

A Study of Speaking Anxiety of English Study Program Students FKIP UNRI

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ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety is one of the common problems experienced in the classroom learning process. This study aims to identify the level of students' speaking anxiety and the factors causing speaking anxiety. This study was quantitative research with a descriptive quantitative design. Quantitative data were obtained through a questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), followed with qualitative data were collected through interviews. The population of this study consisted of fifth-semester students of the English Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Riau. The researcher used cluster sampling as the sampling technique, with three classes (5A, 5B, and 5C) as the sample, consisting of 115 students. The results of the study show that most students were at a relatively high level of anxiety, categorized as *Anxious* level. The findings indicate that anxiety was influenced by several factors, with fear of negative evaluation as the most dominant, followed by lack of understanding of the topic being discussed, lack of preparation, lack of confidence, and afraid of making mistakes. This study concludes that speaking anxiety is an experience felt by students that not only influenced by linguistic aspects but also by psychological factors and the learning environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the communication languages that is intensely used in communicating especially on an international scale is English, which also functions as a universal communication tool in various fields, including the field of higher education. Learning English in College is quite challenging for students because they are EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. As EFL students, students learn English which is not their first language, so it takes extra effort to use the language well in communicating.

Speaking is an important aspect of communication, often defined as the process of conveying thoughts, ideas, and emotions through verbal expression. Speaking is a communication process that involves the production and reception of information between the speaker and the listener [1]. This shows that speaking is not just producing sound, but also includes social interaction, in this study in the learning process. In learning process, speaking skills are needed because students are required to be able to convey ideas, participate in group discussions, and

make presentations using English. Communicative speaking activities are expected to create an interactive learning atmosphere and support the language mastery process optimally.

However, in practice, not all students are able to show good speaking performance. This issue is commonly encountered by many learners of foreign languages, particularly when speaking in English [2]. One of the most frequent problems is speaking anxiety. Speaking anxiety is a psychological condition defined by feelings of fear, nervousness, worry, and discomfort when individuals are required to speak. Speaking anxiety may manifest in various forms, such as hesitation, pressure, frustration, and other negative emotions that affect individuals' ability to communicate [3]. This condition is often reflected in behavioral changes, such as reduced willingness to speak, avoidance of verbal interaction, or even choosing to remain silent when asked to participate in classroom activities.

Speaking anxiety not only has an impact on the psychological aspect of students, but also directly affects their performance in speaking [4]. Students who experience anxiety tend to have difficulty expressing their ideas clearly, struggle with vocabulary use, pronunciation, and sentence structure, and show decreased fluency in speaking. Anxiety is one of the most influential affective factors in foreign language learning, as it can hinder the thinking process and reduce students' self-confidence [5].

This phenomenon of speaking anxiety is also observed among students of the English Study Program, FKIP, Universitas Riau. Based on preliminary observations, several indications of speaking anxiety were identified, such as students showing nervousness when asked to speak spontaneously, a tendency to avoid using English in classroom communication, and a lack of initiative to engage in verbal interaction. These conditions suggest that speaking anxiety remains a significant issue that requires attention in the learning process.

Based on those considerations, this study aims to examine speaking anxiety among students of the English Study Program, FKIP, Universitas Riau, particularly in identifying the levels of anxiety and the factors contributing to its occurrence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Speaking*

Speaking in an educational context involves interaction between teachers and students or among students, depending on how classroom activities are organised. [6] classify speaking into several types: imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and monologue, which range from simple repetition to extended speech.

Speaking plays an essential role in communication as it involves not only producing sounds but also expressing thoughts and feelings [7]. It also functions as a means of building social relationships and conveying information, which are important in both academic and professional contexts [8]. In education, speaking contributes to students' academic and social success, as it enables them to interact, share ideas, and deepen their understanding of the language [9]. Speaking serves social, expressive, and informative functions in classroom interaction.

Effective speaking consists of several key components, including pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. These elements help ensure that messages are delivered clearly and accurately. Fluency and comprehension are important, as they enable students to speak smoothly and respond appropriately in conversations

[10]. Despite its importance, students often face difficulties in speaking. One of the most significant problems is speaking anxiety, which can hinder their ability to express ideas.

