



REDUCING EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING ANXIETY THROUGH SELECTIVE ERROR CORRECTION AND GROUP-WORK

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abstract

This quantitative study aimed to examine the level of speaking anxiety experienced by second-year high-school Acehese EFL learners in their oral performance in L2 classroom and to investigate the attempt to lower their anxiety through the implementation of selective error correction and group work. The Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986) was used as a means to survey and evaluate the learners' speaking anxiety, and their oral performance was assessed through speaking performance rubric before and after the learners' exposure to selective error correction and group work. The findings showed that a high level of speaking anxiety was found in the majority of the learners, and that the use of selective error correction and group work for the treatment of speaking anxiety overall resulted in the learners' improved performance in their oral task. The findings highlighted the needs to create a positive and supportive educational environment that stimulates learners to freely experiment with L2 and to establish close-knit learning communities that promote authentic interactions in L2 and provide opportunities to be more engaged in oral language use.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian EFL learners lack opportunities to practice speaking in class and in real-life situations, resulting in their poor listening and speaking skills. Since English is not an official language, exposure to English only takes place in a language class (Sidik et al., 2021; Yosintha, 2020). Students have little exposure to real speaking situations and thereby lack confidence. In comparison to ESL learners, who study English in a country where English is the main language, EFL learners tend to lower level of fluency due to their lack of exposure to authentic language normally found in interaction and communication with native speakers. Indeed, because EFL learners' engagement to the authentic language use will be confined to their weekly classroom sessions, they are more likely to lack expertise with the language's cultural and historical foundation.

ESL learners are regularly exposed to situations in which they can put their linguistic skills to use when, for instance, they are chatting with coworkers, reading the news, or mingling with the natives. They also benefit from living in an English-speaking nation since it allows them to swiftly adapt to the language to get by. Repeated rehearsing English in various circumstances and situations improves their language aptitude. They have a clear, practical need for English and immense opportunities to employ beyond the classroom. They are

confronted with English-speaking culture on a regular basis, even though their comprehension may be restricted due to their limited language proficiency.

Accordingly, the majority of EFL learners, while highly competent in reading and listening, still fail to demonstrate a satisfying proficiency in their productive skills, especially speaking (Abrar et al., 2018; Johana & Rico, 2014). In addition to their aforementioned lack of exposure to L2 authentic use beyond classrooms, some other factors have been suggested as possible causes. The washback impact of exit and entrance exams has particularly been accused to contribute to this condition (Furaidah et al., 2015; Sukyadi & Mardiani, 2011). National examinations, measuring only learners' reading and listening skills result in a backlash, causing teachers to divert the teaching away from productive skills. Classroom instruction are now devoid of such necessities as long-term assignments, physical book analysis, critical thinking, and computer-based learning since teachers concentrate on taking practice tests by handing out worksheets with items designed identically to those found on standardized examinations. In an attempt to elevate their learners' exam results, some schools even altered course objectives and overhauled course content. Others suggested that passivity, compliance, and reflectiveness are all inherent characteristics of Asian students (Loh & Teo, 2017), and Acehnese EFL learners are no exception. They tend to favor a teacher-centered approach, with teachers expected to be well-equipped for classes, display strong command of course materials, deliver content logically and methodically, and be proficient at responding students' inquiries. Indeed, teachers are supposed to not only deliver content by considerable care in treatment of details in order to aid learning, but also to serve as role models, instilling exemplary values and nurturing learners' social conscience. Others pointed out the shortfall in communicative and interactive tasks in textbooks (Al Hosni, 2014; Diaab, 2016), as well as the complexities of regulating oral communication tasks in overcrowded classrooms (Ariatna, 2016; Ayu, 2019), claiming that teachers are forced to cover a large number of pages in a limited class time, leaving no time for additional communicative activities.

Nevertheless, the feelings of unease, nervousness, and apprehension one experiences when learning or communicating in a language other than his own has commonly been identified as a major factor impeding learners' language learning and acquisition. This so-called foreign language anxiety may be skill-specific in nature, arising when learners are faced with speaking, listening, reading or writing activities that may expose their lack of competence or make them uncomfortable, and may be caused by such classroom-related variables as activities that require learners to produce the language orally or in front of their peers, learners' frequent laughter at their peers who made a mistake in pronunciation, or the instructor's strict approach to error correction. Indeed, foreign language anxiety one that arises from having to perform in a language test is the single most dominant factor contributing to language anxiety (Saha, 2014), and the type of tests that requires learners to produce language orally, especially in front of their peers, is the most frequently reported barriers faced by not only beginner but also advanced EFL learners (Gkonou, 2014; Suleimenova, 2013). Furthermore, language anxiety may be learners-induced, brought about by learners' unfounded assumptions, implausible expectations, self-perceived ineptitude, fear of unfavorable judgment.

