EXAMINING SPEAKING ANXIETY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STUDENTS IN INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study delves into the examination of English speaking anxiety levels among students enrolled in the International Relations Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. Its primary objective is to discern the extent of anxiety experienced by students, identify the factors influencing it, and explore effective strategies to overcome this prevalent issue. Through the utilization of the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS) developed by Balemir (2009), coupled with comprehensive in-depth interviews, the research findings indicate that a significant majority, accounting for 65% of students, grapple with moderate levels of speaking anxiety. The average scores derived from the assessment of different dimensions of anxiety reveal notable figures: 3.26 for Communication Anxiety, 3.16 for Test Anxiety, and 3.26 for Fear of Negative Evaluation. The principal contributing factors exacerbating anxiety include communication apprehension, test-related anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, often stemming from inherent uncertainties surrounding language proficiency and apprehensions regarding comprehension abilities. Effective coping mechanisms identified to alleviate this pervasive anxiety encompass a multifaceted approach, including practices such as speaking exercises in front of a mirror, meticulous preparation of speaking material, and consistent engagement in repeated practice sessions. These strategies collectively contribute to bolstering confidence levels while concurrently mitigating anxiety symptoms. This comprehensive study not only lays a robust foundation for tailored interventions aimed at ameliorating English communication skills among students but also sheds light on the intricate interplay between anxiety levels, underlying factors, and the efficacy of coping strategies. *This is an open access article under the <u>CC BY-SA</u> license.*

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INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a prevalent mental health issue that affects individuals in various settings, including educational institutions. Many students experience apprehension before delivering a presentation in English, feeling tension and speech-related anxiety. Speaking anxiety refers to the stress students face when addressing an audience (Khairunisa, 2019).

Anxiety is described as a mental state that arises when contemplating potential unpleasant events (Knox et al., 2002) and is marked by fear and worry (Özcan, 2019). It manifests through cognitive fear, physiological nervous arousal, and a sense of unease (Lestari & Solekhah, 2022).

EFL learners often experience anxiety during oral activities due to doubts about grammar, forgetting words, or fear of making mistakes (Çelikpazu & Taşdemir, 2022). This anxiety hinders their participation in class, affecting their ability to communicate effectively in English. The differences between English and Bahasa Indonesia, especially in grammar, contribute to these difficulties. Additionally, a limited vocabulary hampers communication, making it challenging for students to speak fluently.

Pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are common struggles for students. Anxiety, characterized by unease and worry (Horwitz et al., 1986), exacerbates these issues and significantly impacts foreign language acquisition (Alamer & Almulhim, 2021). Many students feel afraid and embarrassed when practicing English due to the fear of making mistakes and potential ridicule.

Addressing these root causes is essential for educators to develop strategies that foster a supportive learning environment. By promoting a culture of learning over perfection and creating a positive atmosphere, educators can reduce speaking anxiety and improve language acquisition outcomes.

This study examines the speaking anxiety of sixth-semester International Relations students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, where English is used.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research adopts a mixed-method approach to evaluate the levels of speaking anxiety among sixth-semester students, investigating the influencing factors and effective coping strategies. The study focuses on students enrolled in the International Relations program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. The sample selection employed simple random sampling to ensure the representation of the student population.

The data collection process involved administering the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS) questionnaire developed by Balemir (2009), which assesses Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted to delve into the underlying causes of anxiety and the strategies employed to mitigate it. The questionnaire was distributed during class sessions, allowing participants ample time to respond to the 28 questions. Each interview session lasted approximately 3-5 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent.

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Data analysis involved creating a table of questionnaire results to identify the students' anxiety levels, calculating the mean scores for each anxiety dimension, and applying thematic analysis to the interview transcripts to identify the causes of anxiety and the strategies they use to cope with anxiety.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The main goal of this research is to evaluate the level of English speaking anxiety among sixth-semester students in the International Relations Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. English speaking anxiety is a common issue that can impair students' ability to communicate effectively in an international setting. Data was collected from 83 sixth-semester students, selected randomly from the department. The study employed the FLSAS (Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale) questionnaire, which contains 28 items, to measure three key components of speaking anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Additionally, interviews were conducted with six students, chosen based on their anxiety scores, to gather qualitative insights. This comprehensive methodology aims to shed light on the prevalence and characteristics of English speaking anxiety among students in the International Relations Department.

