



English Speaking Anxiety Among EFL Learners at English Language Education Department Pekalongan University

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the extent of English-speaking anxiety and its underlying causes among EFL students in the English Language Education Department at the University of Pekalongan. Utilizing a mixed-method design, the study integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was administered to assess students' anxiety levels, followed by interviews with selected participants representing high, moderate, and low anxiety categories. Quantitative results showed that 76.7% of the students experienced moderate anxiety, 13.3% had low anxiety, and 10% reported high anxiety. Qualitative findings identified various contributing factors: internal ones such as limited vocabulary and pronunciation issues, and external ones including peer pressure, insufficient speaking opportunities, an unsupportive learning atmosphere, and negative past experiences. The study concluded that speaking anxiety was common among the participants and stemmed from both individual and situational influences. These findings highlighted the importance of creating supportive learning environments and implementing effective strategies to reduce anxiety and improve students' speaking performance.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The English language has become an essential tool of communication in a variety of fields and occupations in the age of globalization. Its function goes beyond casual communication to include professional development, international cooperation, and scholarly discussion. The most direct form of active communication among the four fundamental language skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening) is speaking. It helps learners to communicate concepts, work out meaning, and form bonds with others. However, for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, speaking remains one of the most anxiety-inducing activities in the language classroom (Hagoort, 2019).

One psychological barrier that frequently prevents students from performing well in oral communication is speaking anxiety. According to Noviyanti (2020), it has been identified as a major affective component that can compromise students' confidence, performance, and involvement. The dread of being criticized, of making mistakes, and of getting negative feedback sometimes makes speaking English more difficult for university students in teacher education programs in Indonesia. Students who suffer from this kind of anxiety may refrain from taking part in oral tests, presentations, or class debates, which eventually affects their language development and future preparedness for professional environments.

Speaking anxiety has a serious negative influence on students' academic performance and long-term communication skills, according to recent studies. The importance of overcoming emotional barriers in EFL education is underscored by Amoah and Yeboah (2021) that psychological barriers frequently surpass linguistic

obstacles in language learning. According to studies from Indonesia, speaking anxiety and performance are negatively correlated. This suggests that improving learners' self-confidence can result in less anxiety and improved speaking results (Hermagustiana et al., 2021). Despite these findings, localized research in the context of the English Language Education Department at the University of Pekalongan remains limited.

The present study examines English speaking anxiety among University of Pekalongan EFL students in order to fill this gap. It investigates the level of anxiety as well as the fundamental causes of it. This study's uniqueness comes from its mixed-method approach, which combines qualitative information from semi-structured interviews with quantitative data from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Unlike prior works, which often focus on high school settings (Nuraeni et al., 2024) or broader meta-syntheses (Mustamir, 2024), this study provides an in-depth analysis specific to university-level EFL learners in Indonesia.

This research offers special significance by combining pedagogical and psychological perspectives to suggest evidence-based, relevant methods for lowering speaking anxiety in EFL classes. It also highlights how anxiety experiences are shaped by the instructor, other learners, and the internal belief systems of the students. Teachers, curriculum developers, and lawmakers who are involved in EFL education can create a more encouraging atmosphere that promotes language proficiency and student confidence by being aware of these factors.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore English speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Horwitz et al. created the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which has 33 Likert-scale items, to gather quantitative data. The Google Form was filled up by thirty students from the University of Pekalongan's English Language Education Department. Students were divided into three anxiety levels based on their scores: low (33–92), moderate (93–117), and high (118–165) (Horwitz and Cope (1986, as cited in Erdiana 2020)).

Selected students from each category participated in semi-structured interviews as part of the qualitative phase to investigate the causes of their anxiety. According to Taqwa et al. (2022), the questions centered on coping mechanisms, classroom experiences, and emotional reactions. The interview data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman (1994, as cited in Rijali 2019)).

Descriptive analysis was performed on quantitative data, and the results were contextualized with qualitative observations. Cross-validation ensured reliability, and this combined method allowed for a more thorough comprehension of students' anxiety (Creswell, 2018). The study provides scientifically supported information about the causes and effects of speaking anxiety in EFL contexts in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings from both quantitative and qualitative phases of the research.

3.1. Research Findings

3.1.1 The Results of Students FLCAS Score

Thirty students were given the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to determine their levels of anxiety when speaking English. Their scores were categorized into three levels: low, moderate, and high.