A number of studies, however, have shown that language anxiety have both facilitating and debilitating effects on L2 learning (Azizifar & Fariadian, 2015; Budiman et al., 2018; Fadlan, 2020). To some extent, anxiety encourages learners to give their full measure in order to complete a given task; as a result, it drives them to be more committed and tenacious in their studies. On the other hand, an overwhelming feeling of anxiety may drive learners to escape altogether from the work at hand, causing them to indulge in avoidance behavior. In fact,

debilitating anxiety may result in such psychological disorders as nervous breakdown, panicking, and short-term memory loss or poor memory recall, where, for instance, as reported by Horwitz et al. (1986 as cited in Tran, 2012), learners reported that they understand a particular grammatical form but fail to recall it or made reckless mistakes in an exam or an oral test in which they are required to retain and coordinate a large number of grammar rules at the same time. While the degree of apprehension differs among individuals and circumstances (McCroskey, 1977, as cited in Byrne et al., 2012), all anxious ELL learners display similar tendency, they tend to underrate and fail to perform at their full capacity to communicate in L2 and become fixated at their failures rather than their achievements in L2 learning. They begin to question their competence in a subject, and anxiety ultimately becomes a stumbling block to their learning and demonstrating what they are actually capable of.

Speaking and listening have been identified as the two most common causes of foreign language anxiety (Afshar & Hamzavi, 2014; Xu, 2013), and the former is widely regarded as the most anxiety-inducing aspect of foreign language learning (Sutarsyah, 2017). Besides, other factors such as task difficulty, L1 proficiency, learners' and instructors' beliefs, learners' unwarranted expectations, learners' competitive tendency, as well as learners' lack of emotional intelligence have also been commonly associated to foreign language anxiety (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019; Zhang & Zhong, 2012). Nevertheless, Horwitz et al. (1986, as cited in Kralova & Petrova, 2017) contended that communication apprehension, fear of negative judgment, and test anxiety are the three primary causes of FLA. They argued that having to express one's ideas in a language in which one is not confident while being evaluated by a more proficient user of the language, especially with others steadily gazing, can result in discomfort and fear of being humiliated, which ultimately can arouse communication anxiety. Also, the proclivity to be extremely worried and stressed out by the potential implications of poor performance during a test or an exam impairs learners' capacity to perform as expected in an evaluative situation and heavily affects their performance in a foreign language class. Furthermore, learners frequently believe that they are under constant scrutiny from their teachers' and peers; as a result, they develop the feelings of unease about these people's judgments, concern about their disapproval, and the presumption that their peers would rate them unfavorably.

Ultimately, the apprehension and stress that learners are under creates has the potential to take precedence over the cognitive processes involved in learning a second language. According to Krashen's (1982, as cited in Patrick, 2019) affective filter hypothesis, different emotional learning attitudes in learners will result in different filter capability for learning input; those with a positive emotional attitude have a low filter of language learning input, whereas those with a negative emotional attitude have an elevated filter. Anxiety are among the emotional reactions that are closely associated with the heightened filter, and accordingly, anxious learners' language learning and acquisition will likely be hampered due to their high affective filters. When their filter is heightened, their language growth will be stifled, almost as if a barrier has been created around them to block the flow of information to their brain. In more severe cases, anxiety will result in learners' suffering from anxiety disorders (Mayworm et al., 2014), displaying a non-responsive, passive behavior toward their learning, as evidenced by a lack of enthusiasm and mediocre achievement in tests and assignment.

EFL teachers who are well-versed in the symptoms of anxiety in their learners can begin to identify and detect them early within learners, understand the mental mechanisms associated with their nervous sensations, and assist them by implementing their method to deal with and control their apprehension (Alrabai, 2014; Atasheneh & Izadi, 2012). Lessons should be

organized from the perspective of the learners by considering whether a task would make learners feel uncomfortable or apprehensive. The instructors should utilize some approaches to make learners minimize their fear and feel secure in speaking in L2 in front of their peers. Among the most commonly proposed pedagogical approaches to assist EFL learners suffering from anxiousness are selective error correction and group work, both of which could be employed concurrently so as to produce a gradual change on the students.

Selective error correction constitutes a two-step procedure that begins with the detection of a learner's error and ends with the highlight of the error so as to allow the learner to collect the information necessary to fix the error (Uysal & Aydin, 2017). In selective error correction, feedback can be confined to a single category of error (e.g., errors in article usage), or several pre-determined categories of errors (e.g., articles; tenses; adverbs). Teachers can also take into account such factors as errors' interference with the intended meaning of the statement, their complexity, and their relevance with the current topic of the class. Teachers have reported that they resorted to selective error correction mainly due to the time constraints and the lack of effectiveness of comprehensive correction (McMartin-Miller, 2014). Unfocused feedback may bring about undesired outcome because teachers spend more time attempting to correct all errors and mistakes than delivering instruction or demonstrating the grammatical rules. Indeed, according to Lee (2019), teachers' willingness to invest valuable lesson time and effort offering feedback may start to diminish when they do not witness any signs of development in learners' speaking skill and interest, and the same errors keep persisting in the future instead. In contrast, learners would gain greater benefit from a teacher's criticism if he or she concentrates on specific and limited features of their oral performance since it allows them to attend to a specific fault at a time and eliminate it from their language in the future. More importantly, this practice would pose no detrimental impact on learners' attitudes toward speaking since their performance would not be marred by a lot of potentially demotivating remarks by their teachers.