Table1. The Result of Categories and Frequency FLSAS Questionnaire by Balemir

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Slightly Anxious	28 – 69	3	4%
Moderately Anxious	70 – 97	54	65%
Highly Anxious	98 – 140	26	31%
Total		83	100%
Maximum Score	415.00		
Minimum Score	83.00		
Average	64.80		
Standard Deviation	28.47		
Varience	29.185		

The average score for the entire sample is 64.80, indicating a moderate level of anxiety. Most students (65%) experience moderate anxiety when speaking, suggesting that they are still open to external guidance.

For knowing the average values about speaking anxiety of the Third Semester Students at English Department Mulawarman University the researcher is used the pattern.

$$Mx = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

Mx = mean (average)

N = Number of Students

$$Mx = \frac{64.80}{83}$$

Mx = 0.78

Table 2. Mean Score of FLSAS Component

FLSAS Component	Mean Score
Communication Apprehension	3.26
Test Anxiety	3.16
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.26
Average	2.89

Communication Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation are both 3.26, while Test Anxiety is 3.16.

Explanation Based on Components of Speaking Anxiety:
   a. **Communication Apprehension**

The average score for communication anxiety is 3.26, with the highest item being number 1 (M=3.60) and the lowest item being number 24 (M=2.65).

Items Number	Questionnaire Item	Mean Score
1.	When I speak English in class, I become nervous.	**3.60**

3.	When I review the scheduled material prior to class, I feel really at ease speaking English.	3.06
7.	Knowing that we will be speaking in English makes me happy.	3.42
8.	Speaking in front of class in English makes me feel really uncomfortable.	3.20
11.	If I believe that my classmates speak English better than I do, I feel nervous about participating in oral activities.	3.28
14.	When I can't properly communicate my ideas in English, I become anxious.	3.52
17.	When I know there will be oral assignments in class, I enjoy going.	3.10
20.	I am more inclined to participate in class when the topics are interesting.	3.52
24.	I get more anxious when I go to an English class than when I go to other ones.	2.65
25.	I hesitate when responding to questions in English.	3.14
28.	I'm nervous about speaking in English, even though I'm well-prepared for the material.	3.39

b. **Test Anxiety**

The average score for test anxiety is 3.16, with the highest item being number 5 (M=3.45) and the lowest item being number 26 (M=2.67).

Items Number	Questionnaire Item	Mean Score
5.	When I realize that my spoken activities will be graded, I am anxious.	3.45
12.	I feel anxious about oral exams in English class.	3.24
16.	I feel at ease during pair-work activities.	3.43
19.	I enjoy volunteering answers in English class.	2.82

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Items Number	Questionnaire Item	Mean Score
2.	I feel less anxious about speaking English in front of others when I am familiar with them.	3.39
4.	I get nervous in class when I'm the only one responding to my teacher's English question.	3.49
6.	I am afraid I will answer a question in English incorrectly.	3.49
9.	I am scared to attend the speaking class because I got corrected by my teacher.	2.81
10.	Participating in group discussions in class makes me anxious.	2.80
13.	I would feel more at ease speaking in English if the class were smaller.	3.57
15.	When I am aware of the planned oral activities, I am more inclined to communicate in English.	3.21
18.	I'm not concerned about people making fun of me because I understand that everyone makes mistakes when speaking in English.	3.39
22.	When my teacher invites other students to give me feedback on my speech practice in class, I get uncomfortable.	3.07
23.	I don't feel pressured when my teacher corrects my oral mistakes in class.	3.41
21.	If I have more practice speaking English in class, I do not get nervous for oral exams.	3.67
26.	When working in groups, I become anxious.	2.67
27.	I'm not anxious when taking an oral exam.	2.87

c. **Fear of Negative Evaluation**

The average score for fear of negative evaluation is 3.26, with the highest item being number 13 (M=3.57) and the lowest item being number 10 (M=2.81).

