

Students' Anxiety in EFL Speaking Class Experienced by the Fourth-Semester Students of the English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Anxiety, Speaking, language, EFL, Students' anxiety	This research is about the speaking anxiety experienced by fourth-semester students in EFL classes. The aim of this study is to analyze the types and causes of students' speaking anxiety and to identify the strategies used by students to overcome their anxiety in speaking English. The writer has formulated three research questions in this study as follows: (1) what types of speaking anxiety are experienced by the fourth-semester students? (2) What are the factors that cause students' speaking anxiety? and (3) what strategies are used by students to overcome their speaking anxiety? This research employed a qualitative method. The participants of this study were sixty fourth-semester students of the English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University. The writer distributed a questionnaire and conducted interviews with 10 selected students. The data were presented in the form of a narrative description. The results of this study showed that among the three major types of speaking anxiety, the most commonly experienced type by the students was communication apprehension, followed by fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. In addition, several internal and external factors contributed to their anxiety, such as lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and the presence of lecturers or peers. The students also implemented various strategies to reduce their anxiety, such as preparation before speaking, practicing in front of a mirror, deep breathing, and using self-talk techniques.
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INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is one of the most common psychological barriers faced by students in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), especially when it comes to speaking. Despite completing foundational speaking courses, many students continue to experience anxiety during classroom speaking activities. This anxiety can hinder their performance, reduce participation, and limit the development of their communication skills. The present study examines this phenomenon among fourth-semester students in the English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University, where the writer observed that even students with sufficient preparation and vocabulary mastery still exhibit signs of anxiety, such as trembling, nervousness, or forgetting ideas when speaking in English.

To address this issue, it is necessary to examine the types and causes of speaking anxiety and identify strategies that students use to overcome it. Understanding the nature of this anxiety can help educators create more supportive environments and implement effective teaching practices to reduce its

impact. This study is motivated by both the writer's personal experience and academic interest in improving speaking performance among EFL learners.

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a situation-specific anxiety arising from the unique challenges of language learning, particularly in oral communication. FLA consists of three main components: communication apprehension (CA), test anxiety (TA), and fear of negative evaluation (FNE). Previous studies (Rumiyati & Seftika, 2018; Suciati, 2020; Bogod et al., 2021) have investigated these categories and their impact on learners' performance. However, there remains a gap in studies that combine these types with student-reported coping strategies in EFL contexts, especially among Indonesian university students. This study aims to fill that gap by not only identifying the types of anxiety but also exploring the underlying causes and the strategies employed by students to manage their anxiety.

The main aim of this study is to investigate the types of speaking anxiety experienced by fourth-semester EFL students, the factors that contribute to this anxiety, and the strategies used to overcome it. The expected results of this study include identifying communication apprehension as the most dominant type of anxiety and recognizing both internal factors (lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes) and external factors (teacher's presence, peer evaluation) as key contributors. Moreover, the study is expected to reveal that students tend to employ preparation, self-talk, and relaxation techniques as their coping strategies.

By presenting a thorough understanding of speaking anxiety in the EFL classroom and highlighting students' coping strategies, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the literature on language anxiety and practically to English teaching methodologies at the university level.

METHOD

Basically, this study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the speaking anxiety experienced by EFL students. The research was conducted at Nusa Cendana University during the 2024–2025 academic year, with the researcher actively involved in data collection. The total population consisted of 152 fourth-semester students enrolled in the English Study Program, of whom 60 were selected as the sample using purposive sampling. These participants were chosen from classes 4C and 4D.

Data were collected through two primary instruments: a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). It consisted of 33 items translated into Indonesian and was distributed online via Google Forms using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire aimed to identify the types of speaking anxiety experienced by students. Based on the questionnaire responses, 10 students were selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews. These interviews allowed the researcher to explore deeper insights into the causes of speaking anxiety and the strategies students used to manage it.

The data analysis in this study followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The questionnaire results were presented as frequencies and percentages, while the interview data were analyzed thematically. To ensure data validity, triangulation was used by comparing questionnaire and interview findings and by aligning the results with relevant theoretical frameworks. This approach allowed for a comprehensive and credible analysis of students' speaking anxiety in EFL classroom settings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

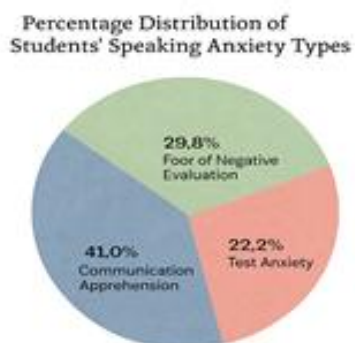
Findings

The following are the detailed analyses regarding findings and discussion of this study, which consists of three parts: Types of Students' anxiety, Causes of Speaking anxiety, and their Strategies to cope with speaking anxiety. The data from the findings is presented in the form of pie charts, and so the percentage level will be clearly seen.

Types of Anxiety

The interview findings confirmed the questionnaire results, indicating that communication apprehension is the most common form of speaking anxiety among students. Participants reported feeling nervous and unprepared when suddenly asked to speak. One student expressed, "If I do not prepare myself, I feel like my heart is beating very fast, and I can't think clearly." This exemplifies communication apprehension, which typically arises in spontaneous speaking situations. Fear of negative evaluation emerged as the second most frequent type. Students often expressed discomfort over being judged by their peers or instructors. One participant stated, "I feel ashamed when people stare at me while I'm speaking, especially if they are better in English." This concern led many to refrain from volunteering to speak. Lastly, test anxiety was reported in relation to formal speaking activities such as oral presentations.