Group work entails any teaching and learning activities or assessment task in which learners of varying levels assemble into pairs, small groups, or large groups and collaborate as a team to craft knowledge and understanding of concepts and to achieve a shared goal on a set of tasks objectives. Whether the objective is to improve learners' content mastery, to develop certain skills, or a mixture of both, teachers may casually set up group work on short activities or use it as a comprehensive pedagogical approach that requires learners to play an active role in a group setting over a period of time to collaboratively complete a major assignment or project. The adoption of group work in ELT, perhaps, stems from the realization of Vygotsky's notion that social support is essential for students' success in learning (O'Donnell & Hmelo-Silver, 2013). He maintained that interaction with peers, especially more experienced ones, contributes considerably to learners' skill and knowledge developments, and therefore, he advised that teachers promote classroom leadership, facilitate meaningful exchanges between learners, as well as implement collaborative learning strategies in which less capable learners could progress with the support of more skilled partners. Group work allows learners to discuss subject matters or complete collaborative tasks with their peers in a less intimidating setting (Zulfikar & Aulia, 2020), thus eliminating the fear that prevents anxious learners from engaging with the entire class. Group work also creates interactive environment which can aid the growth of learners' linguistic and communicative skills, drives learners to become more immersed with the task, develop their confidence, and promote independent or self-directed learning (Sajedi, 2014). As learners work collaboratively in group work, they interact in a meaningful communication in L2 and receive helpful feedback from their peers, developing positive interdependence by motivating and supporting each

other through exchange of ideas and knowledge in achieving a shared objective. In addition, learners are engaged in process skills or cognitive process (as in interpreting data, problem analysis and problem solving), organizational skill (as in assigning roles among members), and evaluation skill (as in making decisions regarding their group's final solution to a task (Gómez et al., 2013; Noroozi et al., 2012). All of these skills are vital for effective interaction and collaboration in their current academic and future professional lives.

This quantitative study was conducted to examine the level of speaking anxiety in secondary-level EFL learners in SMK N 1 Jantho, a public vocational high school in Aceh Besar, and to examine the impact of concurrently applying selective error correction and group work to reduce their anxiety of speaking English in front of others. Preliminary observation revealed that the reality faced by the majority of Indonesian EFL learners is well-represented by the ELLs in Aceh Besar, the majority of whom, while relatively competent in reading and listening, are unable to demonstrate a satisfying competence in their productive skills, especially speaking. The majority of the ELLs displayed to some extent anxiety when asked to produce L2 orally in front of the entire class.

Foreign language anxiety has attracted the attention of many researchers, and a number of studies have attempted to explain its causes and impacts in L2 learning and acquisition. In their autobiographical research on the growth of anxiety in EFL learners, Trang et al., (2013) looked at 49 university students who were considered apprehensive according to the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. They reported that, in their L2 learning quest, learners started off feeling highly enthusiastic. However, their degree of enthusiasm dwindled with time, replaced by a rising amount of anxiety that peaked out during their high school or tertiary periods. They further named teaching methodology, evaluation methods, classroom interactions, and curriculum design as the four factors that spawned and exacerbated FLA in learners. In a case study on the usage of English as an international language of communication at two Austrian multinational corporations, Aichhorn and Puck (2017) found that foreign language anxiety affected all non-native participants, albeit to a varying extent. As a coping mechanism, the affected respondents either avoided and withdrawn themselves altogether from any circumstances that necessitated the use of English, or resorted to code-switching. Furthermore, Jiang and Dewaele (2020) explored the FLA in over a thousand Chinese EFL learners at tertiary level as well as its correlations to their sociobiographical and linguistic factors. The findings revealed that FLA was substantially correlated to learners' origins, international travel or stay, L2 learning starting age, self-rated fluency, grades in achievement tests, and intensity of L2 exposure. Along the same line, using a scale adapted from (Horwitz et al., 1986) Foreign Language Classroom Scale (FLCAS), Latif (2015), in her quantitative analysis of the degree and causes of language anxiety among more than a hundred Chinese ESL learners, reported that to a large extent the learners felt anxious in L2 classroom, and that anxiety levels among the learners were much determined by their years of L2 exposure, rather than their gender and age. Li et al. (2021) also conducted a survey on over two-thousand Chinese EFL learners from several high-schools and colleges to investigate the influences of innate affective competence and instructional settings on Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Anxiety. They discovered that learners' innate affective competence and instructional settings were strong predictors of learners' satisfaction and apprehension in learning L2. More specifically, they identified that instructional settings was more positively correlated with learning satisfaction than affective competence, while affective competence was more positively correlated with apprehension than instructional settings. Additionally, E. J. E. Lee (2016) surveyed and interviewed sixty master's-degree ESL learners to study the effects of instructors' oral corrective feedback (CF) on the learners' language anxiety. The

instructors' CF, in contrast to clarification requests, was in general revealed to contribute positively to the participants' affective parameters, particularly reducing their fear of speaking in L2 in front of their peers.