Factors of Speaking Anxiety and Strategies to Overcome It

    a. Categories of Speaking Anxiety

    1. Slight Speaking Anxiety

Student 1 felt tense and afraid of making mistakes, especially with grammar:

S1: *"Um, how? Um, I'm afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. Especially, what is that? Grammar, right, it's usually mentioned when eeee what is that? In English? Because we get tense and then go blank, so our English gets messed up. That's how it is for me."*

Student 2 felt slightly embarrassed but got used to speaking with practice:

S2: *"Um, learning to speak at first is a bit embarrassing, but gradually, if you do it often, you get used to it."*

    2. Moderate Speaking Anxiety

Student 3 felt fearful about grammar but had some confidence:

S3: *"If in class, my feeling is actually happy because I personally like English, so I have a bit of confidence when speaking English. But sometimes umm, there's a little fear because sometimes when we speak English, we are still fixated on grammar, right? So, it's like when you want to speak, you think about 'was, wes, wos', what should it be? Still a bit scared like that. Actually, we know what we want to say and what we want to talk about. That's it."*

Student 4 saw speaking English as challenging but necessary for their field:

S4: *"Eeee for me personally eeee, speaking English is something challenging yet, eeee in my opinion, for International Relations students, it's something that must be done because, whether we like it or not, as International Relations students, interacting in English is one of the mandatory methods eeee of communication that we must understand and be able to do."*

    3. High Speaking Anxiety

Student 5 felt nervous due to a lack of proficiency:

S5: *"To be honest, I feel nervous because I'm not really good at it, because personally, I'm not very good at English, so the difficulty is, can't, can't... it's not easy to speak, speaking in English is difficult so naturally, I feel nervous and scared. That's it."*

Student 6 felt nervous and jittery, especially in front of many people:

S6: "Ummm, from my experience, honestly, I feel nervous, scared, and jittery for sure. Especially since I'm still in the learning stage, right? It's like eeee learning in front of... what is it? learning to speak in front of many people, right?"

b. **Factors of Speaking Anxiety**

1. Communication Apprehension

Students 1, 3, and 5 showed signs of communication apprehension:

Student 1: Expressed tension and fear of making mistakes when speaking in English, often experiencing blanking out which makes their English messy.

Student 3: Expressed feelings of fear and anxiety, particularly related to grammar when speaking in English.

Student 5: Feels nervous and scared due to a lack of proficiency in English, making it difficult for them to speak.

2. Test Anxiety

No students explicitly showed test anxiety.

3. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Students 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 exhibited signs of fear of negative evaluation. They expressed concerns about making mistakes or feeling embarrassed when speaking English, particularly in front of others. This fear of being negatively evaluated can significantly impact their confidence and willingness to engage in English communication.

c. **Strategies to Overcome Speaking Anxiety**

Students shared various strategies to manage their anxiety:

Student 1: *"Um, it's pretty much the same, like um, for example, the nervousness, um, the nervousness, for example, during a presentation, like an English presentation. So, it's usually the same as other presentations, like calming oneself down and staying focused on the material that I want to convey".*

Student 1 claimed that to overcome their speaking anxiety by calming themself and staying focused on the material to be conveyed.

Student 2: *"Usually, I tend to reduce direct eye contact with the other person, but focus more on the surrounding areas, while occasionally glancing at the speaker's eyes."*

Student 2 reduces direct eye contact with the speaker but occasionally glances at the speaker's eyes.

Student 3: *"Ummm, maybe for overcoming anxiety, it's more about being confident, like ummm, just go ahead and speak first, then write down the key points you want to convey beforehand. Then, like, ummm, speak slowly because sometimes we rush, right? So, ummm, the speech can become, what? inaudible, right? So, it's better to speak more slowly and use simple language so that friends who are not very proficient in English can understand too."*

Student 3 overcomes speaking anxiety by boosting their confidence, daring to speak despite feeling anxious, preparing key points, speaking slowly so that the language used can be heard

clearly, and also using simple language to make it easier for listeners who are less proficient in English to understand.

Student 4: *"Ummm first, preparation. In my opinion, that is the most important thing. When I can understand what I want to say, that becomes a crucial point for me. Therefore, I think that preparation, when I want to speak English, understanding the material and vocabulary, is one of the things that enhances my ability in English."*

Student 4 does is to prepare beforehand because it's important to understand the material that will be delivered.

Student 5: *"Usually, sometimes we are informed by the ummm lecturer about the theme, like "Later we will talk about this". So usually, um... what is that? we are trained first before... before we are asked to come forward to speak. Ummm, we're definitely trained on how to read it, how to speak it, like that. It's just training, basically. Learning it again."*

Student 5 overcomes speaking anxiety by practicing at home how to read and speak beforehand before speaking in front of the class.

