

FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY: A MIXED METHOD STUDY OF THE THIRD-YEAR STUDENT OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT UNIVERSITY RIAU

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Abstract: *This research analyses about the factors contributing to speaking anxiety among third-year students in the English Department at University Riau. It also explores strategies that can help reduce this anxiety and enhance students' ability to communicate effectively in English. Speaking anxiety is a common challenge faced by learners of English as a foreign language, often stemming from fear of judgment, lack of confidence, and inadequate preparation. These factors not only hinder students' participation in class but also impede their overall language acquisition process. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study collected data from 115 participants using the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSA) questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that over half of the participants (53.33%) reported experiencing "very anxious" levels of speaking anxiety, indicating the prevalence and severity of the issue. Students identified specific causes of their anxiety, including fear of making mistakes, being evaluated negatively by peers and instructors, and feelings of linguistic inadequacy. To address these challenges, the study identified several strategies that students found effective. Among these were thorough preparation before speaking tasks, consistent practice to build familiarity and fluency, and adopting a positive mindset to reduce fear and build self-assurance. These strategies were found to significantly alleviate anxiety and enable students to approach speaking activities with greater confidence and ease.*

Keywords: *Speaking anxiety, English proficiency, mixed-method, students' confidence*

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI KECEMASAN BERBICARA SISWA: STUDI METODE CAMPURAN PADA MAHASISWA TAHUN KETIGA JURUSAN BAHASA INGGRIS DI UNIVERSITAS RIAU

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis tentang faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap kecemasan berbicara di kalangan mahasiswa tahun ketiga Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Riau. Buku ini juga mengeksplorasi strategi yang dapat membantu mengurangi kecemasan ini dan meningkatkan kemampuan siswa untuk berkomunikasi secara efektif dalam bahasa Inggris. Kecemasan berbicara adalah tantangan umum yang dihadapi oleh pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing, sering kali berasal dari rasa takut akan penilaian, kurang percaya diri, dan persiapan yang tidak memadai. Faktor-faktor ini tidak hanya menghambat partisipasi siswa di kelas tetapi juga menghambat proses pemerolehan bahasa mereka secara keseluruhan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data dari 115 peserta menggunakan kuesioner Skala Kecemasan Berbicara Bahasa Asing (FLSA) dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa lebih dari separuh peserta (53,33%) melaporkan mengalami tingkat kecemasan berbicara “sangat cemas”, yang menunjukkan prevalensi dan tingkat keparahan masalah tersebut. Siswa mengidentifikasi penyebab spesifik dari kecemasan mereka, termasuk ketakutan membuat kesalahan, dievaluasi secara negatif oleh teman sebaya dan instruktur, dan perasaan tidak mampu berbahasa. Untuk mengatasi tantangan ini, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi beberapa strategi yang menurut siswa efektif. Diantaranya adalah persiapan yang matang sebelum tugas berbicara, latihan yang konsisten untuk membangun keakraban dan kefasihan, serta menerapkan pola pikir positif untuk mengurangi rasa takut dan membangun rasa percaya diri. Strategi-strategi ini terbukti secara signifikan mengurangi kecemasan dan memungkinkan siswa melakukan aktivitas berbicara dengan lebih percaya diri dan mudah.

Kata Kunci: Kecemasan Berbicara, Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris, Metode Campuran, Kepercayaan diri siswa.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as a fundamental skill for learners of English as a foreign language. It is not only essential for effective communication but also serves as a benchmark for overall language proficiency. According to Brown (2004), speaking is one of the productive skills that requires learners to articulate their thoughts fluently and accurately while considering pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. However, speaking often presents unique challenges for learners due to psychological barriers, most notably anxiety. Anxiety, as defined by Audia et al (2019) is a specific emotional reaction characterized by apprehension, nervousness, and worry that interferes with language learning, especially in speaking tasks.

This study analysis the factors contributing to speaking anxiety and examines strategies to mitigate it, ultimately aiming to enhance students' confidence and fluency in English communication. Speaking anxiety, often referred to as foreign language anxiety, is influenced by various interrelated factors. These include fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and fear of negative evaluation, which can result in avoidance behaviour and reduced participation in speaking activities Putri et al (2023). Students experiencing anxiety often find it difficult to organize their thoughts or articulate them clearly, leading to a cycle of self-doubt and hesitation.

Furthermore, speaking involves not only linguistic skills but also cognitive and psychological processes. According to Widdowson (1984), speaking requires learners to process and produce language in real-time, making it a demanding task. This demand is amplified by the pressure to perform in front of peers or instructors, which often triggers higher levels of anxiety. Cheng et al (2023) also highlighted that speaking in a second language requires learners to balance linguistic accuracy with fluency, creating additional stressors for students who perceive their language skills as inadequate.

To address these challenges, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding the underlying factors contributing to speaking anxiety and implementing strategies to overcome them. Strategies such as consistent practice, preparation before speaking tasks, and adopting a positive mindset have been found effective in reducing anxiety levels Kondo and Ying-Ling (2017). Creating a supportive classroom environment where students feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment is equally critical. By tackling these issues, educators can foster a learning atmosphere that promotes active participation and builds learners' confidence.

