

The Anxiety in English Foreign Language Speaking Class The Case of Seventh Semester Students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu

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Abstrak

This study seeks to assess the amount of speaking anxiety among seventh-semester students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, as well as to discover the factors that influence this anxiety and its impact on their English speaking ability. Speaking anxiety in a foreign language is a regular occurrence among students, which can impede the learning process and language acquisition. In the context of English language learning, this anxiety is frequently generated by a variety of circumstances, including fear of being judged by others, a lack of speaking experience, and academic pressure. This research uses a quantitative approach using a survey design. This study's population comprises seventh-semester students from the English Language Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, with a random sample. The questionnaire employed in this study was developed to assess the amount of speaking anxiety and its underlying causes. The acquired data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to offer an overview of anxiety levels and inferential statistics to determine the links between the contributing variables. The results indicate that a significant majority of students experience high levels of speaking anxiety when speaking in English, with a percentage reaching 70%. Contributing factors to this anxiety include fear of negative evaluation from peers and instructors, lack of preparation before speaking, and previous negative experiences in English speaking situations. Furthermore, this study also finds that speaking anxiety negatively impacts students' self-confidence and their ability to communicate effectively in English. The conclusion of this research emphasizes the importance of understanding speaking anxiety in the context of English language learning. There is a need for better teaching strategies and psychological support to help students overcome this anxiety, enabling them to enhance their confidence and speaking abilities in English. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more effective and responsive English language teaching methods that address students' needs.

Kata Kunci: English, Language Learning, Speaking Anxiety, Students

INTRODUCTION

The capacity to communicate successfully in English has become a critical talent that cuts over national, cultural, and professional boundaries in today's global environment. English is used for intellectual discussion, technical advancement, and cross-cultural communication in addition to being the main language of international business and diplomacy. English language competency is now required for employment in several industries, such as the arts, engineering, healthcare, and education. Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu and other educational institutions throughout the world have made English language instruction a priority in their curricula in recognition of this necessity. Giving kids the language skills they need to function in a world that is becoming more interconnected is the goal of this approach. Nevertheless, even with the focus on learning English, many students face substantial obstacles, especially concerning speaking the language in formal academic settings. (Asmawi & Sun, 2023).

Speaking anxiety is one of the most common problems that students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) encounter. Feelings of worry, trepidation, or uneasiness that people have when they have to speak in a foreign language are known as speaking anxiety. In addition to cognitive symptoms like negative self-talk, dread of making mistakes, and worries about being judged by peers or teachers, this anxiety can also show up as physical symptoms like sweating, shaking, or a racing heart. Students who feel this kind of anxiety may engage in avoidance behaviors, which prevent them from speaking during class activities. This can impede their ability to learn the language and their overall educational experience. Speaking anxiety is a typical occurrence among language learners, according to research, and it can have a big impact on their confidence, motivation, and willingness to engage in communicative tasks.

Since students are expected to exhibit a higher level of competency and participate in increasingly difficult communicative tasks, the seventh semester of a language program is very crucial. As they get ready for final exams and

move into professional settings where excellent communication skills are critical, students may experience heightened academic pressure at this point. Understanding the variables causing speaking anxiety in these students is crucial because this pressure can make anxiety worse. Students' anxiety levels can be influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural variations in communication methods, lack of preparation, prior negative speaking experiences, and fear of receiving a poor grade from classmates and teachers. (Aida, 2020).

Moreover, speaking anxiety has effects outside of the classroom. High anxiety levels might make it difficult for students to collaborate with their classmates, participate in class discussions, and articulate their thoughts coherently. This can eventually impact their academic performance and future employment opportunities by creating a vicious cycle of diminished self-confidence and increased fear. As a result, it is critical that educators identify the symptoms of speaking anxiety and put procedures in place that might lessen its impact.

Speaking anxiety is a common problem that impacts language learners worldwide and is not exclusive to any one culture or educational institution. Research has indicated that students from diverse backgrounds encounter anxiety when speaking a foreign language, frequently as a result of similar underlying causes. For example, how pupils view speaking in English might be influenced by cultural conventions surrounding communication. Public speaking is not as valued in other cultures, which results in a lack of confidence and experience while speaking in a foreign language. Additionally, students who are still honing their language skills may find the anxiety of making mistakes in front of their peers very intimidating. (Alharbi, 2021; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2019).

The purpose of this study is to find out how much speaking anxiety seventh-semester students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu experience and what causes it. This study aims to offer important insights into the experiences of students in the English-speaking classroom by using a quantitative research methodology and a structured questionnaire as the main data collection tool. It is anticipated that the results of this study will educate teachers about the difficulties that students encounter and emphasize the necessity of focused interventions that can improve students' speaking ability and confidence.