Level of Student Anxiety	Total Student	Percentage
Low	4	13.3%
Moderate	23	76.7%
High	3	10%
Total	30	100%

From the results above, the majority of students (76.7%) felt moderate speaking anxiety, followed by low anxiety (13.3%) and high anxiety (10%). This suggests that students frequently struggle with speaking anxiety, although not always to a severe level.

3.1.2 Analysis of Students' Interview

1. Analysis of Interviews on Students' Low Anxiety Levels

According to the results of their interviews, students with low anxiety levels claim their confidence in their ability to speak English to frequent practice and self-awareness of their skills. They typically speak in class with a relaxed attitude and are not anxious about making errors because they see them as a necessary part of the learning process.

These students manage their anxiety by planning and, when needed, use relaxing techniques. Additionally, they stress the value of constant practice and keeping an optimistic outlook, inspiring friends to be self-assured and unafraid of mistakes.

2. Analysis of Interviews on Students' Moderate Anxiety Levels

In general, students with moderate anxiety feel anxious about speaking English, especially when called upon unexpectedly or in impromptu settings. With preparation and self-assurance, anxiety may often be controlled while it is present. These students say that practice, familiarity, and a positive atmosphere boost their confidence.

Their anxiety levels are greatly impacted by elements like the lecturer's attitude and the classroom environment. Negative circumstances, such as being intimidated, can make them more anxious. Instead of speaking in formal academic contexts, individuals find comfort in conversing with peers, improving their pronunciation and vocabulary, and preparing ahead of time as coping mechanisms.

3. Analysis of Interviews on Students' High Anxiety Levels

When speaking English in class, students with high anxiety levels state that they feel very nervous. This is frequently caused by their worry of making mistakes, receiving a poor grade, and being judged by their peers. Tasks involving spontaneous speaking, like giving a presentation without notes or being asked to speak out of the blue, make them particularly nervous. These students' tendency to overanalyse how other people see them impairs their speaking abilities even more.

They use self-encouragement, pronunciation drills, and content review to try to prepare as much as they can. Avoidance techniques, such as avoiding eye contact with the audience, are also used by some. Despite their difficulties, they show a desire to become better and frequently stress that in order to feel more at ease, they need peer support and a non-judgmental setting.

3.2. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate anxiety related to speaking English among University of Pekalongan EFL students. According to the FLCAS results, the majority of students had moderate anxiety, which is consistent with the findings of Nuraeni et al. (2024), who discovered comparable levels among high school students. Anxiety like this can have a big impact on long-term linguistic confidence and academic achievement.

The results of the interviews showed that anxiety had both external and internal causes. Similar to Quvanch et al. (2024), linguistic difficulties such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary gaps were frequent. Similar to Mustamir (2024), psychological characteristics such as perfectionism, low self-esteem, and fear of failure worsened during public speaking.

Externally, limited speaking opportunities, unsupportive environments, and peer pressure worsened anxiety, consistent with prior studies. Furthermore, students' perception that English is a difficult language implies that mindset-based interventions could be required in addition to conventional teaching methods.

This study draws attention to the particular psychological and environmental difficulties faced by EFL students at Indonesian universities by combining FLCAS results with interview observations. It extends previous research by offering a university-level focus (cf. Nuraeni et al., 2024), deepening psychological analysis (cf. Mustamir, 2024), and contextualizing cultural factors found in Afghan learners (cf. Quvanch et al., 2024) within the Indonesian setting.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the level of English speaking anxiety and the contributing factors among EFL learners in the English Language Education Departement at the University of Pekalongan. As mentioned in the Introduction, the study aimed to provide insights on the psychological obstacles that English speakers encounter and to identify solutions that might foster confidence in language acquisition.

According to the results of the FLCAS questionnaires, most students report having moderate anxiety, while a smaller proportion report having low or high levels of anxiety. These findings supported the idea that speaking anxiety is a serious but variable problem for EFL students. The interview analysis further deepened this understanding by identifying the specific internal (e.g., fear of mistakes, self-perception) and external (e.g., classroom environment, peer pressure, teacher behavior) factors influencing students' anxiety. These results provide new and localized information from an Indonesian university setting while also being consistent with other research.

In conclusion, recognizing and addressing English-speaking anxiety is crucial for improving students' communicative competence. By understanding its causes and manifestations, educators can better support learners in overcoming barriers and achieving language fluency with greater confidence.

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