

Students' Perception on Public Speaking Skill: A Case Study in the International Relations Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

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Abstract

Idea or creativity is sometimes useless without the ability to tailor it to wider society. Not to mention in this industrial revolution, communication skill is urgently needed by everyone without any exception. This article aims to find out the students' perception on public speaking skill. There were several students from the International Relations Department who took Public Speaking in their English class as the objects of the research. The result found that students realize that public speaking is important to support their studies. However, they found some obstacles during doing public speaking such as feeling unconfident and the fear of sharing their opinion or as known as Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA). Public speaking is the thing that students cannot escape from, even if there are a lot of difficulties they would find. It is expected that after reading this research, students will be more aware of the importance of having public speaking skills.

Keywords: *students creativity, public speaking, communication skill, public speaking anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

In the world of academics and work, soft skills are so important and really hard to do. The soft skills include emotional intelligence, attitude, communication skills, social skills and all things which are related to the identity of someone. One of the communication skills is the skill of public speaking. Public speaking skill is one of the factors that determine someone's success, both in the field of education and in the professional world. This skill is very strategic to gain competitive advantage, credibility, and positive reputation (Marinho, 2015). By possessing this skill, we can undoubtedly reap numerous advantages and benefits.

Some successful world leaders such as Barack Obama, Martin Luther King, Adolf Hitler, and others have excellent skill in public speaking. It means that most successful people in the world have a good ability in public speaking. By this skill, they can express their aspirations and influence others to agree with them. It can be concluded that one of the keys to succeed is having a good public speaking skill. Raja (2017) argued "Professionals are expected to regularly keep on improving their communication skills". Therefore, the more we master the skill, the more competitive we are.

Public speaking is a two-way communication in front of the public in order to inform, persuade, or entertain them. The speaker is typically seen as the sender of the message, while the listener is the receiver. However, both parties are actively engaged in the process of sending and receiving messages throughout the speech. As audience members listen, they also transmit messages through laughter, frowns, expressions of boredom, or sometimes by asking questions (Hamilton, 2015).

An example for this statement is a presentation in a classroom. In this case, someone presents the lessons in front of the class' members in order to make them understand the content. If they do not have problems understanding the points, it means that the public speaking performance is a success. However, if they do, it is the opposite. It is in line with the article written in the Educational Advisory that stated "public speaking is delivering the material that we have mastered in front of audiences in purpose to make the audiences understand and are persuaded the public speaker" (REACHIVY Boutique Educational Advisory, 2016). Therefore, there are some activities that do not belong to public speaking such as greeting someone that we meet on a street, calling our friends, buying something in the groceries, and having a little talk with others. A successful public speaking performance, based on Chen, et.al (2014), requires several aspects such as verbal and nonverbal communication that include the speech content, voice, intonation, facial expression, gestures, and body posture.

For students, public speaking skill is a mandatory skill to have. Almost all the academics and jobs world need the skill. Chen, et.al (2014) believe that Oral communication is consistently rated as one of the most valued workforce skills in national surveys. This proves that students really need to prepare the skill as early as possible. Furthermore, this skill is extremely needed for the student of International Relations (IR) because most of the subjects in the class require presentation skills, so if the students want to get a good pass on the subjects, they must have a good skill in public speaking. Sadly, most of them are too scared to speak in public. Previous research found that 75% of the people in the world fear to do public speaking (Fritscher, 2018). For instance, many students of IR in Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY) only read the slides on the monitor or read the paper that they bring while doing a presentation. They do not make any interaction with the audience.

There has been some research conducted to relate public speaking skill and academic world. Raja (2017) believed that someone's competency must be supported with a good public speaking skill. Therefore, he analyzed the reasons behind the anxiety level in undergraduate students of a public speaking class and recommended strategies to overcome this fear. In the same year, Paradewi (2017) investigated students' self-efficacy of public speaking. From the paper, she found that Seemingly, the students have a positive self-efficacy in speaking English.

We can see that from those previous studies, the discussion concerning students' opinion on public speaking has never been the main focus of the research. Before knowing their anxiety issue, motivation, or even self-efficacy about public speaking, we need to know people's opinion or perception about the skill. By doing this, we will be able to make a strategy in improving their quality in it. Not to mention taking the IR students, as one of the parties that really need the skill, as the objects of the research. None of the research has ever done it before. Therefore, this article tries to find out the students of the International Relation Department's perception on public speaking skills. By doing this research, the author would

like to know the opinion of students regarding the skill, the challenges they face, and their attitude about it.

