Exploring Anxiety in EFL Students' Speech Production: Causes and Remedies in the English Education Study Program at PSDKU Aru

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Abstract
Speaking anxiety is a prevalent issue that significantly hinders the learning process for students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This study aims to explore the causes of speaking anxiety among EFL students at PSDKU Aru and to identify coping strategies that may help mitigate the anxiety. The significance of this research lies in its focus on understanding the multifaceted nature of speaking anxiety, which includes both psychological and physiological dimensions, and its impact on students' ability to learn and communicate effectively in English. Data were collected from 37 students in the English Education Study Program using a structured questionnaire, which measured different types of anxiety, contributing factors, and the coping mechanisms students adopted. Results revealed that a substantial number of students experienced various forms of speaking anxiety, such as nervousness, tense body language, and fear of negative evaluation. Factors contributing to this anxiety include lack of vocabulary, fear of making grammatical errors, and low self-confidence. Several strategies were used by students to manage their anxiety, such as regular practice, relaxation techniques, and positive thinking. The findings of this study suggest the need for targeted interventions in educational practices to create a supportive learning environment that encourages students to overcome anxiety and become more confident speakers of English. This paper provides insights that can assist educators in designing effective teaching methods to alleviate the impact of speaking anxiety on EFL learners.

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a natural response to stress and can be experienced in various aspects of life. In the context of language learning, anxiety often emerges when students are required to speak in a language they are not fully proficient in. Speaking anxiety is particularly prevalent among students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as they face both linguistic and psychological challenges that can hinder their ability to communicate effectively. Mastering speaking skills is crucial for EFL students, as it forms the core of their communicative competence, yet many

students find it intimidating to speak in front of an audience. This fear can significantly limit their progress in acquiring language proficiency and negatively affect their overall learning experience.

Speaking anxiety can manifest in various ways, including nervousness, trembling, increased heart rate, and avoidance behaviors, all of which can impair a student's ability to communicate fluently. Anxiety related to speaking not only affects a student's performance during oral presentations or classroom interactions but also has long-term consequences on their confidence and willingness to engage in communication. This study aims to explore the causes of speaking anxiety among EFL students in the English Education Study Program at PSDKU Aru, identify the factors contributing to this anxiety, and investigate the strategies that students use to cope with their anxiety.

The findings of this study can provide valuable insights for educators, helping them understand the unique challenges faced by their students and identify effective ways to reduce speaking anxiety in the classroom. By fostering a more supportive and encouraging learning environment, educators can help students overcome their fear of speaking and build their confidence, thereby improving their language learning outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking anxiety is a well-documented phenomenon in language learning and can significantly hinder a learner's ability to communicate effectively. Horwitz et al. (1986) categorize foreign language anxiety into three main components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These types of anxiety can create a cycle of avoidance, where students' reluctance to participate in speaking activities leads to fewer opportunities for practice, further increasing their anxiety and impeding their progress.

Factors contributing to speaking anxiety can be internal, such as low self-esteem and perfectionism, or external, such as the learning environment, fear of judgment, and teaching methods (Young, 1991). This involves the apprehension about others evaluating or judging one's speaking abilities negatively. This fear can be exacerbated by the presence of peers or instructors during speaking activities. Since fear is not specific to taking tests, it is a continuation of test anxiety, which is the second component of second/foreign language anxiety. Instead, it can happen in any social or assessment setting, such as a job interview or speaking in a second or foreign language class (Tanveer, 2007:14). It is also more comprehensive in that it covers not just the teacher's assessment of the pupils but also how other students are believed to be responding. According to Horwitz et al., while dread of a poor assessment, test anxiety, and communication anxiety are helpful conceptual building blocks for describing anxiety related to second or foreign languages.

According to Yavuz et al. (2013:4), anxiety related to second languages comes in three forms: When students possess mature ideas and opinions but lack the necessary interpersonal abilities, it can lead to communicative anxiety. It's a dread of actual interaction with other individuals. When second language learners believe they are unable to give the right social impression, they become fearful of being evaluated negatively. It is a fear of being judged by others, a desire to stay out of circumstances that require judgment, and an expectation. In summary, test anxiety is a fear of being evaluated academically. It is a common anxiety that students have, whether consciously or unconsciously, that they would perform poorly on tests and have a bad experience. This particular form of anxiety is rooted in a fear of failing and is related to worries about academic evaluations. Additionally, lack of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge also contributes to students' fear of making mistakes, which heightens their anxiety. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) propose two coping strategies: problem-focused and

emotion-focused strategies. Problem-focused strategies address the root of anxiety, while emotion-focused strategies aim to manage the emotional response. Both types of strategies are crucial for EFL students in managing their anxiety effectively.