Nevertheless, in spite of a number of prior investigations on language anxiety in general, studies focusing on classroom strategies to deal with learners' L2 anxiety are still few in number. Indeed, studies focusing specifically on L2 speaking anxiety in Indonesian educational context and ways for teachers to cope with the issue still need further study impetus. This research aimed to fill this gap.

Theoretically, this study's findings were intended to corroborate established theories and further provide empirical evidence of practical rules and principles of English language pedagogy, notably in terms of EFL learners' oral performance through the application of selective error correction and group work. Practically, for teachers, this study demonstrated how selective error correction and group work might help learners overcome their speaking anxiety in L2 classroom. As for learners, this research showcased their fellow EFL learners' experience in a speaking class with selective error correction and group work, giving them an insight on ways to cope with and manage the anxiety that comes along with learning a foreign language.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative framework in seeking to obtain and explore relevant data on the scale of learners' speaking anxiety in an EFL classroom to arrive at reliable results. A quasi-experimental design was used for this study since field settings made random assignment of participants infeasible (Maciejewski, 2020). The research was conducted at SMK N 1 Jantho, a state vocational high school in Aceh Besar, involving 125 second-year ELLs as the population. Among these ELLs, thirty learners in Multimedia class were selected purposively as the sample of this research on the ground that while this class of ELLs had longer weekly English session than the other classes, they still displayed poor oral proficiency and anxiety in L2 oral production.

Questionnaires and tests, which consisted of an oral pretest and an oral post-test, were the data collection methods used in this study. Closed-ended questionnaire in the form of modified 12-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986) was used to measure the learners' anxiety levels in this study. The questionnaire, administered on the first meeting, consisted of selected items on the five-point Likert scale indicative of L2 speaking anxiety that were distributed equally into three sections, comprising communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. With the responses ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', the questionnaire was later statistically analyzed by calculating the percentage and the mean of the learners' responses to each item of the questionnaire. The learners' anxiety scores were calculated by summing up the ratings of all items, with possible score ranging from a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 60 and with higher total scores indicating higher level of anxiety. The learners' levels of anxiety were determined by adopting Jee's (2014) anxiety categorization, in which those with scores in the range of 12 to 32 were considered to have low level of anxiety, those whose score ranged from 33 to 44 were classified as moderately anxious, and those with a score range of 45 to 60 were perceived as highly anxious. In addition, items with combinational percentages (of those who agreed and strongly agreed with the statements) higher than 40% were regarded as anxiety-arousing factors.

On the second day, the pre-test, in which the learners were required to make a two- to three-minute-long oral presentation on a topic assigned the day before, was administered to

examine and measure at first hand the learners' anxiety level before experimental teaching. The speaking assessment rubric as adopted from Ismailia (2021) was then used to evaluate their performance. This 100-point analytic scoring rubric assesses five different components of speaking ability, which comprise pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and task. After a four-meeting experimental teaching, in which selective error correction and group work were implemented, an oral post-test was administered to evaluate their speaking performance after the treatment.

On the third day, in six groups of five, the learners brainstormed what topics they would like to present as a group. A leader, a note-taker, a timekeeper, and a language checker were appointed in each group. Everyone would take on the role of a reporter. On the fourth day, each group worked on a presentation in which each member took a turn presenting in his or her designated portion. The learners collaborated to plan, create a draft, rehearsed their portions, and produced relevant visual aids. At this point, the leader ensured that everyone was actively contributing and participating orally. The timekeeper ensured that each reporter's presentation was of sufficient length for the allotted time, and language checker checked that everyone was talking in L2. The teacher ventured from group to group to ensure that everyone was performing his or her assigned role. The teacher demonstrated his or her accessibility by responding to queries and providing assistance with the learners' English when requested. Focusing on content delivery, the errors were recast communicatively and naturally so as not to disrupt content delivery.

On the following day, the learners initially rehearsed their group presentation to overcome their anxiety about presenting in front of the rest of the class. During this phase, the teacher again circulated, selectively correcting errors, focusing on the ones that affected the overall intended message, the ones that can be addressed through straightforward explanation, the ones related to the current teaching points, (i.e., in a lesson on describing an object, the use of erroneous verb tenses was corrected). Afterwards, using the visual aids, each group in succession made a presentation on the topic they had decided. Three minutes was allocated to question-and-answer session after each presentation, during which the learners might decide what and how to ask. The presenting group was given two-minute preparation time before responding. This strategy aimed to lower the learners' anxiety of speaking in front of their peers as well. By the end of the session, announcements on the individual oral post-test was made. The learners were required to perform individually in a short talk on the final day on the same topic as the pretest. The speaking performance rubric was used to assess their performance once more.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The following table sums up the learners' responses to the communication apprehension items in the questionnaire.

Table 1. Responses to Communication Apprehension Items

No	Statements	Percentage					Mean
		SA	A	NA	D	SD	
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	10%	53.33%	26.67%	10%	0%	3.633
2	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in	10%	50%	36.67%	0%	3.33%	3.633

	the foreign language.						
3	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	3.33%	20%	46.67%	23.33%	6.67%	2.9
4	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	6.67%	56.67%	36.67%	0%	0%	3.7

Overall Mean Score 3.47

*SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; NA: Neither Agree nor Disagree; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree.