Student 6: *"Ummm, the first thing to overcome anxiety and fear in speaking English is, first, I have to ummm prepare a notebook and writing tools. Then, whatever I want to talk about, what I want to convey later, I write it down first, I plan it first, then I practice, practice speaking. Whether it's talking in front of a mirror or, back when I was in school, I usually used a recorder when talking. So ummm that's my tip to reduce anxiety."*

Student 6 overcomes speaking anxiety by practicing in front of a mirror first. Before that, student 6 prepares a notebook and writing tools to jot down what they will say.

Discussion

This study identifies that the majority of sixth-semester International Relations students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur experience moderate levels of speaking anxiety. These findings highlight the diverse spectrum of students' experiences in verbal communication, particularly in a foreign language context. By categorizing anxiety into slight, moderate, and high levels, the research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding these variations, paving the way for targeted interventions tailored to individual needs.

The prevalence of moderate speaking anxiety underscores its pervasive nature in academic settings, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to support students in overcoming these challenges and enhancing their communication skills. This finding aligns with previous studies that have highlighted the significant impact of speaking anxiety on students' academic and personal development.

Further exploration of the underlying factors contributing to moderate speaking anxiety is essential. These factors include communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear

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of negative evaluation, which are significant across different levels of anxiety. Communication apprehension, characterized by nervousness in verbal interactions, often stems from uncertainties about language proficiency. Test anxiety, related to academic assessments, exacerbates anxiety during language learning. Fear of negative evaluation reflects students' worries about judgment from peers or instructors, leading to self-doubt and inhibition in speaking tasks.

Students 1, 3, and 5 share common challenges despite their varying levels of anxiety. Student 1's fear of making errors causes mental blankness, Student 3's anxiety revolves around grammatical accuracy, and Student 5 struggles with nervousness due to perceived lack of proficiency. These commonalities highlight the pervasive impact of speaking anxiety on language learners, even for those with mild anxiety.

The study also identifies six strategies used by students to overcome speaking anxiety, including practicing in front of a mirror, thorough preparation, and memorization. Students 3, 4, 5, and 6 found extensive preparation, such as scripting and rehearsing in front of a mirror, particularly helpful. Han, Tanriöver, and Şahan (2016) support this, noting that mirror practice helps cope with speaking anxiety (Wati & Larasaty, 2020). Liu (2007) emphasizes the importance of practice and building confidence to overcome anxiety, aligning with Raja's (2017) view that thorough preparation provides security and focus (Rahmawati & San Rizqiya, 2023).

Moreover, the utilization of memorization techniques by Student 6 is in accordance with the memory strategies outlined by Oxford and Crookal (1989), resulting in heightened confidence levels and a notable reduction in anxiety levels. These insights strongly suggest that the integration of memorization practices alongside thorough preparation and rehearsal significantly contributes to the alleviation of speaking anxiety, as highlighted in the study conducted by Balderston et al. (2016).

In summary, the research findings underscore the universal aspiration among students to overcome speaking anxiety, irrespective of the strategies employed. The consistent efficacy of regular practice, meticulous preparation, and memory techniques transcends diverse contexts, indicating a shared acknowledgment of their pivotal role in fostering confidence and improving verbal communication skills. This collective endeavor unifies students in their quest for enhanced language proficiency and communication abilities, underscoring a shared commitment to personal growth and development regardless of individual approaches or levels of anxiety.

CONCLUSION

The researcher found that the level of speaking anxiety among sixth-semester students in the International Relations Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur was moderate. Approximately 65% of students experienced moderate speaking anxiety, 31% experienced high speaking anxiety, and 4% experienced low speaking anxiety, with an average score of 64.80.

This study identified three main factors causing speaking anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension was evident in students 1, 3, and 5, who had difficulty expressing ideas due to feelings of inadequacy. Fear of negative evaluation was prominent in students 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, who worried about making mistakes and feeling embarrassed. No students explicitly reported test anxiety, indicating that their anxiety was more related to communication and negative evaluation.

To overcome speaking anxiety, students used several strategies: preparation before speaking, practicing, reducing direct eye contact, and building self-confidence. Preparation involved writing key points and practicing in front of a mirror, while regular practice helped students feel more comfortable speaking in public. Reducing eye contact and enhancing self-confidence through mastering the material were also effective.

In summary, most students encountered moderate levels of speaking anxiety, mainly stemming from communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. Despite differences in anxiety levels, students adopted similar coping strategies, suggesting a uniform approach across the cohort.

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