This study aims not only to identify the causes of speaking anxiety but also to explore practical solutions that can empower students to improve their speaking abilities. Enhancing their confidence and fluency will not only contribute to academic success but also equip students with the communication skills needed for their professional and social lives.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods to provide broader insight about anxiety in speaking English to third year student of English Department at University Riau. As stated by Cresswell (2017) mixed methods are the collecting, analysis, and “mixing” of quantitative and qualitative data to comprehend a study problem. This study employed

the explanatory design, which begins with gathering and analysis quantitative data, followed by collecting and analysis qualitative data.

To determine the sample of the research, random sampling technique was used and 75 students out of 115 population were chosen. providing a broad and diverse sample for the study. The Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSA) suggested by Hortwiz et al (1986) were distributed to the students to find out the level of students' speaking anxiety, and to obtain the qualitative data, semi-structured interview was conducted to find out the factors contributed to it. To get the levels of students' speaking anxiety, there are several steps done by the writer:

1. Scoring items

The filled-questionnaires were collected to be checked and scored for each item. There are 33 statements with different scores based on Likert's Scale.

Table 1. Likert's scoring table adopt from Hortwiz et al (1986)

Scoring					
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Positive question	5	4	3	2	1
Negative question	1	2	3	4	5

2. Categorizing the levels of students speaking anxiety

After the total score from the students' result of FLCAS gained, it was categorized into some levels of anxiety based on Alrabai (2014).

Table 2. Anxiety level scale

Scale	Level anxiety
109-165	Very anxious
99-108	Anxious
90-98	Mildly anxious
83-89	Relaxed

After knowing the levels of the anxiety, the results were converted into a percent. The students with the highest level of anxiety were invited to do the interview to find out the factors contributed to it.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research results are presented based on data collected through the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSA) questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

1. The Result of the Questionnaire

The result of the questionnaire is presented below. The result shows that the levels of speaking anxiety experienced by the students varied ranging from very relaxed to very anxious.

Table 3. Distribution of the Students' Anxiety Levels

Score Range of Anxiety	Level	Number of students	Percentage
33-82	Very relaxed	-	-
83-89	Relaxed	6	(8 %)
90-98	Mildly Anxious	8	(10.67%)
99-108	Anxious	21	(28%)
109-165	Very Anxious	40	(53.33%)

The majority of students (53.33%) were categorized as "very anxious," indicating a high prevalence of speaking anxiety. The remaining students were distributed across "anxious" (28.00%), "mildly anxious" (10.67%), and "relaxed" (8.00%). No students reported feeling "very relaxed. The results from the semi-structured interviews are categorized into key themes based on students' responses regarding the factor and strategies of speaking anxiety.

1. Based on the interview, students revealed some factors that cause them to experience anxiety, including:

Table 4. Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety

Theme	Descriptions
Fear of Judgment	Concerns about being evaluated negatively by peers or instructors during speaking tasks.
Lack of Confidence	Feelings of insecurity about one's ability to pronounce words correctly, use appropriate grammar, and speak fluently.
Low English Proficiency	Limited vocabulary, difficulty with pronunciation, and lack of fluency increase anxiety levels.
Fear of Making Mistakes	Apprehension about making errors in speech and the fear of embarrassment in front of others.
Lack of Preparation	Insufficient practice or readiness for speaking tasks leads to nervousness and hesitation.
Task Familiarity	Anxiety increases when students are unfamiliar with the topic or task, making it harder to articulate ideas.
Communication Apprehension	Discomfort and anxiety experienced when speaking in front of an audience or during group discussions.
Performance Anxiety	Stress and fear associated with being the centre of attention, often resulting in physical symptoms like trembling or sweating.

2. Strategies to Reduce Students' Speaking Anxiety

Students who feel significant levels of anxiety also try to reduce their anxiety. Most of students who were interviewed employed similar techniques, such practicing many exercises, to reduce their feelings of anxiety. Based on interviews students revealed several strategies they used when experiencing anxiety, as follows:

Table 5. Strategies to Manage Speaking Anxiety

Theme	Descriptions
Preparation and Practice	Students emphasized the importance of thorough preparation before speaking tasks. This included rehearsing speeches, organizing ideas, and simulating presentations to build familiarity and reduce nervousness.
Positive Thinking	Students adopted a mindset focused on self-belief and growth, reminding themselves that mistakes are a natural part of learning and should not discourage participation. This helped them maintain calmness and confidence during speaking tasks.
Peer Collaboration	Practicing speaking with classmates or trusted peers provided a supportive environment where students could gain feedback and build confidence without fear of judgment.
Self-Regulation Techniques	Techniques such as deep breathing, pausing to gather thoughts, and maintaining a calm demeanor were frequently employed to manage physical symptoms of anxiety during speaking activities.
Using Notes as a Safety Net	Students used notes or outlines during presentations as a fallback to maintain focus and reduce the fear of forgetting key points, helping them stay composed and confident.
Using Technology and Applications	Language learning apps and digital tools allowed students to practice speaking in a low-pressure environment, improving fluency and familiarity with the language without immediate judgment from others.
Building Familiarity with Topics	Students reported that being more familiar with the speaking topic helped reduce anxiety, as they felt more prepared and knowledgeable, which increased their confidence during the task.
Feedback and Encouragement	Supportive feedback from instructors and peers played a crucial role in alleviating students' fear of judgment, boosting their confidence, and encouraging more active participation in speaking tasks.

