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## **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE CONVERSATION CLASS TO REDUCE STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN RUMAH INGGRIS**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the implementation of online conversation class to reduce English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' foreign language anxiety in *Rumah Inggris*. Conversation class is an approach to teach practical oral language. One of the challenges of mastering oral language for EFL students' is the foreign language anxiety. Foreign language anxiety is the feeling of nervousness and apprehension that is experienced by EFL students. The implementation of online conversation class allows students to have a safe learning environment that can reduce their foreign language anxiety. This study was conducted in *Rumah Inggris*, an online English course based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The samples of this study were 8 students who were enrolled in online conversation class. Levels of anxiety were investigated through Modified Foreign Language Anxiety (MFLA) adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The quantitative analysis indicated the foreign language anxiety level in online conversation class was considered low within three levels of anxiety by dimensions: communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and text anxiety (TA).

Keywords: conversation class, foreign language anxiety, online learning

### **Introduction**

Conversation class is an approach to teach practical oral language. It becomes popular in non-native English countries (i.e. Indonesia, Spain, Thailand, etc.), where English as a foreign language (EFL) students do not get many opportunities to use their oral English in their daily life. EFL students consider speaking as one of the most important language skills and need to be mastered. In addition, English plays a prominent role in international communication (Crystal, 2003). It gives the EFL students motivation to learn English oral language through conversation class. Motivation is not enough to drive students to master the oral language. One of the important elements in mastering the oral language is practice. To fulfill the aims of conversation class, where students are able to practice practical oral language, it needs to be supported by cultivating a safe environment for

learning. It can boost students' confidence in expressing their thoughts through the use of oral language. One of the challenges of mastering oral language for EFL students is foreign language anxiety. Empirical research has proven that anxious EFL students have a low motivation to participate in learning activities and have lower performance than non-anxious students (Aida 1994, MacIntyre and Gardner 1991). Foreign language anxiety is the feeling of nervousness and apprehension that is being experienced by EFL students when they are learning English. There are three main factors of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety (TA).

There has been a rise of numbers in online conversation class due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Rumah Inggris* is an online platform, based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It provides online conversation classes. Online conversation class is being conducted for 90 minutes through Zoom consisting of 8-10 students. Online conversation class is being designed to allow students to have relaxed and intimate oral language practices. The researcher has noticed students develop positive attitudes in online conversation class. Students become more active, enthusiastic, and confident during online conversation class as a sign of low foreign language anxiety. There are no studies that explore the level of foreign language anxiety in online class settings. Therefore, this study is aimed to investigate the level of foreign language anxiety in online conversation classes and discover the impacts on students' feelings upon joining the online conversation class.

1. What anxiety level did students experience upon joining the online conversation class?
2. What impacts did students feel on their English anxiety upon joining the online conversation class?

### ***Conversation class***

The conversation class is an approach to teach practical oral language. It becomes popular in non-native English countries (i.e. Indonesia, Spain, Thailand, etc.), where English as a foreign language (EFL) students do not get many opportunities to use their oral English in their daily life. EFL students consider speaking as one of the most important language skills and need to be mastered. In addition, English plays a prominent role in international communication (Crystal, 2003). It gives the EFL students motivation to learn English oral language through conversation class.

To fulfill the aims of conversation class, where students are able to practice practical oral language, it needs to be supported by cultivating a safe environment for learning. A relaxed atmosphere is conducive to free expression (Jackson, 1969). It boosts students' confidence in expressing their thoughts through the use of oral language to master it.

### ***Foreign language anxiety***

Foreign language anxiety is the feeling of nervousness and apprehension that is being experienced by EFL students when they are learning English. There are three main factors of foreign language anxiety; communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety (TA). Communication apprehension (CA) is a variety of anxiety that comes from fear of academic evaluations and a fear of failing to communicate with others (Horwitz and Young,

1991). Test anxiety (TA) is the fear of failing academic tests and an unpleasant feelings experience carried either consciously or unconsciously by learners in various contexts (Aydın, 2009). Fear of negative evaluation is a type of anxiety indicated with fear about other people's evaluations, avoidance of evaluative circumstances, and the expectation that others would negatively evaluate them (Watson & Friend, 1969).

Foreign language anxiety affects the learning process. Students who have Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) tend to feel overly nervous and cannot focus on the learning process. Anxious students are also more likely than non-anxious students to be slow to learn the target language (Ortega, 2009). Anxious students are often more prone to underestimate their language proficiency and avoid risky behaviors, such as speaking in class or attempting to explain complicated ideas (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre, Noels, & Clement, 1997; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986).

FLA can lead to speaking anxiety that might slow down students' progress in learning English. Speaking anxiety is the fear of public speaking. When students have FLA they will show low interest in practicing their oral skills which lead to speaking anxiety. Speaking anxiety in EFL students is correlated to the vocabulary repertoire, self-confidence, chances to speak English, grammar accuracy, attitude to English, and background of English.

