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## **STUDENT SPEAKING ANXIETY, CAUSAL FACTORS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS: A MIXED METHODS RESEARCH**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the level of speaking anxiety and factors causing it, as well as solutions based on students' perspectives at each level of anxiety. Using a mixed-methods research design with an explanatory sequential approach, quantitative data were collected through the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) from 288 English Language Education students in batches of 2022, 2023, and 2024 at a public university in Palangka Raya. In-depth interviews, students were selected based on FLSAQ scores to represent high, medium, and low anxiety levels.

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Quantitative results showed that the majority of students were at a moderate level of anxiety (56.8%), while 18.3% showed high anxiety and 24.9% low. The results also showed that there were no significant differences in anxiety scores based on year of entry or class. Qualitative results showed students with high and medium anxiety experienced anxiety due to language competence (vocabulary and grammar), lack of speaking opportunities, negative experiences from the environment, and lack of preparation and confidence. Students with low anxiety generally have more active exposure to and use of English and better self-management strategies. The solutions that students expect include material preparation, independent practice, a supportive classroom atmosphere, and structured teaching strategies.

**Keywords:** *speaking anxiety, EFL students, FLSAQ, teaching strategies, English language learning*

## INTRODUCTION

In learning activities, students may exhibit signs of anxiety when speaking in English. Psychologically, they may experience increased fear, unpleasant memories, and embarrassment, while physically, they may sweat, have dry mouths, and feel their hearts racing while speaking (Özütürk & Hürsen, 2013). According to Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi (2019), anxiety can affect a person's emotions, cognition, and behavior. Students who experience speaking anxiety may exhibit unusual behaviors when speaking and show various signs of fear. Therefore, students' fear or anxiety when speaking English can affect their physical actions and emotions. Although the physical signs of students' anxiety when speaking English can be observed, understanding their feelings is more challenging as they are invisible. This invisible condition hinders the fluency of ideas, contributes to the loss of content and vocabulary, and lowers confidence to speak.

Feelings of discomfort arise whenever they are assigned to speak, which can negatively impact their academic speaking performance.

Horwitz et al. (1986) define anxiety as a subjective feeling of tension, fear, and nervousness, triggered by the fear that something bad will happen. Muna et al. (2019) state that anxiety is a psychological phenomenon that directly affects the body's response to a situation. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a unique combination of self-perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that emerge specifically in the context of language learning in the classroom, facing particular challenges and characteristics in understanding language skills and components (Horwitz et al., 1986). Tridinanti (2018), speaking anxiety is the feeling of stress, pressure, and fear associated with language speaking. Students with speaking anxiety often experience fear and worry due to various factors. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) represents a unique blend of perceptions, emotions, and behaviors that arise due to the challenges of acquiring a new language in the context of language learning, to be specific, speaking anxiety is a common form of FLA, marked by feelings of stress and fear when communicating in a target foreign language that can significantly hinder students' ability to express themselves and engage confidently in speaking activities.

Students' speaking anxiety in English learning can have negative consequences on their academic performance, leading to lower classroom achievement (Oktaviani et al., 2013). Anxiety affects students' performance and grades, not just in speaking but in their overall English learning. Self-perception, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors related to the learning process can all be hampered by anxiety (Neman & Ganap, 2018). If left unaddressed, speaking anxiety can hinder students' ability to learn or complete tasks. Interaction with instructors and English lessons may also be affected, as students may hesitate to engage in the learning process. In extreme cases, students may even skip English classes due to their anxiety. Thus, it is crucial to understand students' speaking anxiety to help instructors better comprehend the mental and emotional challenges students face during

speaking activities (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). By knowing the levels and factors of students' speaking anxiety, instructors can adjust their teaching strategies and create a more comfortable learning environment, enabling students to improve their speaking skills and overcome their anxiety.

Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014) developed a questionnaire to measure the level of speaking anxiety, namely FLSAQ (Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire). They recognized that speaking is the most challenging skill for many foreign language learners and, therefore, requires an instrument that can capture psychological, affective, and behavioral aspects in greater depth and the context of oral communication. The FLSAQ accommodates this need with items that are more relevant to the live speaking experience, whether in presentation, discussion, or question and answer activities rather than similar instruments developed by Horwitz. Then, they identified three primary factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety. According to them, these factors are taken into three groups: educational, individual, and environmental factors.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the factors that cause speaking anxiety. Abrar et al. (2024) stated that the factors affecting the anxiety of EFL students from a public university in Jambi are linguistic issues (lack of knowledge about vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation), psychological issues (fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation), and performance issues (lack of preparation, learning environment conditions, and time constraints). Thai EFL students also experienced speaking anxiety. The contributing factors were that they were unconfident and anxious about making mistakes when speaking English (Kalra, 2020). Ali & Anwar (2021) and Sugiyati & Indriani (2021) stated that the most influential factor in EFL Students' speaking anxiety is fear of negative evaluation, followed by communication apprehension and test anxiety.

Furthermore, Afidawati et al. (2024) investigated the strategies used by students to overcome their anxiety. These strategies include preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, and peer-seeking. The most

used strategy by the students was preparation, followed by a more joyful strategy (Nuraeni et al., 2023). EFL students use self-management (preparation and practice, learning from mistakes), self-psychology (relaxation and motivation), and asking for help from others (friends and family) to overcome their anxiety (Abrar et al., 2024). Teachers can also play a role in overcoming students' speaking anxiety by creating an unthreatening classroom environment, increasing opportunities for students to practice speaking, and ways of using classroom dynamics (Inada, 2021).

