes. While

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learners' belief is too wide of a subject, many things affect one's belief of something. So, this one depends on the students' trust in their capabilities, environment, and principle of language learning.

Finally, this study's exciting finding is that students have a varied opinion on the sub-dimension of their cause of speaking anxiety. There is a sub-dimension that has a few statements which receive a very positive response. However, other statements that are still related or similar to the previous statement receive a negative response. Unfortunately, the unique point is also becoming the weakness of this study because the instruments cannot fully accommodate students' perception of the cause of speaking anxiety they experienced. In future research, hopefully, researchers will be able to adapt, adopt or even create instruments that can accommodate students' perception well so the result will be more homogenous and reliable. When the findings and results are more reliable, this media proven can provide a new learning media that is less stressful and pressuring on ELT in an online setting.

CONCLUSION

As presented in the finding and discussion, the result of this study is to find out students' perception of the use of voice notes to reduce students' speaking anxiety. The sudden change because of the rapid spread of COVID-19 has made both teachers and students unprepared; hence it is possible for students to feel some degree of stress, depression, and anxiety caused by several reasons, especially when it comes to ELT. After seeing the results, the findings explained that there are several causes of speaking anxiety. Some of them agreed with the proposed causes of their anxiety when conducting a speaking activity, such as grammatical competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and personal reasons. However, there are also some that they disagree with, which means they do not think that particular problem is causing them to experience some degree of speaking anxiety, such as sociolinguistic competence and learners' belief. The rest of the causes, which are teachers' manner and teaching and testing procedure, receive neutral responses from the respondents, indicating that it is not a primary concern for some.

Speaking, dubbed as one of the most anxiety-provoking skills, has made teachers and researchers try to find a less stressful learning method, one of them is utilizing the voice note feature in messaging apps. The second result based on the findings is students have positive perceptions of using voice notes to reduce their speaking anxiety. According to the questionnaire result in the second half, most of them agree that using voice notes is less pressuring and makes them more feel at ease than doing the speaking activity directly through video conference. Thus it lessens their speaking anxiety level, knowing that they will have a chance of correcting themselves when they make mistakes in the middle of showcasing their speaking skill. This study then can conclude that doing a speaking activity in ELT using a voice note is approved and preferred by the students as they think it is less stressing and pressuring.

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