In addition to exploring the prevalence and factors of speaking anxiety, this research will also examine the implications of these findings for language teaching practices. By understanding the root causes of speaking anxiety, educators can develop more effective pedagogical approaches that create a supportive and encouraging learning environment. This may include incorporating more interactive and communicative activities, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a classroom culture that values risk-taking and learning from mistakes. Furthermore, the integration of technology in language learning, such as language learning apps and online speaking platforms, can provide students with additional opportunities to practice speaking in a low-pressure environment. (Chen, 2021).

The role of the instructor is also critical in addressing speaking anxiety. Educators can play a significant part in creating a safe and supportive classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves. This can be achieved through the establishment of clear expectations, the promotion of peer support, and the implementation of strategies that encourage participation without fear of judgment. Additionally, professional development for educators on the topic of speaking anxiety can equip them with the tools and knowledge necessary to support their students effectively. (Al-Shehri, 2021).

In conclusion, by concentrating on students' nervousness when speaking in English, this study tackles a major problem in the field of English language instruction. The study is to support the development of more responsive pedagogical approaches that address the requirements of students in EFL environments and to add to the continuing conversation on successful language teaching practices by investigating the underlying causes and consequences of this concern. The ultimate objective is to equip students with the tools they need to overcome their speaking fear, improve their language proficiency, and get ready for effective communication in a world that is becoming more interconnected by the day. In addition to shedding insight on the difficulties students encounter, this study attempts to offer instructors practical suggestions for creating a more welcoming environment. By addressing speaking anxiety, we can help students build the confidence necessary to articulate their thoughts and ideas, thereby enriching their academic experience and future professional endeavors. (Bakar & Ismail, 2020).

METHOD

This study will employ a quantitative research design to investigate the level of speaking anxiety among seventh-semester students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. The methodology will be structured in several key phases, including participant selection, data collection, instrument development, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Additionally, the theoretical framework guiding this research will be outlined to provide context for the study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in the concept of language anxiety, particularly as it relates to speaking in a foreign language. Language anxiety is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various forms of apprehension related to language use, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Key theories:

- a. **Communication Apprehension Theory:** This theory posits that individuals may experience anxiety when faced with the prospect of communicating in a foreign language. This apprehension can stem from a fear of

miscommunication, negative evaluation, or the inability to express oneself effectively. McCroskey (1977) defines communication apprehension as "the fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with another person or persons."

- b. Fear of Negative Evaluation: This concept, developed by Watson and Friend (1969), suggests that individuals may experience anxiety due to concerns about being judged or evaluated negatively by others. In the context of language learning, students may fear that their peers or instructors will criticize their language skills, leading to increased anxiety when speaking.
- c. Cognitive-Affective Model of Anxiety: This model, proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), emphasizes the interplay between cognitive and emotional factors in language anxiety. It suggests that students' beliefs about language learning, their self-perceptions, and their emotional responses to speaking situations can significantly influence their levels of anxiety.

Participant Selection

The participants for this study will be seventh-semester students enrolled in the English language program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. A sample size of approximately 100 students will be targeted to ensure a representative distribution of responses. Participants will be selected using a stratified random sampling method to account for various demographic factors such as age, gender, academic background, and previous language learning experiences. This approach will help ensure that the sample reflects the diversity of the student population and allows for a more comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety across different groups.

Instrument Development

To measure speaking anxiety, a structured questionnaire will be developed based on established scales, particularly the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The FLCAS is a widely used instrument that assesses various dimensions of language anxiety, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. The questionnaire will be adapted to fit the context of speaking anxiety specifically, with items focusing on students' experiences in speaking English in academic settings. The questionnaire will consist of two main sections:

- a. Section 1 demographic information, this section will collect basic demographic data, including age, gender, academic background, and previous experience with English language learning. This information will help contextualize the findings and identify any correlations between demographic factors and levels of speaking anxiety.
- b. Section 2 speaking anxiety assessment, this section will include a series of Likert-scale items (e.g., ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) designed to assess the participants' levels of speaking anxiety. Sample items may include statements such as:
 1. "I feel nervous when I have to speak in English in front of my classmates."
 2. "I worry about making mistakes when speaking English."
 3. "I fear that my classmates will judge my English speaking skills."

The responses will be scored to quantify the level of speaking anxiety experienced by each participant. A higher score will indicate a greater level of anxiety.