Student anxiety can be categorized into high, medium, and low levels based on the FLSAQ results. Students with high levels of anxiety can be a significant problem for students when speaking. This feeling of tension can lead to various behavioral cases, such as a lack of motivation to learn or difficulty concentrating. If students' English-speaking anxiety is high, they may hesitate to participate in class discussions and may not fully engage in classroom learning activities. Ultimately, this anxiety may impact their academic performance in language learning. (Hooda & Saini, 2017). The way to cope needs to be based on the causal factors for each anxiety level.

Further research is needed to explore the underlying causes of anxiety among students with high levels of speaking anxiety. The investigation should also be extended to students with moderate and low anxiety levels. It is essential to determine whether the factors contributing to speaking anxiety are consistent across these groups or if they differ. If they do vary, what are the specific differences? Identifying and addressing these causes is essential and effective to reduce anxiety. Solutions should be tailored to each anxiety level, taking into account students' perspectives. What interventions do students with high anxiety expect? The same question applies to those with moderate and low anxiety. Implementing solutions that align with the specific needs and experiences of each group will likely yield more effective results.

This study is directed to address these questions. Therefore, the first formulation of the problem is how the anxiety level of English

education students from one of the public universities in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, covers the year of entry into college and their respective classes? The second formulation is, how does the anxiety level of these students differ in terms of year of study and class? Third, what are the factors that cause speaking anxiety in these students in terms of anxiety levels of low, moderate, and high? Fourth, what are the solutions for students at each level in order to overcome their speaking anxiety? The results of this research can be a guide for teachers, lecturers, or educational practitioners to develop models or learning tools to overcome the problem of speaking anxiety at each level.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

To address the first and second research questions, the researcher required numerical data from the FLSAQ questionnaire scores. Following this, interviews were conducted with selected participants, chosen based on their questionnaire responses. These interviews aimed to provide deeper insights into the participants' speaking anxiety, particularly its causes and possible solutions. The information gathered through interviews was used to address the third and fourth research questions. Therefore, the researcher employed a mixed method approach using an explanatory sequential design, in which quantitative data collection and analysis were carried out first, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis (QUAN→Qual) (Ary et al., 2010).

### **Participants**

The participants for the quantitative data collection consisted of English education students from a public university in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, who enrolled in the years of 2022, 2023, and 2024. These cohorts represented students in their third, second, and first years of study, respectively. The researcher excluded fourth-year students, as many had either graduated or were in the process

of completing their final projects. Within each entry year, students were assigned to three classes based on their admission pathway. Class A, B and C for those through the achievement, the test and the independent pathways respectively.

The first stage of the study started with quantitative data collection to administer the FLSAQ questionnaire to all students. The total number of students was 314, of which 37 students from 2022 class B participated in the FLSAQ questionnaire test, and 277 students participated in the speaking anxiety data collection. However, not all students filled out the questionnaire. In the test class, 31 out of 37 (83.8%) students completed the questionnaire. In the other class, 257 out of 277 (92.8%) students completed the questionnaire. Overall, 288 out of 314 (91.7%) students completed the questionnaire. Details are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Number of Participants per Year Entry per Class*

| Year Entry   | Class    | Number as per Database | Number of Completed Questionnaire | %            |
|--------------|----------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| 2022         | A        | 40                     | 39                                | 97.5%        |
|              | B *      | 37                     | 31                                | 83.8%        |
|              | C        | 40                     | 35                                | 87.5%        |
|              | Subtotal | 117                    | 105                               | 89.7%        |
| 2023         | A        | 24                     | 22                                | 91.7%        |
|              | B        | 30                     | 26                                | 86.7%        |
|              | C        | 27                     | 23                                | 85.2%        |
|              | Subtotal | 81                     | 71                                | 87.7%        |
| 2024         | A        | 39                     | 38                                | 100.0%       |
|              | B        | 38                     | 38                                | 100.0%       |
|              | C        | 39                     | 36                                | 92.3%        |
|              | Subtotal | 116                    | 112                               | 96.6%        |
| <b>Total</b> |          | <b>314</b>             | <b>288</b>                        | <b>91.7%</b> |

Note: \* FLSAQ Questionnaire Trial Participants

The next stage involved the researcher conducting interviews with several students to gather qualitative data. There were six

criteria for selecting participants. First, participants were chosen from the 2022 and 2024 entry years to represent both newly enrolled students and those who had been in the program the longest. Second, students from each of these entry years were selected to represent low, moderate, and high levels of speaking anxiety. The goal was to explore the similarities and differences in the causes of anxiety across the three levels. Third, the researcher initially interviewed two participants from each anxiety level for source triangulation. Fourth, the current speaking performance of the selected participants was taken into account; for example, students with low anxiety were expected to demonstrate better speaking performance in class. Fifth, participants needed to be able to express their thoughts clearly in Indonesian to allow for in-depth exploration of the causes of speaking anxiety. Sixth, if inconsistencies were there between the responses of the two participants from the same group, the researcher would conduct additional interviews with other students from the same entry year and anxiety level. Information related to the fourth and fifth criteria was obtained from the course instructors responsible for the classes where the participants were enrolled.