2.2 Anxiety

Feelings of anxiety are commonly observed during classroom learning and are often accompanied by psychological and physiological responses. In this study, anxiety refers to a feeling of fear or worry that arises when individuals speak to express their ideas. Anxiety is an emotional reaction related to fear or worry, which may cause students to feel distracted, unfocused, and concerned about making mistakes or failing to convey information clearly.

Anxiety is often triggered by fear of negative evaluation from others, which can interfere with students' speaking performance [11]. Similarly, [12] explain that students may feel anxious in foreign language learning due to concerns about how their abilities are judged. This indicates that anxiety is closely related to individuals' perceptions of their own competence.

Anxiety also involves complex emotional and physical responses, such as fear, tension, trembling, sweating, and difficulty concentrating [13]. These symptoms can signal that students are experiencing anxiety when speaking in public or participating in classroom activities.

In terms of classification, anxiety can be divided into several types. [14] distinguishes between trait anxiety, which is a stable tendency to feel anxious, and state anxiety, which occurs

in specific situations [15]. There were categories of anxiety into trait, state, and situation-specific anxiety, where the latter refers to anxiety that appears only in particular contexts [16].

In this study, the focus is on situational anxiety, which emerges in certain speaking contexts. Students may feel anxious when presenting in front of lecturers but more relaxed when speaking with peers. This suggests that anxiety is largely influenced by situational factors, including environment, audience, and level of preparation [17].

2.3 Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety refers to feelings of fear or worry experienced when individuals communicate orally, which can hinder students' ability to participate actively in the classroom. Students with speaking anxiety often feel uncomfortable speaking in front of others and tend to avoid speaking situations [18]. This condition also lowers students' confidence, leading them to become passive participants rather than active speakers.

Speaking anxiety is closely related to emotional factors such as nervousness, embarrassment, and lack of confidence [18]. Students may also worry about their language preparation, fear negative evaluation, and feel uncertain about their performance or understanding of the topic. These factors, including fear of making mistakes and lack of preparation, can significantly hinder students' ability to express ideas clearly [19].

The level of speaking anxiety can be measured using the

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by [20], which categorises anxiety into five levels: very anxious, anxious, mildly anxious, relaxed, and very relaxed. Students at higher levels tend to experience strong fear and pressure that limit their communication, while those at lower levels feel more comfortable and confident in speaking [21].

Anxiety levels can be simplified into three categories: high, moderate, and low, representing varying degrees of fear and confidence in speaking situations [22]. However, this study adopts the classification proposed by [23] as it provides a more detailed description of students' speaking anxiety levels.

3. METHODS

This study used a descriptive quantitative design to describe the level of students' speaking anxiety and to identify the factors contributing in speaking anxiety. According to [24], this approach focuses on measuring phenomena through structured instruments to represent conditions as they naturally occur. The variable examined in this study is speaking anxiety in classroom learning. Since this study conducted with a descriptive quantitative design, the quantitative data (questionnaires) were collected first, followed by qualitative data (interviews) to further explain and interpret the findings more comprehensively [25].

This study was carried out at Universitas Riau, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, English Study Program. The population of this study consisted of all 5th semester students in the 2025/2026 academic year, totaling 116 students, who were divided into three classes: 5A, 5B, and 5C. Babbie (2020) states that a population is the entire set of elements that becomes the focus of a study

and possesses characteristics relevant to the research objectives. In this study, the population referred to students who had completed several speaking skill courses at the pre-intermediate to post-intermediate levels, and were therefore considered to have relevant experience in classroom speaking activities. Referring to [26], a sample is a subset of the population selected to represent the overall characteristics of the population. This study used cluster sampling as the sampling technique, there were three classes treated as sample units to obtain representative data.

The research instrument was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by [18], which has been proven to have validity and reliability in measuring foreign language anxiety. Out of the 33 available items, this study used 17 items that specifically represented speaking anxiety. These items covered various situations that potentially triggered anxiety, such as afraid of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, lack of preparation, and lack of understanding about topic being discussed. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), which was used to assess respondents' level of agreement with each statement.