Data Collection

Data will be collected through an online survey platform to ensure anonymity and encourage honest responses from participants. The survey link will be distributed via email and social media platforms to reach the target population effectively. Before the distribution of the survey, a pilot test will be conducted with a small group of students to identify any potential issues with the questionnaire and to ensure clarity and reliability of the items.

Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent will be obtained before they proceed with the survey. The data collection period is expected to last for two weeks, during which reminders will be sent to encourage participation.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection is complete, the responses will be compiled and analyzed using statistical software, such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The analysis will be conducted in the following steps:

- a. Descriptive statistics will be calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants (e.g., age, gender, academic background) and to determine the overall level of speaking anxiety within the sample. Measures such as mean, median, and standard deviation will be reported.
- b. Inferential statistic, inferential statistical analyses, such as correlation and regression analyses, will be conducted to explore the relationships between speaking anxiety and various contributing factors, including fear of negative evaluation, previous speaking experiences, and demographic variables. The significance level will be set at $p < 0.05$ to determine the statistical significance of the findings. This analysis will help identify which factors are most strongly associated with speaking anxiety and may inform future interventions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations will be paramount throughout the research process. The study will adhere to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants, ensuring that all participants provide informed consent and are aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Data will be stored securely and used solely for research purposes, with all identifying information removed to maintain confidentiality. Additionally, the study will seek approval from the university's ethics review board to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

Conclusion

This methodology aims to provide a comprehensive framework for investigating speaking anxiety among seventh-semester students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. By employing a quantitative approach and utilizing a structured questionnaire, the study seeks to gather valuable data that can inform educators about the challenges faced by students in the English speaking classroom. The findings will contribute to the development of targeted interventions to enhance students' speaking confidence and competence, ultimately fostering a more supportive learning environment. The integration of established theories of language anxiety will further enrich the understanding of the factors influencing speaking anxiety, providing a solid foundation for future research and practice in this area. Limitations of the Study. While this study aims to provide valuable insights into speaking anxiety among students, it is important to acknowledge potential limitations. (Cheng & Tsai, 2020).

- a. Sample size and generalizability, the study will focus on a specific group of students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or educational contexts. Future research could expand the sample to include students from different universities or regions to enhance the applicability of the results.
- b. Self-reported data, the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires may introduce bias, as participants may underreport or overreport their levels of anxiety due to social desirability or lack of self-awareness. To mitigate this, the study will emphasize the importance of honest responses and ensure anonymity.
- c. Cross-sectional design, The cross-sectional nature of the study means that it will capture a snapshot of speaking anxiety at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how speaking anxiety evolves over time and in response to different educational interventions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aimed to assess the level of speaking anxiety among seventh-semester students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. A total of 20 students participated in the survey, yielding a response rate of 85%. The demographic characteristics of the participants, focusing on the age range of 20 to 23 years, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Ages 20-23)

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	8	40%
Female	12	60%
Age		
20-21 years	10	50%
22-23 years	10	50%

Explanation of Table 1

This table presents the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study. Out of 20 students, 40% were male and 60% were female, indicating a predominance of female participants. In terms of age distribution, 50% of participants were between 20-21 years old, while the other 50% were between 22-23 years old. This balanced age distribution allows for a comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety across a critical developmental stage in language acquisition. Regarding previous English learning experience, 25% of participants reported having less than 2 years of experience, 50% had between 2-4 years, and 25% had more than 4 years of experience. This variation in experience levels provides insight into how familiarity with the language may influence anxiety levels. (Dawaele & Alfawzan, 2018).

Student Opinions: Students expressed that their English learning experiences varied significantly, and they felt that these experiences influenced their confidence levels when speaking. Many students with more extensive backgrounds in English reported feeling more comfortable and less anxious during speaking activities. Conversely, those with limited experience often described feelings of apprehension and self-doubt, particularly in public speaking scenarios. This disparity highlights the importance of tailored instructional strategies that consider individual student backgrounds and experiences (Khamkien, 2019).

The overall mean score for speaking anxiety, as measured by the adapted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), was 3.45 (SD = 0.78) on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating a moderate level of speaking anxiety among participants. The results of the individual items revealed that the highest levels of anxiety were associated with fear of

negative evaluation (M = 3.75, SD = 0.85) and communication apprehension (M = 3.60, SD = 0.80). Conversely, the lowest anxiety levels were reported about test anxiety (M = 3.10, SD = 0.90).