### **Research Procedure**

The first stage of the research procedure following the QUAN→Qual sequence is to conduct quantitative research using the survey type. (Lodico et al., 2010). First, the researcher developed the FLSAQ questionnaire in Indonesian. The questionnaire was adapted from Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014). The development was carried out by asking for suggestions from two experts on the results of the translation into Indonesian language and testing on students in the entry year 2022 class B. Second, the researcher selected the participants, namely all English education students in the entry years of 2022, 2023, and 2024. Third, the researchers gave valid and reliable questionnaires to the students. Fourth, the researchers analyzed the data from the questionnaire and drew conclusions.

The second stage of the procedure is to conduct qualitative research (Ary et al., 2010). First, the researcher selected the interview participants following the predetermined criteria. Second, the researcher developed a semi-structured interview sheet. Third, the researcher conducted interviews with interview participants. Fourth, the researcher analyzed the data by coding, triangulation, and constant comparison. The aim was to explore the factors that cause speaking anxiety and how to overcome it from the student's perspective.

### **Research Instruments**

The instrument used in collecting quantitative data was the FLSAQ questionnaire in Indonesian language. The first step in developing the questionnaire was for the researcher to translate the FLSAQ questionnaire from Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014) into Indonesian language. The questionnaire consisted of eighteen statement items. The translated questionnaire items were validated by two experts in English language education. The result was that the questionnaire was suitable for use with revisions. The researcher made revisions based on the suggestions of the two experts. The revised questionnaire was tested on the 2022 entry-year B students. The result is the Sig. of the correlation coefficient of each question item with the total is less than 0.05, which means that each question item is valid. In addition, the test results gained a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, and it was  $0.913 > 0.6$  (reliable) (Ghufron, 2011).

The instruments used for collecting qualitative data included the researcher as the primary instrument and a semi-structured interview guide as a supporting tool. The guide contained several pre-prepared questions, while the development of additional questions was done during the interview based on participants' responses. Both the interview indicators and questions were derived from findings of previous research (Abrar et al., 2022; Akkakoson, 2016; Damayanti & Listyani, 2020; Kenoh, 2021; Khafidhoh et al.,

2023; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Taly & Paramasivam, 2020; Umisara et al., 2021) (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

*Grid and Questions in Semi-structured Interview Guidelines*

| Aspect                                       | Indicator               | Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Causal Factor                                | Educational             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you think that knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation affects your anxiety in speaking English? Explain according to your experience!</li> <li>2. Does the lack of opportunity to speak English in class increase your anxiety?</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                              | Individual              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are you nervous or afraid of making mistakes when speaking English? Give examples.</li> <li>2. Does the lack of time to gather ideas and unfamiliar topics increase your anxiety?</li> <li>3. Why do you feel insecure, nervous, or afraid when speaking or when called upon to speak English in front of the class?</li> <li>4. Are you not used to listening to and using English, both written and spoken in your daily activities?</li> </ol> |
|                                              | Environmental           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you feel nervous or afraid of your friends' responses when you are asked to speak English in front of the class?</li> <li>2. Does the lecturer's direct assessment and comments (feedback) on your ability to speak English in front of the class increase your anxiety?</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                            |
| Reccomen dation from students' point of view | self-management         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What activities or preparations do you need to do to reduce nervousness or fear when speaking English in front of the class? Share your experiences!</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                              | getting-help strategies | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the expected class conditions so that you can speak English in class more comfortably?</li> <li>2. In your opinion, what should the lecturer do to make the Speaking class easier or more comfortable?</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## Data Collection

Data collection was carried out by giving a questionnaire to all students entering the classes of 2022, 2023, and 2024 by using Google Forms at the link <https://bit.ly/FLSAQ2025>. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the researcher classified students into low, moderate, and high speaking anxiety. Two participants were initially selected for each level of anxiety in students entering the classes of 2022 and 2024. If there was a discrepancy in the findings, the researcher interviewed another student with the corresponding year of entry and anxiety level.

## Data Analysis

The initial stage involved analyzing the quantitative data. First, the researcher categorized students into low, moderate, and high levels of speaking anxiety. The criteria used were as follows: scores above 72 indicated high anxiety, scores between 54 and 72 indicated moderate anxiety and scores below 54 indicated low anxiety. Second, the classification results were presented in tables and diagrams. Third, the data was summarized by examining measures of central tendency, distribution, and position. Finally, the researcher used statistical tests to draw conclusions and address the second research question.

The second stage was qualitative data analysis. The first activity was that the researcher transcribed the interviews for each participant. Second, the researcher coded the interview transcripts to reduce the data. The coding consists of 12 digits where digits 1-2 are 22 and 24, which indicate the year of entry 2022 and 2024, respectively. Digits 3-5 are the subject codes. Digit 6 is the anxiety level of H (high), M (moderate), and L (low). Digits 7-8 are the indicators in Table 2, namely EDU (educational), IND (individual), ENV (environment), SEM (self-management), or GET (getting help). Digit 9 is the question number in Table 2 that corresponds to the indicator. Digits 10-11 are the order of the interview transcripts from 01 onwards. Data that were not coded would not be used in the

analysis. Third, researchers gave meaning to the data using word, phrase, and sentence analysis. The method was for the researcher to read the interview transcripts, focus on interesting words, phrases, and sentences, write down all the possible meanings that came to mind from these words, phrases, and sentences, and re-read the transcripts to determine the most appropriate meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Fourth, the researcher looked for similarities in causal factors between two participants at the same level (constant comparison). Fifth, we describe the causes of anxiety at each level. The result is the theory concluded in the research (Lodico et al., 2010).