The result shows that a combined 63.33% or more than half of the learners believed that they did not feel confident using L2 in front of others. Only three learners (10%) affirmed that classroom communication in L2 did not make them feel uneasy. The other eight learners (26.67%) indicated that they had neither a positive nor a negative view on speaking in L2 in the classroom. In addition, almost half of the learners also (40%) felt reluctant to offer their answers to their teacher's questions in class. Only one learner (3.33%) admitted that his/her inability to comprehend the teacher's statement was not a source of apprehension. Also, a total of seven learners (23.33%) indicated that they felt more stressed out and unconfident in learning L2 more than in learning any other school subjects. These learners still found L2 class the most stressful learning experience at school. On the other hand, more than half of the learners (30%) reported otherwise, with seven learners (23.33%) stating their disagreement and two (6.67%) other their strong disagreement on the idea that L2 lesson put them in a daunting situation. Additionally, a total of 19 learners (63.34%) admitted that their apprehension occurred when they failed to comprehend parts of what their teacher said.

In terms of the items reflexive of their test anxiety, the learners' responses in brief is shown in the following table:

Table 2. Responses to Test Anxiety Items

No	Statements	Percentage					Mean
		SA	A	NA	D	SD	
1	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in class.	20%	46.67%	33.33%	0%	0%	3.87
2	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I made.	0%	46.67%	43.33%	0%	10%	3.27
3	I feel very self-conscious about speaking in foreign language in front of other students.	3.33%	43.33%	43.33%	10%	0	3.4
4	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	3.33%	33.33%	40%	23.33%	0	3.167
Overall Mean Score							3.43

*SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; NA: Neither Agree nor Disagree; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree.

As can be seen in the table, a total of 20 learners (80%) admitted to becoming panic-stricken when they had to speak in L2 without prior preparation, while a total of 14 learners (46.67%) felt uncomfortable and agitated over the thought that their mistakes and errors were to be pointed out by their teachers in front of their peers. Only three learners (10%) indicated that they did not feel afraid or anxious with the prospect of being corrected by their teacher.

A total of 14 learners (46.66%) also indicated that, to a certain degree, they feel inhibited when they have to speak in front of their classmates. On the other hand, only a small minority of the three learners (10%) felt that speaking in front of others is not a cause of inhibition for them. Furthermore, eleven learners (36.66%) indicated that speaking in L2 classroom is a cause of confusion and nervousness, while seven other learners (23.33%) reported that they do not experience nervousness or perplexity when speaking in L2 classroom.

As for the fear of negative evaluation items, the learners' responses are summarized in the table below.

Table 3. Responses to Fear of Negative Evaluation Items

No	Statements	Percentage					Mean
		SA	A	NA	D	SD	
1	I keep thinking that the other students are better at language than I am.	33.33%	43.33%	23.33%	0%	0%	3.87
2	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	0%	40%	60%	0%	0%	3.27
3	I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	1.33%	50%	23.33%	1.33%	0%	3.4
4	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	20%	50%	30%	0%	0%	3.167
Overall Mean Score							3.76
*SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; NA: Neither Agree nor Disagree; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree.							

Twenty-three learners (76.66%) believed that their language proficiency was inferior to other learners' and that other students performed better in their L2 classroom, and 12 learners (40%) reported to feel reluctant to offer their answers to their teacher's questions in class. The majority of the learners also perceived their lack of speaking ability, as shown by the fact that 19 (63.33%) of them agreed to the suggestion that their classmates possessed higher-level oral proficiency. Only four learners (13.33%) indicated their relative confidence by denying their peers' better L2 oral proficiency. In addition, 21 learners admitted to feeling anxious to speak in L2 due to the thought of being laughed at by their peers.

The learners' scores in all items in all three factors causing speaking anxiety were then summed up to arrive at the total score. The levels of anxiety were then assigned to each of the learners based on the total score they attained, as can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Learners' Anxiety Levels

Learner No	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Communication Apprehension	Test Anxiety	Total Score	Anxiety Level
1	15	15	18	48	High
2	13	12	13	38	Moderate
3	15	15	12	42	Moderate
4	18	15	11	44	Moderate
5	11	14	13	38	Moderate
6	18	16	20	54	High
7	20	20	20	60	High
8	8	10	8	26	Low
9	10	8	8	26	Low
10	13	12	13	38	Moderate
11	15	13	18	48	High
12	15	12	15	42	Moderate
13	12	15	15	42	Moderate
14	18	15	15	48	High
15	20	16	18	54	High
16	20	20	20	60	High
17	18	20	16	54	Moderate
18	16	18	20	54	High
19	18	20	14	52	High
20	20	20	20	60	High
21	20	16	18	54	High
22	14	18	20	52	High
23	14	20	18	52	High
24	8	8	10	26	Low
25	14	18	20	52	High
26	18	18	18	54	High
27	20	20	20	60	High
28	18	15	15	48	High
29	18	18	18	54	High
30	20	18	14	52	High

As illustrated in the table, the majority of the learners experienced L2 speaking anxiety, with two-third of them (63.33%) considered to be highly anxious and eight of them (40%) considered to be moderately anxious. Only three learners (10%) indicated that they experienced a low-level anxiety.