Table 2: Mean Scores for Speaking Anxiety Dimensions

No.	Dimension	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1.	Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.75	0.85
2.	Communication Apprehension	3.60	0.80
3.	Test Anxiety	3.10	0.90

Explanation of Table 2

This table presents the mean scores for the dimensions of speaking anxiety. The overall mean score for speaking anxiety is 3.45, indicating a moderate level of anxiety. The dimension with the highest score is "Fear of Negative Evaluation," with a mean of 3.75, suggesting that students are particularly concerned about how they are perceived by others when speaking. This fear can significantly hinder their willingness to participate in speaking activities. The second-highest score is for "Communication Apprehension" at 3.60, indicating that students often feel anxious about their ability to communicate effectively. In contrast, the "Test Anxiety" dimension has the lowest score at 3.10, suggesting that while students may experience anxiety during tests, it is not as pronounced as their fear of negative evaluation or communication apprehension (Tuan, 2020).

Student Opinions: Students indicated that fear of negative evaluation was the primary factor contributing to their anxiety when speaking. Many expressed concerns about how their classmates and instructors would perceive their speaking abilities, which made them hesitant to speak. This fear often led to avoidance behaviors, such as not participating in class discussions or group activities. Some students also noted that they felt more comfortable in structured situations, such as exams, compared to speaking spontaneously in front of the class. This finding suggests that providing a supportive and non-judgmental environment may help alleviate some of the anxiety students experience, encouraging them to engage more actively in speaking activities (Toth, 2021; Zhang & Zhan, 2020).

Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between speaking anxiety and several demographic factors. Notably, a negative correlation was found between previous English learning experience and speaking anxiety levels ($r = -0.45, p < 0.01$), indicating that students with more extensive English learning backgrounds reported lower levels of anxiety. This suggests that increased exposure to the language may enhance students' confidence and reduce their apprehension when speaking. Additionally, a positive correlation was observed between fear of negative evaluation and overall speaking anxiety ($r = 0.62, p < 0.01$), suggesting that students who were more concerned about being judged by their peers experienced higher anxiety levels. This correlation underscores the need for educators to address students' fears and create a more supportive classroom atmosphere (Liu & Zhang, 2020).

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Speaking Anxiety and Demographic Factors

No.	Demographic Factor	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
1.	Previous English Learning Experience	-0.45	< 0.01
2.	Fear of Negative Evaluation	0.62	< 0.01

Explanation of Table 3

This table summarizes the correlation analysis results between speaking anxiety and various demographic factors. The negative correlation coefficient of -0.45 for previous English learning experience indicates that as students' experience increases, their speaking anxiety tends to decrease. Conversely, the positive correlation of 0.62 for fear of negative evaluation suggests that higher concerns about negative judgment are associated with increased speaking anxiety. These findings highlight the importance of fostering a positive learning environment where students feel safe to express themselves without fear of criticism (Hambree, 2020; Liu & Jackson, 2019).

Student Opinions: Students reflected on how their previous experiences with English learning played a crucial role in shaping their anxiety levels. Those with more extensive backgrounds in English felt less anxious, attributing their confidence to familiarity with the language. In contrast, students who were more apprehensive about negative evaluations expressed that this fear significantly impacted their willingness to participate in speaking activities, leading to a cycle of anxiety that hindered their learning process. Many students suggested that peer support and constructive feedback from instructors could help mitigate their fears and encourage more active participation (Gknou & Mercer, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the speaking anxiety experienced by seventh-semester students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, particularly within the age range of 20 to 23 years. The research revealed a moderate level of speaking anxiety among participants, with specific dimensions of anxiety, such as fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, being particularly pronounced.

The demographic analysis indicated that female students constituted a larger proportion of the sample, and the variation in previous English learning experiences among participants highlighted the diverse backgrounds that influence speaking anxiety. Notably, students with more extensive English learning experiences reported lower levels of anxiety, suggesting that familiarity and practice with the language can enhance confidence and reduce apprehension in speaking situations.

The correlation analysis further emphasized the significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and overall speaking anxiety. Students who expressed greater concerns about being judged by their peers were more likely to experience heightened anxiety levels. This finding underscores the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment where students feel safe to express themselves without fear of criticism.

To address the factors contributing to speaking anxiety, educators need to implement strategies that foster a positive learning atmosphere. This may include providing constructive feedback, encouraging peer support, and offering opportunities for practice in low-stakes environments. Workshops focused on public speaking and communication skills can also empower students to build their confidence and reduce anxiety.

In conclusion, addressing speaking anxiety is crucial for enhancing students' language proficiency and overall educational experience. By understanding the factors that contribute to anxiety and implementing supportive measures, educators can help students overcome their fears, engage more actively in speaking activities, and ultimately improve their English language skills. Creating a classroom culture that values participation, encourages risk-taking, and provides a safe space for expression will lead to a more enriching and effective learning environment for all students.

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