## **FINDINGS**

### **Student Anxiety Levels in Review of Entry Year and Class**

The researcher distributed questionnaires to all English education students from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 cohorts at a public university in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan. The findings revealed that 18.3% of students experienced high anxiety, 56.8% moderate anxiety, and 24.9% low anxiety (see Figure 1). The proportion of students with low anxiety was highest among those admitted in 2024, followed by 2023 and then 2022. In contrast, the highest percentage of students with high anxiety was found in the 2022 cohort, followed by 2024 and then 2023. The average FLSAQ scores for students entering 2022, 2023, and 2024 were 63.28, 60.93, and 59.86, respectively (see Table 3). These results indicate that the average anxiety levels, as measured by the FLSAQ, were relatively consistent across the three cohorts.

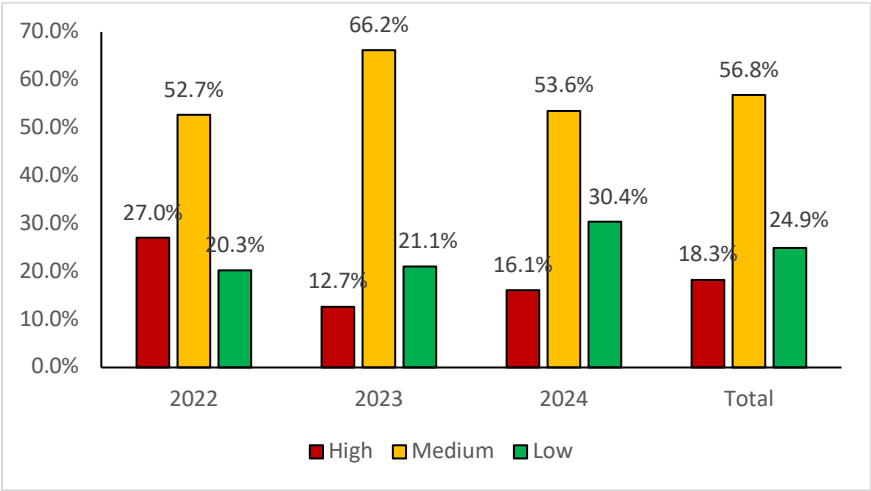


Figure 1. Percentage of Students at Each Level of Speaking Anxiety per Year of Entry

Table 3.  
FLSAQ Questionnaire Score Summary by Year of Entry

| Entry Year | N   | Mean  | StDev | Min   | Q1    | Median | Q3    | Max   |
|------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2022       | 74  | 63.28 | 13.98 | 21.00 | 56.00 | 65.00  | 73.00 | 86.00 |
| 2023       | 71  | 60.93 | 13.78 | 23.00 | 54.00 | 65.00  | 70.00 | 83.00 |
| 2024       | 112 | 59.86 | 14.31 | 24.00 | 51.25 | 63.00  | 69.00 | 87.00 |

The percentage of students at each anxiety level by class indicates that Class C generally had lower anxiety levels compared to the other two classes. This result is evident from the fact that Class C had the highest proportion of students with low anxiety and the lowest proportion with high anxiety. The data was followed by Class B, with Class A having the highest overall anxiety levels (see Figure 2). The average FLSAQ questionnaire scores for Classes A, B, and C were 60.43, 60.86, and 58.91, respectively (see Table 4). These results suggest that the average scores across the three classes were relatively similar.

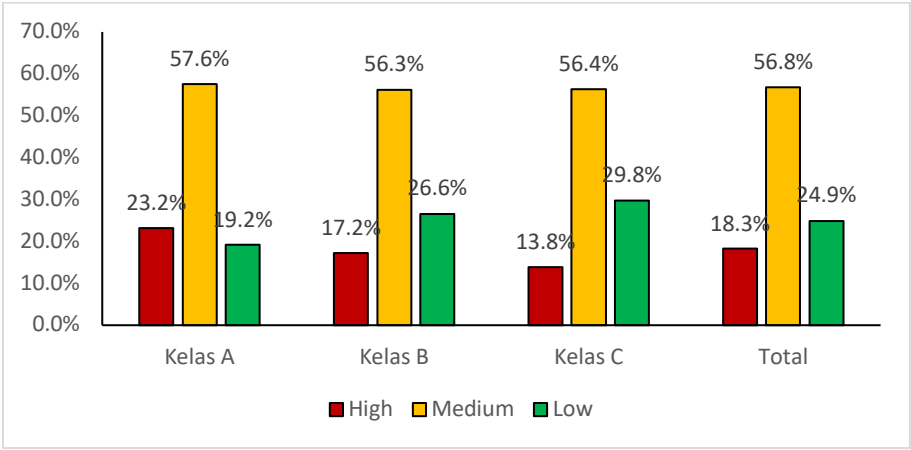


Figure 2. Percentage of Students in Each Level of Speaking Anxiety per Class

Table 4.

FLSAQ Questionnaire Score Summary by Year of Entry

| Class | N  | Mean  | StDev | Min   | Q1    | Median | Q3    | Max   |
|-------|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| A     | 99 | 63.43 | 13.68 | 21.00 | 57.00 | 66.00  | 72.00 | 86.00 |
| B     | 64 | 60.86 | 13.68 | 27.00 | 53.00 | 63.00  | 70.75 | 87.00 |
| C     | 94 | 58.91 | 14.55 | 23.00 | 52.00 | 62.00  | 69.25 | 84.00 |

Differences in Anxiety Levels Based on Year of Entry and Class

The researcher performed a Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test on the residuals from the two-way ANOVA. The result showed a significant value of Sig. = 0, which is below 0.05, indicating that the data were not normally distributed at a 5% significance level. As a result, the researcher employed the Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric test to analyze the differences. For the variable of entry year, the Kruskal-Wallis test yielded a Sig. value of 0.251, which is greater than 0.05, indicates no significant difference in FLSAQ questionnaire scores based on year of entry at the 5% error level. Similarly, the test for class differences resulted in a Sig. Value of 0.068 was also greater than 0.05, meaning there was no significant difference in scores based on class.