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively using Microsoft Excel by calculating the total score of each respondent based on their responses to all questionnaire items. The total score was used as an indicator of the level of speaking anxiety, where the higher score indicated the higher level of anxiety. Furthermore, the scores were classified into five categories of anxiety levels, namely Very Relaxed, Relaxed, Mildly Anxious, Anxious, and Very Anxious, based on scales adapted from [18] and the Oetting Scale. The data were then analyzed in terms of frequency and percentage to identify the distribution and the most dominant level of anxiety among the respondents.

To complement the quantitative analysis, this study also utilized qualitative data through interviews with several

respondents who had high levels of speaking anxiety. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on criteria relevant to the research objectives, in which respondents were determined based on questionnaire results indicating high levels of speaking anxiety [27]. This selection ensured that the participants had relevant experience and were able to provide in-depth insights into the symptoms and factors contributing to speaking anxiety. The interview data were analyzed descriptively through transcription and categorized into the groups related to the factors causing anxiety.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Level of Students' Speaking Anxiety

The level of speaking anxiety was assessed through the questionnaire adapted from [18], as mentioned previously. Speaking

anxiety levels were determined based on several key indicators of speaking anxiety, including negative thoughts (cognitive), feelings of nervousness (emotional), physiological reactions (physical), and behavioral responses during speaking activities [28].

The cognitive aspect refers to students' negative expectations and fear of failure when speaking, while the emotional aspect is reflected in feelings of tension and worry. [22] stated experience such as trembling, sweating, and increased heart rate indicate the physiological dimension of anxiety, where behavioral indicators are observed through avoidance, silence, or low initiative to participate in classroom. The following table shows that the levels of speaking anxiety experienced by the participants varied, ranging from very relaxed to very anxious.

Table 1. Distribution of Speaking Anxiety Level

Level of Speaking Anxiety	Frequencies	Percentage
Very Anxious	23	20,00%
Anxious	48	41,74%
Mildly Anxious	30	26,09%
Relaxed	7	6,09%
Very Relaxed	7	6,09%
Total	115	100%

From a total of 115 participants, researcher found different variations of anxiety levels. First, there were 23 participants (20%) were in the Very Anxious level. The data showed that this group experienced very high speaking anxiety and tended to experience serious obstacles in expressing their ideas, such as extreme nervousness, fear of speaking, and a strong tendency to avoid verbal communication.

Second, 48 participants (41,74%) were in the Anxious level, representing the largest proportion of the participants. In this condition, most students experienced a considerable level of anxiety when speaking in class. Although they still attempted to participate, their anxiety likely affected their fluency, clarity, and overall confidence during communication.

Third, 30 participants (26,09%) classified as Mildly Anxious level, showed that they still experienced anxiety, but at a milder level and generally were able to manage these feelings when communicating. Last, there were 7 participants (6,09%) classified as Relaxed level and also 7 participants (6,09%) were in the Very Relaxed level, showing that only a small percentage of participants were truly confident and felt very comfortable speaking English without emotional pressure. This explanation indicates that overall, the level of participants speaking anxiety was at an average categorized as Anxious level.

4.2 Factors of Students' Speaking Anxiety

The findings of the study showed that several factors contributed to the participants' speaking anxiety.

Table 2. Distribution of Speaking Anxiety Factors

No.	Indicator	Total Score	Mean	Percentage
1	Afraid of making mistakes	1561	3,39	67,8%
2	Fear of negative evaluation	2055	3,57	71,4%
3	Lack of Confidence	2850	3,54	70,8%
4	Lack of preparation	1620	3,52	70,4%
5	Lack of understanding about topic being discussed	2033	3.54	70,8%

Among the five indicators analyzed, fear of negative evaluation was the most dominant factor, with a mean score of 3.57, a percentage of 71.4%, and a total score of 2055. These findings indicate that the participants had a high level of concern about being negatively evaluated by others when speaking in English. This concern was particularly related to aspects of grammar and pronunciation, which made the participants feel pressured and exposed when speaking in front of others. Most participants felt nervous when they became the center of attention and were worried about criticism from others.