DISCUSSION

Here are four main factors that cause students' speaking anxiety regarding speaking performance, namely: low English proficiency, lack of self-confidence, lack of familiarity with the task, and fear of making mistakes.

The first factor found English proficiency, which refers to students' ability to use English to create and communicate meaning in spoken and written contexts, was found to be the most significant factor in generating anxiety. The inability to express oneself fluently and accurately in English often makes students feel anxious and nervous.

This research is that to reduce students' speaking anxiety, efforts are needed to increase English language proficiency through more intensive practice and focusing on developing communication skills. In addition, increasing students' self-confidence and making them more familiar with speaking tasks in class is also very important. Reducing fear of mistakes can be done by creating a learning environment that is supportive and free from overly critical judgment.

As stated by Liu (2006) This research reveals that low English proficiency is a crucial problem that influences students in speaking English in class. As a result of this low proficiency, students feel unskilled when speaking English, believe that their English skills are poor, and assume that others are better than them. This causes students with low English skills to have difficulty participating in speaking activities in class.

The second factor found in this research is a lack of self-confidence, which is known as communication apprehension. This lack of self-confidence causes students to feel worried, anxious and nervous, so they are reluctant to give opinions or participate in class activities. According to Daymiel et al (2022) To overcome communication anxiety, strategies are needed that help students feel more comfortable and capable of speaking. This can involve training in communication skills, using relaxation techniques, as well as creating a supportive, non-judgmental classroom atmosphere. By addressing these concerns, it will be easier for students to understand and express information correctly, thereby improving their participation and speaking performance in class.

The third factor found in this research is the fear of making a mistake. To reduce students' speaking anxiety, efforts need to be made to eliminate the fear of making mistakes. This can be done by creating a supportive learning environment where mistakes are seen as a natural part of the learning process. Support from teachers and classmates, as well as an emphasis on collaborative, non-judgmental learning, will help students feel more comfortable and confident when speaking English. By reducing this fear, students will be more courageous to participate actively in speaking activities in class. As stated by Asysyfa et al (2019) Students who have previously failed when speaking will prefer to remain silent than risk failing again and will reduce their confidence little by little.

The last factor is to increase student participation and reduce speaking anxiety, it is important to choose topics that are relevant and familiar to students. Integrating topics that interest students and providing an early introduction to new assignments will help them feel more comfortable and ready to participate. This approach can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, thereby encouraging students to be more active in speaking activities in class (Liu, 2006). From those four factors above, the researcher concluded that English proficiency is the most factor causing students' speaking anxiety.

The second case discussed in the finding was the strategies to reduce students' speaking anxiety. In this study, there are four strategies offered to reduce student' anxiety. The first strategy found was change the mindset. According to Atas (2015) He suggested that students instill assumptions and believe that they are not alone. They also need to instill the perception that teachers are there to help them correct their mistakes

and make them braver, not to insult them. They must be aware that mistakes when speaking are a normal thing in learning and this can at least change students' thinking patterns and make them braver and more confident in speaking.

The next strategy is to think positively. Students need positive thinking to produce positive responses. Kondo and Ying-Ling (2017) suggest that students think about good things and calm themselves. that it is important to instill the perception that teachers are there to help students correct mistakes and increase their courage, not to insult them. Stopping negative thoughts before or while speaking is the key to being brave and confident (Marzuki, 2022).

The last strategy was peer seeking, as stated by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2017) peer search is an important strategy for students to improve their English skills. By looking for peers who are experiencing the same thing, students will feel less alone and will worry less. In addition, by interacting with English-speaking friends, students will get used to using the language in everyday life, so that English will no longer feel stiff and will be more natural to use.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, speaking anxiety remains a significant challenge among third-year students of the English Department at Universitas Riau. The study found that the majority of students experience speaking anxiety at varying levels, with most categorized as "very anxious" (53.33%) and "anxious" (28%). These findings suggest that speaking anxiety is a prevalent issue in EFL learning environments.

Strategies employed by students to overcome their speaking anxiety include thorough preparation, practicing with peers, utilizing notes, and engaging in positive self-talk. These strategies have proven to help students build confidence and manage anxiety during speaking tasks.

This research emphasizes the need for educators to create supportive, non-judgmental learning environments. By focusing on students' individual needs and providing constructive feedback, educators can help reduce the barriers posed by speaking anxiety, enabling students to improve their communication skills effectively.

Recommendation

The study offers several recommendations. For students, students need to actively participate to reduce their anxiety levels during speaking assignments. They must show a friendly attitude towards each other to create a pleasant and conducive learning environment. For lecturers, the recommendation is lecturers are advised to implement speaking activities in speaking classes, because this approach allows students to improve their speaking skills and build knowledge in this area. As facilitators in the classroom environment, lecturers must help students manage their speaking anxiety.

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