Furthermore, the results of the learners' oral presentation in both pretest and post-test in brief can be seen in the tables below. Their scores in the respective tests, along with the mean scores, have been arranged in ascending order of magnitude with their corresponding frequencies.

Table 5. Pre-Test' Table of Frequency and Mean Score

No	Interval Class	Frequency (fi)	Midpoint (xi)	fi.xi
1	31 – 36	2	33	66
2	37 – 42	3	39	117
3	43 – 48	8	45	360
4	49 – 54	3	51	153
5	55 – 60	2	57	114
6	61 – 66	11	63	693
7	67 – 72	1	69	69
Total		30	357	1572
Mean	52.4			

Table 6. Post-Test' Table of Frequency and Mean Score

No	Interval Class	Frequency (fi)	Midpoint (xi)	fi.xi
1	63 – 66	3	64	192
2	67 – 70	4	68	272
3	71 – 74	0	72	0
4	75 – 78	11	76	836
5	79 – 82	3	80	240
6	83 – 86	0	84	0
7	87 - 90	9	88	792
Total		30	532	2332
Mean	93.28			

The learners' average score in the post-test was 93.28, significantly higher than that of the pre-test. This disparity suggests that the implementation of selective error correction and group work effectively lowered the learners' anxiety in L2 speaking.

Discussion

The result of the questionnaire revealed that fear of negative evaluation is the major cause of the learners' speaking anxiety. More than half of the learners admitted to harboring the feeling that their L2 proficiency was inadequate, deficient or inferior when compared to their peers'. As a matter of fact, all, but four of them, perceived that their peers' oral skill exceeded theirs. The learners apparently exhibited severe uneasiness when expressing themselves in L2 in front of others, which, according to Russell (2020), was caused by a constraining feeling of excessive concern about others' perception of what is said. Their persistent fear of negatively evaluated by their teachers and their peers appeared to limit their engagement in L2 learning activities, especially in ones that entailed making an oral production of L2. The perpetual feeling of being scrutinized is prevalent, however, not only among the learners in this investigation, but also among many other ELLs, many of whom experience a sense of inadequacy and poor self-evaluation (Cheng & Erben, 2012), further exacerbated by their low self-confidence, throughout their L2 learning. Indeed, a persistent feeling of inadequacy may lead to an inferiority complex and can negatively interfere with learners' academic life (M. Lee et al., 2017). Learners may feel that they intellectually of less worth or importance than others, and as a result, they appear detached and withdrawn in the presence of the people who make them feel inadequate.

A large number of the learners reported that they avoided volunteering answers to their instructors' questions for fear of being incorrect and being judged as less proficient. Similarly, the majority of the learners also reported they are fearful of their L2 oral performance due to the perceived threat of being embarrassed or ridiculed. Providing incorrect answers or performing poorly in front of their peers gave causes for concern for the learners since they are often associated with mockery, humiliation, and loss of self-esteem. The results were comparable to those of Sevinç and Backus (2017) and Suleimenova (2013), all of whom discovered that EFL learners tend to experience apprehensiveness when they have to speak in front of others in an L2 learning environment, causing them to restrict their engagement in learning activities and putting them at greater risk of being judged by others. Out of fear of being adversely rated by their peers, the learners suppress their critical thinking and inventiveness and avoid taking any risks. This attitude has detrimental consequences for L2

learning. Because instructional environments are meant to allow learners to learn from both their instructor and their peers, the possible advantages of a shared educational experience are missed. Since learners are frequently misinformed yet too timid to offer their ideas, they lose a chance for learning the correct answer. In addition, since learners may also typically be correct but are too anxious to speak up, they risk missing out on a genuinely gratifying moment. In other words, this behavior may minimize their odds of being rejected, but it will also restrict them from their opportunity to learn, develop, and offer something unique.

Furthermore, communication anxiety and test anxiety account for relatively the same level of anxiety in the majority of the learners in this study. More than half of the learners suggested that they struggled with the feelings of low confidence, refraining them from speaking in their L2 classroom. While learners' lack of confidence might be attributed to such factors as fear of being unintelligible, lack of knowledge of the content, or constant self-comparison to other advanced learners (Hamouda, 2013; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Shabani, 2012), in many ELLs, it was mainly caused by their fear of making errors and their self-perceived lack of proficiency (Savaşçı, 2014). In addition to displaying such character traits as shyness, silence, and disinclination in their L2 learning, learners stricken by communication apprehension are also highly susceptible to such negative emotions as tension and nervousness, as was the case with a few learners in this study. In fact, a large number of learners in this study also identified their fear, nervousness, and subsequent reluctance to engage and interact in L2 as critically caused by not only their failure to comprehend their instructors but also their inability to comprehend the entire words in their teachers' utterances. This particular finding is in agreement with that of Suleimenova (2013) and Nilsson (2020) who reported that failure to understand what the instructor says is among the most anxiety-inducing (classroom) scenarios for many ELLs. Apprehensive communicators attempt to attend to every word an interlocutor says in an interaction (Arabai, 2014), not knowing that the more they focus on each word uttered, the more perplexed they become in keeping up with information flow, and that even the most skilled learners may struggle to communicate effectively with others. As a consequence, they have trouble in both comprehending others and getting their ideas across to them.