The results of the quantitative analysis indicated that there were no significant differences in anxiety scores based on students' year of entry. Therefore, the researcher chose interview participants only from students in their first year and those who had nearly completed three years of study, aiming to provide deeper insights into the quantitative findings. From the 2024 cohort, the students interviewed were 24BDR and 24ELN (high anxiety), 24IYL, 24RZK, and 24MYS (moderate anxiety), and 24JLY, 24RYN, and 24SYM (low anxiety). From the 2022 cohort, the participants included 22SRL, 22NRL, and 22REG (high anxiety), 22TRI, 22RAI, and 22MRI (moderate anxiety), and 22YNS and 22AVA (low anxiety). In some cases, a third participant was included at a certain anxiety level due to inconsistencies in the responses of the initial two. A total of 16 students were interviewed, consisting of 5 males and 11 females.

### ***Educational 1: The Effect of Vocabulary, Grammar, and Pronunciation***

Students from the 2022 and 2024 cohorts who experienced high levels of anxiety reported that their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation significantly influenced their anxiety. Making mistakes in any of these areas often caused them to lose track of what they knew or intended to say. This led to fears of being mocked by peers or receiving poor grades (22SRLHEDU101, 22NRLHEDU101, 24BDRHEDU101-03, 24ELNHEDU101). These findings were based on responses from four participants: 22SRL and 22NRL (2022 entry) and 24BDR and 24ELN (2024 entry), indicating that source triangulation was conducted. Additionally, participant 24BDR made consistent statements at three different points in time, as shown by the codes 24BDRHEDU101, 24BDRHEDU102, and 24BDRHEDU103, confirming time triangulation. All further conclusions presented in this article have been supported through both source and method triangulation.

Students in the 2022 and 2024 entry years with moderate anxiety stated that all three knowledge influenced their English-speaking anxiety, where the two most contributing factors were vocab and grammar. The condition is different for students with low anxiety in

both years of entry who stated that only one of the three knowledge, namely vocabulary alone or grammar alone, affects their anxiety when speaking English. Subject 22AVA said: "*... yang saya cemas itu dalam vocab-nya. Kalau mengenai tata bahasa mungkin fluency bagi saya tidak berpengaruh ... vocab yang kadang kurang aja sih miss, saya bisa lupa terhadap vocab-vocab tertentu begitu*" translated into "... what I worry about is the vocab. As for grammar, maybe fluency doesn't affect me... it's just the vocab that is sometimes lacking, I can forget certain vocabs like that" (22AVALEDU101).

### ***Educational 2: Lack of Opportunities to Speak English***

Students with low anxiety in the entry years 2022 and 2024 stated that the lecturer asked only particular students to speak so that other students did not get the opportunity. As a result, these students are anxious about speaking English. The same thing was revealed by students with moderate anxiety in both years of entry. Both subjects agreed that lack of opportunity affects anxiety. Students who are often appointed to speak in front of the class will get used to it so that their anxiety decreases. Conversely, students who rarely speak in front of the class will make mistakes, so they feel anxious. Subject 24IYL (moderate anxiety) said, "*Misalkan aktif ... rasa percaya diri saya juga meningkat*" translated into "Suppose I am active ... my confidence also increases" (24IYLMEDU205). In contrast, students with low anxiety in both years of entry stated that they were not affected by the lack of opportunities to speak English.

### ***Individual 1: Being Afraid of Making Mistakes***

Students with high anxiety from the 2024 entry year reported being strongly affected by making mistakes while speaking. Such errors caused them to hesitate and lose confidence, which in turn increased their anxiety over time. Similarly, students from the 2022 entry year with the same level of anxiety expressed fear about speaking English during class presentations or when called to the front. Meanwhile, students with moderate anxiety from both the 2022 and

2024 cohorts shared that they feared making mistakes while speaking English. They were particularly anxious about receiving unwanted reactions from classmates, such as judgmental stares or being abruptly corrected while speaking in front of the class. This fear was often rooted in past experiences where they felt embarrassed or criticized during classroom speaking activities. Students with low anxiety in both years of entry expressed less fear in speaking English.

### ***Individual 2: Lack of Time to Brainstorming***

Students in 2022 and 2024 with high and moderate anxiety stated the same thing, namely that the lack of preparation time made students confused or did not know what to say. Such conditions increase student anxiety. Subject 22TRI (moderate anxiety) said, *“Iya langsung panik dan seperti yang saya bilang tadi kan saya agak terbatas juga dalam kosakata jadi masih sangat takut untuk on the spot ya kayak begitu”* translated into *“Yes, I immediately panicked, and as I said earlier, I was a bit limited in vocabulary, so I was still anxious to be on the spot like that”* (22TRIMIND204). Students with low anxiety in both years of entry stated that the lack of preparation time would increase anxiety. They need to master key points and vocabulary relevant to the topic to relieve anxiety.