METHOD

This research employs a quantitative research method as its primary approach. With this method, the researcher will collect data in the form of numbers and facts that can be statistically analyzed. This enables the researcher to accurately and objectively measure the variables involved in the study and draw conclusions based on robust data analysis. The quantitative research method is highly valuable when researchers aim to identify patterns, relationships, or trends within the data and systematically test scientific hypotheses. Therefore, this research will make a significant contribution to understanding the phenomena under investigation through a high-quality and empirically grounded approach (Cresswell, 2012). This research used quantitative as the method with the details as follows:

Participants

Participants included 15 undergraduate-students of the International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. The 15 students were from HI.B3 English Class in the Language Training Center of UMY (LTC UMY). Those students were in the 5th Semester in 2019. The researchers were the teacher and the member of this class. Therefore, HI.B3 class was chosen as the object of the research. As the name of the faculty and the department, the students should have the skill of public speaking to support their studies. The main topic of discussion in the faculty of social and political science is revealing their opinion which is related to public speaking's skill. Furthermore, those students were at the public speaking level in their English Class. Participants who failed filling the questionnaires were excluded.

Materials

This article used paper-based surveys to collect the data. The research received the information of the students' perception on public speaking skill by spreading the questionnaires. The questionnaire is one of the instruments of descriptive quantitative research. The research implemented the questionnaires through Google Form. The form contained the closed-ended questions and the open-ended questions. The researchers chose two types of questions to obtain the valid data. On the closed-ended questions, participants responded to the survey by answering the questions by choosing the scale of 1-5 points. Which is 1 (disagree), 2 (less agree), 3 (rather agree), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). In the open-ended questions, participants responded to the survey by answering the questions with a long answer, it can be a paragraph. The researcher made their own questions by considering the situation and condition of the students of the International Relations Department.

Procedures

Those undergraduate-students in HI.B3 class who study in the International Relations Department of Social and Political Science Faculty in Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta had a LINE group for their English class. One of the researchers was one of the students of the class which meant the researcher is one of the members of the group too. However, the researcher was excluded from the population to avoid subjectivity in the research. The researcher introduced herself and explained the purposes of the research. At the same time, the researcher shared the link of the questionnaires on Google Form and asked the students

in the group to fill it. While filling the questionnaires on Google Form, students could ask the researcher if they had any questions. The researcher thanked the students for participating in the research.

RESULTS

The following is a dataset of 15 students who completed questionnaires with closed-ended questions. The questionnaire included 12 questions related to their opinions on public speaking skills.

Table 1.

The Result of Questionnaires with Closed Ended Types

No.	Question	Disagree (1)	Less Agree (2)	Rather Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1.	In daily life, I often talk to people around me	0	4	2	3	6
2.	I will talk if someone else starts the conversation first	2	0	2	8	3
3.	There are several conditions that compel me to speak in public	1	0	3	7	4
4.	I often speak in public	0	4	8	1	2
5.	I feel confident when I have a presentation in front of the class	0	3	7	4	1
6.	I think that my friend is better than me at the presentation	0	1	6	2	6
7.	I will choose to be quiet, even though I can answer questions that are asked by friends when present in class	1	3	6	4	1
8.	I feel confident when I answer the question	0	1	10	3	1
9.	I am not sure with the answers that I convey	0	2	8	5	0
10.	I will spontaneously ask when I don't understand the material	1	7	5	2	0
11.	I feel confident when speaking in public other than in class	1	3	7	2	2

12. Public speaking skills are important to have	0	0	0	4	11
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To explain the answer of the closed-ended types of questionnaires, the researchers use a table to find out all of the participant's answers to make it easier to analyze. The answers from questions number one until three show that participants realize that in some circumstances, they should do the public speaking. Questions number four until eleven are about the participants' feelings while they do a presentation or just see another presentation. The answers of those questions show that most of the participants are not sure with their presentation and think that their friends' presentations are better. The participants still hesitate to ask the material that they do not understand. Moreover, participants mostly feel unconfident while doing a presentation. The last question shows that most of the participants realize that public speaking skill is important to be mastered.

The open ended types of questionnaires give the participants a chance to explain about their feelings while doing a presentation. There were two (2) questions for the open-ended type. Question number one aims to find out the reasons why they feel unconfident. Most of the participants answered that it is because they do not have the ability, they do not master the material, they are lack of preparation, they feel intimidated, they feel scared of making mistakes, and etc. Question number two concerns their way to solve the unconfident feeling and most of the participants said that they do a lot of practice, memorize the material, and pray. The Last question is about their perspective of public speaking with the reasons. All of the participants said that public speaking is important and they have a lot of reason, such as because they should do it sometime, public speaking is one of the ways of communication, it is required to get a job, it supports their study, and in Islam's perspective, they are khalifah in the earth which means that they should have the public speaking skill to share their knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this article was to find the students' perception on public speaking skill. The researchers predicted that public speaking skill is really important for students, especially to get good scores to support their studies. The questionnaire which was given by the researchers to the students are based on the researchers' experiences. One of the researchers was in the same class as the participants, so the researcher's experiences were able to be a source for the questionnaires. The researchers took some answers to questions which can strongly explain the purpose of this article. Firstly, the questionnaires were asking about something general in daily life, then asked something specific about presenting in the class in which the purpose is to find the differences between talking personally in daily life and speaking in front of people. Then the result showed the differences.