Furthermore, as far as test anxiety is concerned, the findings revealed that classroom oral activities, ranging from simply being called up to respond to the instructor's on-the-spot occasional inquiries to making an oral presentation in front of the classroom, caused intense apprehension, nervousness, as well as confusion to a number of the learners in this study. A major portion of the learners, indeed, further indicated their performance was especially marred with panic-attack as a result of extreme anxiety from having to speak without preparation, which in most cases, results in speech disorder (García-Pastor & Miller, 2019), forgetfulness (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012), and high-level of distractibility (Al-Saraj, 2014). At this rate, not only does anxiety detrimentally impair their performance in a given task, but, since oral activities such as tests, discussion, and presentation are ubiquitous in educational setting at any levels, and in fact, learners in L2 classroom are frequently assessed based on how well they perform orally, their overall academic performance was also put at risk.

Nonetheless, what prowls from behind students' poor contribution in oral activities is not only their exposure to all other eyes or an audience and self-consciousness, but also their negative attitude towards errors. Almost half of the ELLs in this study identified instructors' negative feedback as particularly anxiety-provoking, indicating their worries about making mistakes, being criticized, being laughed at or losing face in front of their peers. Instead of completely pondering on the task at hand, anxious learners had a tendency to focus their

attention inward, self-deprecatory and constantly insecure about their performance (Gargalianou et al., 2016). They felt uncomfortable when their mistakes are pointed out fearing that a mistake will damage their reputation and make them seem less than perfect. As a result, they exhibit aversive attitude because they would rather not say anything than say something but risk an error.

These negative emotional reactions to learning circumstances create a barrier that might obstruct learning or language acquisition. A learner's cognitive process is heavily regulated by his or her emotional state, with L2 learning and acquisition being deterred if their affective filter is heightened, that is, if the circumstances surrounding the language learning make a learner feel under stress and unwilling to learn, creating a mental block that prevents input and hamper his or her cognition. All this emotional baggage gets in the way of achieving the primary objectives of foreign or second language learning, that is to communicate and exchange information and knowledge with others.

Anxiety was found to adversely affect the communicative skills of the learners' in this study. In their oral performance in the pre-test, hesitation, pauses, as well as fillers such as *um*, *er*, and *uh* were common features in their speech. Some learners displayed such signs of nervousness as rocking and stepping back and forth, blushing, and sweating. Meanwhile, their speech was characterized by pauses, difficulty finding words, and forgetfulness, and as a result, many of them had difficulties maintaining the flow of their ideas as they were speaking. Some, in spite of their preparedness, seemed to fail to recollect the things they had rehearsed. In addition to the learners' inability to concentrate, most of the learners struggled in the area of vocabulary although a few managed to use a range of vocabulary beyond what was covered in the lesson. In terms of grammar, they were found to use basic syntactical constructions, and many made occasional errors in such areas of verbs, prepositions, and word forms. Prosodic errors which affected intelligibility were found in several learners. Some learners would request for clarifications on how to pronounce words correctly on a few occasions.

Only through the creation of a student-friendly, low-stress educational setting can learners be stimulated to experiment, take risks, and produce exceptional performance, and selective error correction and group work serve this purpose well. The learners' L2 speaking anxiety was significantly reduced after the implementation of the two strategies as was evident in the mean score of their post-test, which was considerably higher than that of their pre-test. This improvement in their speaking performance could be attributed to the fact that they were more confident in their ability to communicate in L2 working under the selective error correction classroom (Ha et al., 2021) since the approach meets the learners' need for non-threatening correction. When implementing selective error correction, a teacher doesn't interrupt the learners' speech flow, allowing them the opportunity to complete their thoughts. As learners are delivering their ideas, the teacher observes and records grammatical, lexical, or pronunciation errors, noting only those that are directly related to the current topic, obstruct understanding, or occur persistently. Moreover, in selective error correction, less is more; that is, correcting only a limited number of errors at a time will increase the possibility of the corrections being retained in the learners' long-term memory (Mak, 2019). Therefore, rather than targeting all learners' mistakes, Teachers should take into account the learners' current command of L2, types of mistakes, and expectation toward error correction. Correction should be directed on a pattern of errors in learners' speech, and manageable portions of feedback that learners can handle should be provided to avoid overburdening them.

Selective error correction is less overwhelming for learners and enables teachers to concentrate on recurring errors. However, to yield the expected results, teachers play a pivotal

role in this. It is the teacher's responsibility to motivate individuals who are reluctant to speak up by showcasing a positive attitude toward learners' efforts to communicate. Teachers must not just tolerate and welcome learners' errors, but also provide them with an appraisal of their good performance in order to keep their morals high, nurture confidence and alleviate the stress as a result of correction (Daskalovska et al., 2012). Selective error correction requires teachers to not only attend to learners' mistakes, but also consistently demonstrate their own forbearance for them in order to develop an atmosphere of sincere acceptance to errors (Barnes & Lock, 2013). Furthermore, in order for learners to keep their affective filter in check and efficaciously learn the language, comprehensible feedback should be offered in a secure and comfortable educational atmosphere (Tang, 2016). Putting the learners in the humiliating position of being correction could be avoided by, for instance, notifying them about which errors would be addressed in an activity. This way, learners' attention is drawn to specific errors, reducing the range of correction.

