

## Overcoming Anxiety in English Language Learning Through Drama Performance

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**Abstract:** Anxiety becomes one of the top emotional encounters a person could have (Suleimenova, 2013: 1860). Anxiety towards learning English is very common among Indonesian students, especially at Universitas Madura Pamekasan. The process of studying literature is the most beneficial than another thing, it is true that some people read literature for pleasure and enjoyment, but if we study literature more for that purpose, indeed we lose the life experience that we might never endure in the real life. The writer tries to decrease student anxiety through one of the literary works, Drama. The study is design to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena and it exists at the time of the study. The participants of the study were 21 students at 5th semester, English Department. After performing the Drama, most of the students become more confident and off course increase their motivation in learning English.

**Keywords:** EFL Learners, Anxiety, Drama, English Language Learning

### Introduction

The importance of English language nowadays is can be used as a communication media for teaching learning process in the classroom, for international conferences and for communicate with native. There are still a lot of factors that cause most of the students to face their difficulties in English learning, especially in their speaking skill. Learning would be success if learners have interesting to learning new language and could accept that new language rightly (Nunan, 2003: 6). Getting opportunities to practicing students' speaking skill in English can motivate them in the classroom.

In Indonesia, English as a foreign language is seldom too used by the students' daily conversation. Of course, it has an impact of students speaking skill. There are lots of mistakes during English learning process. Some of them are intonation, grammatical, accuracy, vocabulary, and also fluency. It reveals that language anxiety is not connected with any language course grades, as found by Price (1991). Most of EFL students feel unconfident as one of their personal influences correlated with anxiety. Perspiration, sweaty palms, dry mouth, muscle contractions and tension, and increase heart rate are some physical signs of anxiety (Spielberger, 1983). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986: 125) state that "some learners may claim to have a mental block against anxiety when they come to learn to speak a second or foreign language. It makes students have less confidence, stress, and nervousness that impede learning process."

Anxiety could be faced by everyone and it becomes one of the top emotional problems (Suleimenova, 2013: 1860). It can be irritating the mind caused by fear of danger and misfortune. "Anxiety poses several potential problems for the student of a foreign language because it can interfere with the acquisition, retention, and production of the new language" (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991: 86).

Foreign language anxiety can interfere learners' performance in their communication with another speaker, and also influence their comprehending in the new language (Tóth, 2006). Anxiety in learning English is very common for the students and there are some reasons that make their mind grow fast towards anxiety. Students also feel anxious when their performance in speaking skill evaluated by others. Cubukcu (2007, 133) establish the main sources of anxiety, those are: "(a) presenting before the class, (b) making mistakes, (c) losing face, (d) inability to express oneself, (e) fear of failure, (f) teachers, and (g) fear of living up to the standards."

During the observation session, Universitas Madura Pamekasan students has differences in their level of confident and knowledge. Some of them cannot handle their own speaking task, uninterested with the instruction and had no idea to start speaking. Based on informal interviewed, the biggest student weaknesses in speaking task is lack of vocabularies.



In the daily, literature becomes one of the sorts of art in which language is the medium to express it. The process of understanding literature is the most valuable than another. One of the functions of reading literature is entertaining, but more than that, reading literature can be experienced and understood by themselves. As a teacher at Universitas Madura Pamekasan, the writer experiences that most of the students could not resolve their anxiety towards learning English.

To overcome those problems, the writer tries to decrease their anxiety through one of literary works, Drama. Using drama in EFL classes is the core of teaching speaking, in which it brought a positive significant improvement in students' oral performance. Drama has become one of teaching strategies which motivate students to learn a new language (English).

Drama is unique, because it can balance our thought and feeling, also it makes teaching learning process in the classroom becomes challenging and enjoyable (Wagner, 1998: 9). It provides the learners to practice their English as an opportunity and they could feel free and safe. Through drama, the classroom's atmosphere becomes friendlier and stress-free (Miccoli, 2003). It is considered that drama can be a powerful tool in teaching language.

Dundar (2013) states that "there are 9 (nine) types of drama activities (drama and language games, role play, improvisation, simulations, mime, skits, froze image building, script writing, and readers theatre)." After applying Drama performance, the writer assumes that effectively technique is can be one of some ways to overcoming the anxiety experienced by students at 5th semester of English Department, Universitas Madura Pamekasan.

### **Research Method**

This study designed to explore student speaking anxiety and how to overcome their anxiousness which refers to qualitative research design. Burns and Grove (2003: 19) describe a qualitative approach as "a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meaning". In line with Parahoo statement that qualitative research emphasized on people experiences and it is stressing on individual uniqueness (1997: 59). In collecting the data, the writer used some instruments; those are observation, interview guide, and documentation. Hand in hand with Creswell (1994: 145) said that "qualitative research is descriptive in what the researcher is interested in process, meaning and understanding gained through word or picture." The objective of the study is describing students' anxiety and the way to overcome it.

During observation stage, the writer interviews students with 4 (four) questions. The following questions are: (1) Please describe your feeling when you had to speak English in front of your classmates, (2) When the teacher ask you to study and prepare the next subject from home, are you really do the preparation?, (3) Do you have any thought (or question) towards the today's topic during the class?, (4) What's exactly on your mind when the teacher and your colleagues evaluate your speech (opinion)? From the interview, the writer decides that drama performance as a strategy in helping the students as English foreign learners decrease their anxiety in learning English.