By gathering the students' answers on the questionnaires, the researchers found that most of the students did not feel confident when presenting the material in the class. Other studies show that public speaking is among the most common fears, but mostly sometimes we must stand in front of an audience and do the public speaking (Braeutigam, 2008). It is extremely challenging for individuals who are learning to avoid experiencing a sense of anxiety. The presence of anxiety indicates their determination to become proficient communication learners (Sutarsyah, 2017). It was really different when they talked personally

with their friends. They feel more relaxed and enjoy themselves while having a little chit chat with their friends than explaining something in front of their friends in the class.

However, based on the close-ended answers, it was found that most students were reluctant to start a conversation with someone they had just met. This indicates they have anxiety. Individuals who experience high levels of social anxiety disorder often find themselves grappling with Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA), as reported by 97% of them (Bartholomay, 2016). Which means someone who has anxiety when socializing also feels anxiety when public speaking. The feeling of anxiety when delivering a speech can be referred to as public speaking anxiety. PSA is a specific form of social anxiety that emerges when individuals are confronted with the imminent or anticipated requirement to deliver an oral presentation (Hunter, 2014). Someone who experiences fear of public speaking can have an impact on personal, social, and even individual emotions.

There exist two categories of PSA, namely process anxiety (involving uncertainties about speech creation) and performance anxiety (concerns related to delivering the speech) (Jaffe, 2016). These categories collectively contribute to the complex nature of PSA and highlight the multifaceted challenges individuals face when engaging in public speaking.

This questionnaire is addressed to international relations students in the same public speaking class, regardless of their gender and ethnicity. Several studies have found that fear of public speaking is not influenced by gender, ethnicity, and age (Marinho, 2015). Which means that public speaking anxiety can happen to anyone.

Moreover, the students still doubt and hesitate to ask the lessons whenever they do not understand. It is because when they raise their hand and ask questions, all students in the class will look at them and they think that people intimidate them. Students often go to great lengths to avoid speaking in front of others due to feelings of embarrassment, nervousness, a racing heart, discomfort, a sense of inferiority, and diminished self-esteem (Gaibani, 2014).

With these situations, if the students do not ask, the students will find many difficulties such as they will not be able to answer the examination because they do not understand the material. It will give impacts to their grade then it will determine whether they will pass the lessons or not. Many students not only exhibit a PSA but also actively avoid public speaking assessments and display a lack of motivation to enhance their public speaking skills. The PSA is also referred to as communication apprehension, stage fright, speaker anxiety, or speaker reticence (Nash, 2016). Public speaking has been a persistent challenge in the field of communication and language.

These findings are important because by knowing these cases, the researchers can find and give some suggestions to solve the problem. Then, the students will be able to increase their skill in public speaking, which can give a lot of advantages for their studies. They will not only get a good score and understand the lessons but they will also be prepared for the workforce environment.

The result of the research is similar to a research by North (2018) who said that there are several things that we need to concern ourselves with to become a good public speaker. The suggestions are: get ready by practice; prepare your material; make an outline; know your audience; start and end with different ways; use words, voice, and gestures effectively; use support tools; and adopt the feedback to be better in the next presentation.

All in all, this research is only for students in the department of International Relations of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. The result will possibly be different if the research is conducted in another department or another university.

CONCLUSION

Based on our result and discussion, the researchers found some points. First, students realized that in some situations, they should do public speaking. Such as in the class while doing a presentation. As students of international relations, they should have the skill of public speaking because most of our assignments were about discussing and presenting the material in front of the class. Second, most of the students still feel unconfident while presenting the material in the front of class, which can be called public speaking anxiety (PSA). Mostly, this is because they hate being the center of attention and they feel intimidated. While in fact, Webster (2012) said that if we present it well, the message will give a big impact to the audience.

Third, students prefer to talk to their friends face to face personally rather than in front of the public even though the public are their friends in the room. It is because they do not get the pressure while talking to their friends personally. There are some solutions and suggestions from another researcher to solve it such as get a lot of practice and prepare, know your audience, organize your material in the most effective manner to attain your purpose, watch for feedback and adapt to it, and etc. The researchers suggest that in the future, other researchers with the same topic can do a classroom action research about methods that will encourage students effectively to improve their public speaking skill.

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