Group work, in addition, empowers learners to take charge of their communicative tasks, and therefore relieves fear, promotes responsibility, and improves fluency. Teachers can step away from the traditional teacher-centered classroom design and serve as a facilitator with the learners as the lead speakers instead (Nunan, 2014). This learning circumstance generates a more intimate atmosphere that facilitates learners to take risk in using L2 by instilling a feeling of safety. Learners, as previously remarked, are concerned about looking foolish in front of their peers. When working collaboratively in a small group, they will come to understand that other learners share their feelings and no learner in a group will have to bear the responsibility or feel ashamed if the answer is incorrect. As a result, they will be less intimidated and more encouraged to experiment more creatively with L2. Group work also encourages more active participation of the learners and creates more opportunity to be engaged in communicative tasks (Dobao, 2014). It gives learners wider possibilities to establish and regulate communication, generate a wider range of grammatical constructions, and partake in negotiation of meaning. Even if learners may not be able to express their thoughts grammatically, creative language use still facilitates their interaction to achieve a shared objective. Accuracy may fall victim in these interactions, but more importantly they provide learners a practice for authentic use of L2. Learners also benefit from group work because they are exposed to comprehensible input, that is the language within their current level of competence (Lin, 2015). As they work together, the differences in linguistic proficiency allow learners to address each other's questions and provide explanations to ambiguous teaching points in manners that can be easily perceived by other learners. The benefit of this interaction goes both ways; the learner who raises the question will get a response, and the learner who responded to the question will have positive memory reinforcement by teaching it to his or her peers.

CONCLUSION

Despite the advances to improve learners' oral proficiency and to balance their acquisitions of the four skills has been the focus of ESL or EFL teaching across the globe, including Indonesia, many ELLs continue to struggle in oral activities. While such factors as limited exposure to authentic L2 use, the teaching to the tests, learners' passive characteristics, and the absence of communicative and interactive exercises in textbooks have been proposed as the serious challenges in the teaching of speaking skill, learner's anxiety remains the single most concerning stumbling block, threatening the development of the communicative

competence of ELLs across levels. Furthermore, while language anxiety is a common problem among EFL learners, it is still an extremely challenging issue for teachers to recognize and comprehend.

This research focused on identifying Indonesian EFL learners' levels of anxiety and remedying the undesirable effects of speaking anxiety through the concurrent classroom implementation of the selective error correction and group work. Selective error correction, which places an emphasis on fluency rather than interrupting the flow of learners' oral production of the language, fosters a classroom environment that encourages learners to speak up, while group work stimulates authentic interactions and encourages learners to contribute more actively in interactive use of the language within close-knit learning communities.

The findings indicated that the majority of the learners experienced high level of L2 speaking anxiety in their L2 oral performance, with fear of negative evaluation as the major contributing factor, followed consecutively by communication anxiety and test anxiety. The findings also suggested that selective error correction and group work was able to significantly mitigate learner's anxiety in their oral tasks. Selective error correction provided a secure environment for learners to experiment with the language and received corrective feedback that did not hamper their fluency and flow of speech. In addition, group work allowed the learners to be more engaged in meaningful communication and interaction, assume control of their own oral activities, and eventually freely use the target language without fear.

Oral activities should be a critical part of a foreign or second language class particularly when the setting to use the target language is not immediately available and when the primary objective of learning is effective and communicative command of the language, and its successful accomplishment rests heavily on the teacher's effort. In EFL lessons, teachers should take into accounts learners' anxiety and provide a low-stress, warm, and encouraging educational classroom climate. They should not overlook it nor dismiss it as an issue that learners must solve by themselves, and thus, rather than being stuck to traditional approaches that aim only to instill textbook content, teachers must seek such anxiety-relieving teaching approaches as selective error correction for the sake of empowering learners in accomplishing their objectives. Because each learner comes with distinct characteristics and responds differently to correction and feedback, error correction in oral performance requires meticulous handling and attention. Excessive correction may frustrate the learners and scare them away from communicating in L2, but their errors may end up becoming fossilized if constantly overlooked. Teachers should exercise correction with caution, draw the line between global and local errors, and provide correction selectively and constructively, so as not to stop the learners' train of thought.

Furthermore, the dramatic improvement in the learners' oral performance could be attributed to the fact that communicating, brainstorming ideas, and completing a task collectively in a group, instead of an entire class setting, promotes an anxiety-relieving atmosphere. When teachers allow learners to work cohesively in a group achieve a common objective, assisting one another and recognizing each other's strength, they will stop perceiving themselves as individuals and those very timid learners will gradually get the courage to open up to their peers. When they realize that they have their peers on their side, they will no longer assume that they are being evaluated adversely by them or that they are in a competition with the class' top brass, and as a result, they feel less anxious about L2 learning scenarios.

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