The study was conducted at Universitas Madura Pamekasan with a different region and background in Indonesia. Some of them have a good experience in English; the others need to practise their English speaking skill. The participants of the study were 21 students at 5th semester, English Department, Universitas Madura Pamekasan, academic year 2015/2016.

### **Result and Discussion**

There was only one class of students in English Department, Madura University. Most of the students were interested in studying English language through drama. There were 16 meetings for Drama course. First meeting was an overview (introduction) of the course. The writer did observation and interviewing within 6 (six) meeting. During next 7 weeks drama course, students develop their English language learning. The writer took notes on her reflections.

Drama script was used which are previously prepared. The script was prepared according to learners' interests, age and language level. In the study, the drama script chosen was Cinderella. Students had a chance to create their own props which was very motivating for them. Before start to practice, they do a small observation about Cinderella story then comparing with the script. There are 2 (two)

groups that has a different task and responsibilities. Group A consist of 11 (eleven) students and they were played 11 (eleven) roles of the drama, those are Cinderella, the prince, 2 (two) step sisters, step mother, a fairy, 2 (two) guests, 2 (two) royal guards, and a horse. Group B consist of 10 (ten) students called backstage crew (director and co-director, narrator, 2 (two) make-up artist and hairdo, 2 (two) fashion stylist, 2 (two) decor device, and cameraman).

The next stage was called drama rehearsal. It started from December 2015 until January 2016.

1. Week 8 (eight): December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015

Students start reading as a first step of a drama performance. Most of them were shy to show the real expression of the drama. To motivate them, the writer shares a short course of how to get the exact tone of each role in the script. They had to practice each dialogue of each role played, twice. The writer makes a video recording during this step then show to the students, and let them to compare those 2 (two) recordings. From those comparisons, it can help to increase student motivation and evaluating their performance.

2. Week 9 (nine): December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The second meeting was run with practical the dialogues with real act, tone and expression. Students were train to become more focus, understand and confident in this process. Another participant in group B was start to discussed of their responsibility and supports the process of the drama.

3. Week 10 (ten): December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015

All participants both in group A and B show the better communication skill in English. It can create opportunities for students to set personal goals that are realistic and attainable. The chemistry among the actors was start built naturally.

4. Week 11 (eleven): December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015

The actors were wearing the costumes prepared by fashion stylist. Classroom becomes more communicative and comfortable. It helps the students' progress in learning English especially in their communication skill. Some actors already memorize the dialogue.

5. Week 12 (twelve): December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The students become more fun and enjoy their learning. Most of them were well prepared for their rehearsal. Positive work environment and classroom dynamic was created.

6. Week 13 (thirteen): January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Students who have decor responsibility were finished to fulfil their concept of the stage on next 2 weeks drama performance. The chemistry becomes stronger in this week.

7. Week 14 (fourteen): January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016

It's 1 (one) week-to-go before drama performance. The actors and all crew were ready to give their best performance through Drama.

8. Show time: January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

On the d-day, the students perform the drama successfully. The actors and the backstage crew were work hard to give their best for the best results. Both group A and B were not only give the entertaining but also educating and valuably performance.

From those activities, EFL students were experienced how to build a good team work. Each of them has their own motivation and opportunity to speaking English. They can re-build their confident to make conversation with their classmates. They also had space time to prepare their drama performance for the audiences. Their good team work can made English learning process become more fun and dynamic.

It is important for a teacher knowing their EFL students thought and fear during teaching learning process to decrease their anxiety in English speaking skill. Drama performance can be the one of strategies to overcome student anxiety. It gives more positive feedback from EFL students. Some of them (with lack and poor motivation) become proactive and can learn directly from their friends who have high motivation in learning English.

It deals with Wagner's statement that "Drama is powerful because of its unique balance of thought and feeling makes learning exciting, challenging, relevant to real life concerns, and enjoyable." It has the potential to provide learners to practice their English as an opportunity and they could feel free and safe. Also, fixed to Miccoli said that "Drama also creates a friendly, stress-free atmosphere where optimal learning occurs."

Teacher should try to create positive attitudes (activities) to make their EFL students learn with more fun, free and enjoyable. Drama performance can be an alternative method to overcoming students' anxiety in learning English as a foreign language. Motivation and personality of each learner also important for their English speaking progress in a great manner. Their motivation needed in English communication was quietly different each other. In this case, a teacher must be focused on motivate their EFL students to speaking in English as a foreign language, well and correctly.

## Conclusion

The study discussed about the way to decrease students' anxiety in English learning through drama performance. The writer concludes some benefits using the method for EFL students (from the first week until show time). Those activities can ensure students fully understand the expectations of an assignment; can create opportunities for students participate equally; increases student responsibility; and strengthens students' active participation as a member of the classroom.

There are some strategies to 'repair' English speaking learning in the classroom; individual activity (memorizing some words or phrases), peer activity (practising dialogue), outdoor activity (drama rehearsal), and free activity (watching a film related to the story for drama performing).

The writer hope for further researcher to explore another strategy to overcoming EFL students' anxiety in learning English and also to evaluate the short-term successful strategy for a long-term successful strategy.

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