### ***Individual 3: Being Unsecured to be Called to Speak English***

Students in 2022 and 2024 with high and moderate anxiety expressed that they were not confident, nervous, or afraid when speaking English. The difference is in the reason for their fear. Students with high anxiety were aware of negative responses, such as being ridiculed or not noticed by their peers. Subject 24ELN (high anxiety) said, *“saya bisa lihat terkadang tatapan beberapa orang kayak malas dan nggak ngasih perhatian karena mereka merasa kayak palingan cuma gini-gini aja gitu”* translated into *“I can see that sometimes the stares of some people are like lazy and do not pay attention because they feel like they are just like this”* (24ELNHENV113). Students with moderate anxiety stated the same reason plus two other reasons. First, students are anxious because

they lack preparation in learning the topic to be addressed and understanding vocabulary or pronunciation. Second, students feel insecure because their friends are more capable of speaking English. The condition is different with students with low anxiety in both years of entry who stated that they are confident in speaking English.

#### ***Individual 4: Unfamiliarity to Written and Spoken English***

Students from the 2022 and 2024 entry years who experienced high levels of anxiety reported that they usually listened to English through podcasts, indicating that they were mostly passive users of the language. In contrast, students with moderate anxiety from both years demonstrated slightly higher use of English. They mentioned listening to English content, such as songs and podcasts, and using the language occasionally—for example, by sending chat messages while playing online games. Students with low anxiety levels in both cohorts showed even greater engagement with English. They regularly used the language in both spoken and written forms, such as singing in English or communicating with study partners. The use of writing when communicating by typing text during online games. Students with low anxiety as active language users.

#### ***Environmental 1: Feeling Afraid of Peer Responses***

Students from the 2022 and 2024 year with high anxiety responded to feeling afraid or anxious about their friends' responses when speaking English, namely not paying attention when they are speaking in front of the class. The same condition occurred in students entering the 2024 year with moderate anxiety. Subject 24RZK (moderate level of anxiety) said: “(temannya merespons negatif) langsung terdiam, kata-katanya langsung semrawut ... sedikit lanjutkan, sedikit berhenti, tapi agak campur aduk bahasa itu” translated into “(his friend responded negatively) immediately fell silent, his words were immediately messy ... a little continued, a little stopped, but the language was a bit mixed up” (24RZKMENV114-15). The condition is different from students with moderate anxiety in the 2022 year who have studied together for

three years with their classmates. They stated that they were not afraid of their friends' responses when speaking English because they were used to their classmates. Students with low anxiety in both years responded that they were not intimidated of their friends' responses because they were already close enough to their friends, the class conditions were supportive, and their friends' responses were used as evaluation material.

### ***Environmental 2: The Lecturer's Direct Assessment and Feedback***

Students with high anxiety from the 2022 cohort stated that their level of anxiety was influenced by how the lecturer delivered feedback. If the feedback was poorly given, it made them feel confused and anxious; however, if delivered appropriately, they felt more at ease. In contrast, students with high anxiety from the 2024 cohort reported that feedback from lecturers did not cause them anxiety. Similarly, students with moderate anxiety from both cohorts reacted calmly to feedback, viewing it as a means to correct their mistakes and improve their English skills. Students with low anxiety from the 2024 cohort also perceived feedback positively, considering it helpful for addressing their weaknesses. Low-anxiety students from the 2022 cohort responded similarly to high-anxiety students from the same year, indicating that their anxiety depended on how the lecturer provided feedback. Moreover, students generally preferred that feedback be given after they finished speaking. One such student, 22YNS (low anxiety), expressed: "*(feedback) sudah selesai berbicara dan saya bisa refleksi sendiri, ... tapi ketika dipotong saya menjadi panik dan akhirnya buyar*" translated into "*(Feedback) should come after I've finished speaking so I can reflect... but when I was interrupted, I panicked and lost focus*" (22YNSLENV210).

# **Factors that Cause Speaking Anxiety in terms of Level of High, Moderate and Low**

Based on the results of the analysis per indicator, the researcher describes the factors that cause speaking anxiety in terms of anxiety level (Table 5).

**Table 5.**

*Factors Causing Speaking Anxiety in terms of High, Moderate and High Levels*

| Indicator        | High Anxiety                                                                                            | Moderate Anxiety                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Low Anxiety                                                                                          |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Educa-<br>tional | a. Knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation influences anxiety levels.                        | a. Students stated that all three knowledges influenced anxiety, where vocabulary and grammar were the most contributing factors.                                                                                                                    | a. Only one of the three knowledge, namely vocabulary alone or grammar alone, influences anxiety.    |
|                  | b. Students who do not get enough opportunities to speak will feel anxious when asked to speak English. | b. Lack of opportunities affects anxiety. Students who rarely speak in front of the class will make mistakes and feel anxious.                                                                                                                       | b. Students are not affected by the lack of opportunities to speak English.                          |
| Indivi-<br>dual  | a. Students feel afraid of speaking English when speaking or presenting in front of the class.          | a. Students are afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. They are afraid of being responded negatively by their friends, such as a 'cynical' stare or having a friend immediately correct them when they are speaking in front of the class. | a. Students are not too afraid of speaking English.                                                  |
|                  | b. Lack of preparation time makes students confused or not know what to say. This condition adds        | b. The less preparation time, the more anxious to speak English. Preparation needed for speaking, such as studying vocabulary,                                                                                                                       | b. Lack of preparation time will increase anxiety. They need to master the key points and vocabulary |