"...I always think they will notice my mistakes or my pronunciation,"

"...I feel exposed because every small mistake feels obvious."

This condition indicates that social pressure and fear of negative evaluation were the dominant factor of speaking anxiety. This finding is in line with the study conducted by [29], who states that fear of judgment and criticism is the most influential factor in triggering speaking anxiety.

In addition, the factors of lack of confidence and lack of understanding of the topic being discussed showed the same percentage, 70.8%, with mean scores of 3.54 and total scores of 2850 and 2033, respectively. This similarity in percentage indicates that anxiety was influenced not only by internal psychological factors, such as low self-confidence, but also by cognitive factors, such as understanding of the learning

topic/material. The participants tended to feel nervous, hesitant, and uncomfortable when asked to speak because they doubted their own abilities and perceived that others had better speaking skill.

"...I feel like everyone speaks better than me,"

"...I feel embarrassed when I have to speak."

Furthermore, a lack of understanding of the topic made the participants feel confused, afraid of giving incorrect answers, and left behind compared to other participants. This finding is in line with [30], who states that self-doubt and feelings of embarrassment have a significant relationship with speaking anxiety. On the other hand, [21] also explain that a lack of understanding of the topic can trigger anxiety, as students may feel unprepared both linguistically and mentally.

"...when I don't really understand the topic, I feel confused and afraid to give the wrong answer,"

"...sometimes I feel like everyone understands except me."

The next factor was lack of preparation, which also contributed considerably to speaking anxiety, with a mean score of 3.52, a percentage of 70.4%, and a total score of 1620. These results indicate that participants tended to experience anxiety when they did not have adequate preparation

before speaking. In such situations, participants often felt panicked, confused, and had difficulty organizing the ideas they wanted to convey. This condition was further exacerbated when participants were required to speak spontaneously without having sufficient time to prepare.

"...when the lecturer suddenly asks me to speak, I panic and my mind goes blank,"

"...I know the answer but suddenly forget everything."

This finding is in line with [24], who state that lack of preparation is one of the main factors that hinder speaking performance. This condition occurs because insufficient preparation can trigger a high level of anxiety.

Meanwhile, the factor afraid of making mistakes had the lowest mean score compared to the other indicators, at 3.39, with a percentage of 67.8% and a total score of 1561. Nevertheless, this figure still indicates that this factor had a considerable influence on speaking anxiety. The participants tended to feel afraid and embarrassed when they had to speak, as they were concerned about making mistakes, particularly in terms of word choice, pronunciation, and sentence structure. This fear led participants to avoid speaking as a form of self-protection, which ultimately resulted in low participation in classroom interactions.

"...I'm afraid of making mistakes,"

"...sometimes I prefer to stay silent and let other students speak."

This finding is in line with [5], whose study explains that limited vocabulary, weaknesses in grammar, and pronunciation

problems can trigger anxiety. This condition affects students' participation by reducing their willingness to engage in speaking activities in the classroom.

The findings of this study indicate that all indicators were at relatively high levels, with percentages ranging from 67.8% to 71.4%. This suggests that speaking anxiety was influenced by various interrelated factors, including psychological, cognitive, and situational aspects. In addition, the anxiety experienced by the participants was not only manifested psychologically but was also accompanied by physiological responses, such as a pounding heart, trembling, and tension when speaking in front of the class [31]. Nevertheless, fear of negative evaluation standing out as the most dominant among those factors.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify the level of speaking anxiety among participants and the factors. The data obtained show that most participants have a relatively high level of speaking anxiety, with the average falling into the Anxious level. This study finds that such anxiety is influenced by several factors, with fear of negative evaluation as the most dominant factor, followed by lack of understanding of the topic being discussed, lack of preparation before speaking, lack of confidence, and afraid of making mistakes. These factors not only trigger psychological anxiety but also cause physiological symptoms that affect participants' speaking performance. These findings confirm that speaking anxiety remains a significant issue in English language learning in the classroom. Future research is expected to develop this study more comprehensively and expand its scope in relation to various contexts.

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