The above-mentioned findings have also been strengthened by the students' answers in the questionnaire and interviews related to Types, Causes and Coping strategies. The questionnaire responses were categorized into three factors, aligning with the framework proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which identifies communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety as the core components of language learning anxiety. Similar results were observed by Rumiya and Seftika (2018), who also found Communicative apprehension to be the dominant type of anxiety among EFL learners.



Picture 1: Student's answers

The findings show that Communication Apprehension was the most dominant type of anxiety, with a total score of 1,968 points or 41.0% of the overall anxiety responses. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), Communication Apprehension refers to feelings of shyness, nervousness, or fear experienced when required to communicate in a foreign language, especially in spontaneous speaking situations. The second most dominant type of speaking anxiety identified in this study was Fear of Negative Evaluation, with a total score of 1,430 points or 29.8% of the total responses. Based on Horwitz et al. (1986), Fear of Negative Evaluation is defined as the apprehension about others' evaluations due to concerns about unfavorable judgments from others. The third type of speaking anxiety explored in this study was Test Anxiety (TA), which received the lowest score among the three categories, with a total of 1,403 points. Despite its lower score, TA still appeared as a relevant issue for several students. Horwitz et al. (1986)

define test anxiety as the type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure, often triggered by evaluative situations such as oral exams, presentations, or graded class activities.

Causes of Speaking Anxiety

The factors contributing to speaking anxiety can be broadly categorized into two groups: internal and external. Each of these categories plays a significant role in influencing the level of anxiety experienced by students when speaking English. According to the interview, the writer found that the students' speaking anxiety was caused by a combination of internal and external factors.

Internal factors include a lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and nervousness when speaking in front of others. Some students reported feeling anxious even when well-prepared, especially when speaking in front of lecturers or unfamiliar classmates. This anxiety was intensified by the pressure to pronounce words correctly and the worry of being laughed at, which aligns with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) explanation of the fear of negative evaluation. Below are the statement of some students:

“Even though I already prepared, I still felt nervous when I had to speak in front of my lecturer. I was afraid that my pronunciation would be wrong and people would laugh.”

“I always feel like my English is not good enough, so I get anxious easily, especially when others are watching.”

External factors, such as teachers' attitudes, teaching style, and the presence of lecturers, emerged as significant sources of pressure during the interviews. Some students felt more nervous when addressing large groups or unfamiliar classmates than in smaller or more familiar settings. Peer pressure and fear of ridicule were also prominent concerns, particularly for one of the students, who expressed a strong fear of being laughed at if mistakes were made. Particularly for one student who expressed:

“To be honest, speaking English feels like a challenge to me because I am not used to speaking in front of a class, this becomes even more challenging when I am required to speak in front of a large audience composed of individuals who are not my classmate.”

Strategies to Cope with Speaking Anxiety

The majority of students' anxiety is caused by their negative ideas, such as low self-esteem and negative self-perceptions that lower their talents. Their fear of making mistakes leads them to assume the worst about the situation, including that the audience will find it strange, criticize, and laugh at them. Consequently, because negative thoughts affect speech performance, it is crucial to manage them.

Based on the interview results, it was found that students employed a variety of strategies to overcome their speaking anxiety, each reflecting personal preferences and coping styles. A common approach involved holding or playing with a physical object, usually a pen, during presentations. This strategy served as a distraction to reduce tension and maintain focus, aligning with behavioral techniques aimed at regulating anxiety through tactile grounding. Some students also relied on cognitive strategies like self-talk and positive mental framing. They encouraged themselves internally by affirming that making mistakes was acceptable and that continuing to speak was more important than achieving perfection. These responses reflect adaptive emotion regulation strategies and show how anxiety-inducing situations were reframed as learning opportunities.

In addition, physical regulation techniques, such as deep breathing or small body-focused habits (e.g., pressing on a toe), were used to manage physiological symptoms like shaking or a rapid heartbeat. Preparation and practice also played a crucial role. By thoroughly reviewing material or rehearsing in front of a mirror, individuals were able to build confidence and mentally prepare for their audience's reactions. The mirror technique, in particular, helped simulate real-life speaking conditions. Interestingly,

one of the students admitted to smoking as a way to reduce their anxiety before speaking. While this method may offer temporary relief, it is considered a maladaptive coping strategy, as it does not address the underlying cause of anxiety and may have negative health implications. Overall, these findings indicate that while most students employ constructive strategies such as preparation, relaxation, and positive self-talk, some resort to less effective or potentially harmful methods.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that speaking anxiety is a significant challenge for fourth-semester students of the English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University. The most common types of anxiety identified were communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Contributing factors included both internal sources, such as low self-confidence and fear of making mistakes, and external influences, such as peer pressure and teaching style. To cope with these challenges, students employed a range of strategies, including preparation, mirror practice, relaxation techniques, and positive self-talk. These efforts reflect students' resilience and willingness to remain engaged in speaking activities despite their anxiety.

Overall, this study emphasizes the need for EFL educators to acknowledge and address psychological barriers in language learning. Creating a supportive classroom environment that builds confidence and reduces anxiety is essential for fostering effective language acquisition.

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