| Indicator      | High Anxiety                                                                                                                            | Moderate Anxiety                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Low Anxiety                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                | to students' anxiety.                                                                                                                   | practicing pronunciation or preparing sentences to be delivered.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | relevant to the topic to eliminate anxiety.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                | c. Students are afraid of negative responses, such as being ridiculed or ignored by their friends.                                      | c. Students are anxious because (i) being afraid of judgement by their friends, (ii) lacking enough preparation to study the discussed topic, understand vocabulary, or be fluent in pronunciation, or (iii) feeling insecure because their friends are more capable. | c. Students are confident in speaking English                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                | d. Students usually listen to English through podcasts. Their activities are limited as passive language users.                         | d. Students stated listening to English and using it limitedly. Listening activities through songs and podcasts. Limited use by writing chats while playing online games.                                                                                             | d. Students are accustomed to using English both orally and in writing. Oral use by singing in English or communicating with study friends. Written use when communicating by typing text during online games. Students as active language users. |
| Environ-mental | a. Students feel afraid or anxious about their friends' responses when speaking English, namely not paying attention when they speak in | a. Students entering the class of 2024 felt anxious about negative responses such as inattentive facial expressions or being laughed at by their friends. Students entering the class of 2022 stated                                                                  | a. Students do not feel afraid of their friends' responses because they are already quite close to their friends, the class conditions are supportive, and their friends'                                                                         |

| Indicator | High Anxiety                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Moderate Anxiety                                                                                                                                  | Low Anxiety                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | front of the class.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | that they were not afraid of friends' responses when speaking English because they were familiar with their classmates.                           | responses are used as evaluation material.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|           | b. Students from the 2022 cohort stated that their anxiety was influenced by how the lecturer provided feedback—made them feel anxious and confused, while supportive approaches did not trigger anxiety. In contrast, students from the 2024 cohort reported receiving feedback from lecturers without it causing them to feel anxious. | b. Students respond without anxiety to feedback from lecturers because the goal is to correct mistakes and improve their English language skills. | b. Students from the 2024 cohort viewed feedback from lecturers as a positive opportunity to address their weaknesses. Meanwhile, students from the 2022 cohort responded similarly to those with high anxiety in the same year, stating that their anxiety depended on how the lecturer delivered the feedback. |

**Recommendations from students from each level to overcome speaking anxiety**

There are two indicators to overcome speaking anxiety, namely self-management and getting-help strategies.

### ***Self-management 1: Having Prior Preparations to Reduce Nervousness***

Students from the 2022 and 2024 cohorts with high anxiety prepared by writing scripts, memorizing them, and practicing speaking multiple times. Those with moderate anxiety in both cohorts had a similar preparation approach, which involved noting down new vocabulary and practicing speaking alone. Low-anxiety students in both entry years prepared by understanding the topic, highlighting key points, noting unfamiliar words, and practicing through “reading aloud.” A common strategy across all three anxiety levels was practicing speaking independently as a way to manage speaking anxiety.

### ***Getting-help Strategies 1: Expected Class Conditions to Ensure Students' Comfort***

Students from the 2022 and 2024 cohorts across all anxiety levels hoped for a classroom environment where peers show mutual respect and respond positively when someone speaks English. Additionally, 2022 entry students with moderate anxiety expressed a desire for an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Meanwhile, low-anxiety students from the 2024 cohort hoped for a comfortable learning environment to practice their English. To be more specific, subject 24JLY (low anxiety) wished for a class where all students communicate in English.

### ***Getting-help Strategies 2: Lecturers' Involvement to Ensure Students' Comfort***

Students from the 2022 and 2024 cohorts with high anxiety hope that lecturers can foster a supportive classroom environment where students actively listen to one another, show attentiveness, and collaborate in group tasks. They also expect speaking classes to be structured into several phases: a warm-up session, material presentation, group task completion, and finally, speaking in front of the class. Meanwhile, students with moderate anxiety in both cohorts

wish for relaxed, open interactions with lecturers to help create a comfortable setting for speaking English. They also hope lecturers will make the class enjoyable by selecting familiar discussion topics or incorporating games that encourage English speaking. Students with low anxiety from both entry years expect lecturers to provide constructive and encouraging feedback after students have completed their presentations.

## DISCUSSION

One of the objectives of this study was to explore the differences in the factors that cause speaking anxiety based on students' anxiety levels: high, moderate, and low. These factors came into three indicators: educational, individual, and environmental. Under the educational indicator, the causes of anxiety for students with high and moderate levels were relatively similar. They included limited knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (linguistic factors), as well as a lack of speaking opportunities in class. This factor differs from students with low anxiety, whose anxiety was typically triggered by limited knowledge in either vocabulary or grammar, but not both. The findings indicate that insufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge contribute to increased anxiety during classroom presentations (Desvitasari, 2023). They believe that if both of these knowledge forms are improved, then they can speak English fluently (Subaşı, 2010). Al-Mukdad (2021) shows that linguistic factors are the most dominant cause of speaking anxiety. Under the individual indicator, the causes of anxiety for students with high and moderate levels were related to a lack of confidence when speaking in front of the class—especially when they perceived their peers as more proficient in English. Other contributing factors included insufficient preparation time for learning vocabulary, practicing pronunciation, or organizing their speaking points, as well as limited use of English in daily life. These students tended to be passive language users, engaging with English through activities like listening to podcasts or chatting while playing online games. In contrast, students with low

anxiety mainly experienced nervousness due to inadequate preparation in mastering key points and relevant vocabulary for their speaking topics. Suparlan (2021) showed 45% of students responded that lack of preparation would make them feel anxious when speaking in front of the class.