## **Methodology**

Survey method was conducted to find out the level of anxiety that students demonstrate in online conversation class and the impacts of online conversation class to reduce students' anxiety level. This study was conducted at *Rumah Inggris*, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from January 2021 to March 2021. The participants of this study were 8 students who were enrolled in the conversation class. The researcher used questionnaire as the research instruments in this study. The questionnaire was divided into 3 sections: Modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales (MFLCAS) to identify students' anxiety level, close-ended statements with Likert Scales to identify the impacts of online conversation class to reduce students' anxiety level, and multiple choice with 6 choices to identify the source of students' speaking anxiety. Data were gathered by distributing questionnaire through Google Form.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Students' Anxiety Level in Online Conversation Class***

To find out students' anxiety level in online conversation class the researcher used Modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales (MFLCAS). MFLCAS was adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Classroom (FLCAS). FLCAS was developed by Horwitz et al. in 1986 and it has been widely used to assess FLA. FLCAS is a 33-items, self-report questionnaire using Likert scale to assess students' FLA related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The MFLCAS consists of 8-items, self-report questionnaire using Likert scale survey. Respondents can express their perspectives on FLA by responding to either (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (2) disagree, or (1) strongly disagree. In order to interpret the analysed data, the following criteria were established:

- A mean score of 6.73 – 8.00 indicates the highest level of anxiety.
- A mean score of 5.45 – 6.72 indicates high-anxiety level.
- A mean score of 4.17 – 5.44 indicates medium-anxiety level.
- A mean score of 2.89 – 4.16 indicates low-anxiety level.
- A mean score of 1.60 – 2.88 indicates the lowest level of anxiety.

Table 1. Summarized Results on Modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Statement	n	Min.	Max.	Total	Mean
I feel more confident when I am speaking English in online conversation class. (TA)	8	1	8	36	4.50
I do not worry about making mistakes in online conversation class. (FNE)	8	1	8	31	3.87
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in the online conversation class. (TA)	8	1	8	22	2.75
It frightens me when I do not understand what the tutor is saying in English during the online conversation class. (CA)	8	1	8	21	2.62
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the online conversation class. (TA)	8	1	8	23	2.87
I have difficulties in following the tutor's explanation in online conversation class. (CA)	8	1	8	12	1.50
I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am. (FNE)	8	1	8	36	4.50
I do not bother when the tutor gives personal corrections for my mistakes in online conversation class. (FNE)	8	1	8	37	4.62

The results indicate that in the general overview the students demonstrate low-anxiety level (n: 8) and (mean 3.47). The lowest anxiety level is (mean 1.50) it is being categorized in lowest-anxiety level. It is indicated where the students have no difficulties in following the tutor’s explanation in online conversation class. It is related to Communication Apprehension (CA). The highest anxiety level is (mean 4.62) it is being categorized in medium-anxiety level. It is indicated where the students do not bother when the tutor gives personal corrections for their mistakes in online conversation class. It is related to Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE).

***The Impacts of Online Conversation Class to Reduce Students' Anxiety Level***

The results suggest that online conversation class students feel safe and relaxed to practice their English online learning settings and it can reduce their FLA. None of the participants choose the “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree” options on the statements provided in the questionnaire. 62.5% of students feel safe and relaxed to learn English in online conversation class. 87.5% of students feel motivated to be more active and engage in every learning activity in the online conversation class. 75% of students feel comfortable with the setting of online conversation via Zoom. 50% of students feel more confident to practice oral English in the online setting rather than the offline setting.

Table 2. Summarized Results on The Impacts of Online Conversation Class to Reduce Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
I feel safe and relaxed to learn English in online conversation class.	0%	0%	0%	37.5%	62.5%
I feel motivated to be more active and engage in every learning activity in online conversation class.	0%	0%	0%	12.5%	87.5%
I feel comfortable with the setting of online conversation via Zoom.	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
I feel more confident to practice oral English in the online setting rather than the offline setting.	0%	12.5%	25%	50%	12.5%

### *The Source of Students' Speaking Anxiety*

The results show that the majority of the students experience speaking anxiety due to the lack of vocabulary or vocabulary repertoire (75%). The rest of the students experience speaking anxiety due to lack of self-confidence (12.5%) and difficulties with grammar accuracy (12.5%).

Table 3. Reported Sources of Speaking Anxiety in Online Conversation Class

Sources of Anxiety	Number of responses	Percentage
Vocabulary repertoire	6	75%
Self-confidence	1	12.5%
Chances to speak English	0	0%
Grammar accuracy	1	12.5%
Attitude to English	0	0%
Background of English	0	0%

The results of the questioner indicate that the students in online conversation class at *Rumah Inggris* demonstrate low-anxiety level. They feel comfortable and safe to practice their oral skills with the online learning settings via Zoom. The majority of the students experience speaking anxiety due to lack of vocabulary but with the implementation of online conversation class it can reduce students' anxiety and practice their oral skills at ease.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of MFLCAS and the questioner on the impacts of online conversation to reduce students' FLA, it can be concluded that online conversation class can reduce students' FLA. Students feel safe and able to learn comfortably while they are in online conversation class. Students' FLA level in online conversation class is in low-anxiety level. They are not afraid of making mistakes and accepting the tutor's corrections in positive attitudes. Students become more active, enthusiastic, and confident during online conversation class as the impacts of low foreign language anxiety.

The researcher believes that in the future online conversation class will be widely adapted to teach English oral skills for EFL students. Further research with qualitative methodology is encouraged to provide more details explanations on how online settings classroom can reduce students' FLA from students' perception.

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