In the environmental indicator, the cause of anxiety for students with high levels entering the 2022 and 2024 years and students with moderate anxiety entering the 2024 year is fear of judgment from their friends, such as a 'cynical' gaze, being mocked, laughed at, ignored, or suddenly a friend confirms when the student is talking. Anxiety caused by negative responses is also experienced by 68% of students from one of the public high schools in Siak Hulu, Riau, Indonesia (Najiha & Sailun, 2021). A conducive classroom atmosphere is very important to eliminate students' speaking anxiety (Duan et al., 2021). The situation differs for students with moderate anxiety from the 2022 cohort and those with low anxiety from both the 2022 and 2024 cohorts, as they did not feel anxious about their peers' responses. For the 2022 students, in particular, their lack of anxiety stemmed from being familiar with their classmates, which made them feel secure and comfortable being surrounded by and learning with them (Duan et al., 2021).

Furthermore, anxiety triggered by the way lecturers provide feedback was expressed by students with both high and low anxiety levels from the 2022 cohort. Similar causes were also reported by students from two universities in Riau, who stated that receiving feedback while speaking made them feel embarrassed and lose their train of thought. Overall, lecturer behavior during English-speaking activities significantly impacts students' anxiety levels (Syahfutra & Wibowo, 2021). Likewise, students from a high school in Jambi stated that teacher behavior was the highest factor causing anxiety in speaking English (Sari & Ningsih, 2022). Other contributing factors are similar to those experienced by students, such as fear of being laughed at by peers when making mistakes, anxiety due to inadequate preparation for speaking, and fear stemming from limited vocabulary knowledge (Sinadia & Ngingi, 2023),

This anxiety needs to be addressed in ways that align with students' perspectives. Based on the findings of this study, one of effective approaches is to provide students with sufficient time and encouragement to prepare. Preparation includes understanding the discussion topic by taking notes on key points, listing new vocabulary, and practicing speaking independently. Students also expressed the desire for lecturers to foster a comfortable classroom atmosphere where peers show mutual respect and offer positive responses when someone speaks in front of the class. Additionally, students hope the class environment is enjoyable, supported by familiar topics and the incorporation of games during speaking sessions. Every student must have the opportunity to speak in class. Furthermore, lecturers are expected to structure speaking classes into segments covering warm-up activities, material delivery, task completion, and speaking practice. Feedback should be given constructively after students finish speaking. These approaches align with strategies used by Jordanian undergraduate students to manage and reduce their anxiety, which include building self-confidence, creating a supportive environment, ensuring preparation, and incorporating humor (Alhasan et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study revealed that the level of speaking anxiety of students in the English Language Education Study Program showed quite striking variations. Most students were in the moderate anxiety category (56.8%), indicating that more than half of the student population experienced fear when speaking English, but it was still at a manageable level. Meanwhile, 24.9% of students were in the low category, indicating a more stable level of confidence in speaking situations, while 18.3% of them were classified as high, meaning that almost one in five students experienced anxiety that was quite disruptive to their learning process. This distribution was relatively consistent across all classes, both students entering 2022 (final year students), 2023 (middle level), and 2024 (freshmen level). Likewise, when viewed from classes A, B, and C, each of which represents a

different entry path (achievement, test, and independent). The Kruskal-Wallis test used in the statistical analysis showed no significant difference between these classes. In other words, factors such as the length of study or the entrance selection path do not have a direct influence on students' speaking anxiety levels. This factor implies that speaking anxiety is more psychological and situational rather than based on formal administrative or academic characteristics.

The causes of anxiety vary depending on the level. Students with high anxiety tend to face serious linguistic challenges, such as poor vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills. This result is compounded by the lack of opportunities to speak in class, as well as the discomfort of dealing with social reactions from classmates – such as fear of being laughed at or judged negatively. In some cases, students with high anxiety also show physical symptoms such as shaking or losing concentration when asked to speak in public. On the other hand, students with moderate anxiety generally show more controlled anxiety, although they still feel pressured in certain situations, especially when facing unfamiliar topics or speaking spontaneously. However, they begin to develop coping mechanisms, such as self-practice or calming down before speaking. However, students with low anxiety show significantly different characteristics. They generally have had exposure to and habits of using active English in their daily lives, such as through conversations with friends, playing online games in English, or enjoying English-language content. This exposure strengthens their self-management skills and builds confidence in academic situations so they can be more prepared and relaxed when asked to speak in class.

To manage public speaking anxiety, students across all anxiety levels agree that thorough preparation is the most effective strategy. This preparation includes creating a well-structured script, practicing independently to build familiarity, and gaining a solid understanding of the topic to boost confidence. They also recommend that classroom speaking activities be designed gradually and engagingly – starting with light warm-ups, followed by group collaboration, and

culminating in more formal presentations. Creating a supportive and pressure-free classroom environment is also essential, as it helps students feel less intimidated. Therefore, lecturers are encouraged to regularly assess students' anxiety levels and provide constructive feedback after speaking sessions, allowing students to grow without feeling overwhelmed. For future researchers, there is a need to develop more targeted and adaptable instructional models that cater to diverse student backgrounds. Scalable and effective strategies for managing speaking anxiety are necessary. By implementing these approaches, students are expected to overcome anxiety and develop strong communication skills.

## DECLARATION OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES

During the preparation of this work the authors used DeepL (V.24.4.3) and Grammarly for optimizing language, grammar correctness, and readability. The authors have reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication after the use of this tool/service.

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