Coping strategies, according to Lazarus and Folkman (Miranda, 2013), are tactical approaches that involve actions to deal with stressors such as pressure or demands. In line with Lazarus and Folkman, Friedman (Miranda, 2013) stated that coping strategies are an individual's ability to adjust to a conflict or other challenging situation. Lazarus and Folkman (Maryam, 2017) divide coping strategies into two categories, namely: Problem-focused coping strategies include: analytical and practical problem-solving techniques. This strategy is generally applied when the problem that needs to be solved can be managed and handled effectively. In addition, coping strategies that focus on this coping mechanism will be applied if a person feels confident in their ability to cope effectively with the problem at hand. 2) Emotion-focused coping strategies are doing activities that are intended to enhance emotions without making the stressor even more stressful. Coping is done when a person feels they have no ability to change a difficult situation and can only accept it. Coping is the visible and hidden behaviors that a person does to reduce or eliminate tension psychology in stressful conditions (Yani,1997). Sarafino (2002), coping is an attempt to neutralize or reduce the stress that occurs. In the view of Haber and Runyon (1984), coping is all forms of behavior and thoughts (negative or positive). behaviors and thoughts (negative or positive) that can reduce conditions that burden individual so as not to cause stress.

Previous studies

The initial investigation, conducted by Nuralika, F. (2023), titled "Exploring Students' Anxiety about Their English-Speaking Participation in the Classroom: A Case Study of 10th Grade Students of SMAN 1 Parung, Bogor," aimed to assess the level of students' speaking anxiety, identify types of speaking anxiety, pinpoint factors influencing speaking anxiety, and propose strategies to overcome students' speaking anxiety in class participation. This research utilized qualitative methods, employing thematic analysis to explore and elucidate data on students' anxiety. The researchers discovered through interview transcripts that college students consistently experienced debilitating types of anxiety, such as worry, tension, fear of the researcher, nervousness, hesitation, researcher stress, blankness, and trembling. In contrast, college students exhibited only low debilitating types of anxiety, with two high debilitating types of anxiety displaying facilitating aspects like confidence and studying in advance. Additionally, the study identified three factors - cognitive, affective, and performance factors - that negatively impacted students' ability to engage in class participation. The affective factor was the most prevalent, with students employing coping strategies such as relaxation, preparation, positive thinking, distraction, concentration, and self-enhancement to mitigate negative experiences. Despite these coping strategies, students expressed reduced confidence in their ability to participate in group projects in class.

The second study, conducted by Rosmini et al. and titled "EFL Students' Anxiety in Oral Presentation in Thesis Examination during Covid-19 Pandemic Era at Islamic Higher Education" (2022), aimed to examine EFL students' anxiety during oral presentations for thesis exams. This qualitative case study involved seven experienced EFL students, and thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed that during oral presentations for thesis exams, all EFL students experienced both debilitating and facilitating anxiety. Facilitative anxiety was observed when students exhibited tense, frightened, afraid, nervous, self-doubt, blank, and trembling feelings. Conversely, debilitating anxiety was present when students displayed tense, anxious, terrified, nervous, self-doubt, blank, and trembling feelings.

These two studies inspire the researchers to create similar study in PSDKU Aru. Hopefully the result will be beneficial for future teachers and fellow researchers alike.

METHODS
Research Design
This study employed a quantitative research design to explore the causes and coping strategies for speaking anxiety among EFL students at PSDKU Aru. A survey method was used to collect data, utilizing a structured questionnaire designed to measure the different dimensions of speaking anxiety, the factors contributing to anxiety, and the strategies students use to cope with their anxiety.

The participants in this study were 37 students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at PSDKU Aru. The students were selected from three different semesters: semester 2, semester 4, and semester 6. This sample was chosen to represent a range of language proficiency levels, as students in different semesters may have different levels of exposure to English language learning and different experiences with speaking anxiety.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which consisted of three sections: types of speaking anxiety, factors contributing to anxiety, and coping strategies for speaking anxiety. Responses were measured using a Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to identify the prevalence of different types of anxiety, contributing factors, and coping strategies among the participants.

The data collected through the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each item on the questionnaire to determine the prevalence of different types of anxiety, the most common contributing factors, and the coping strategies used by students. The results were then interpreted to identify patterns and relationships between the different variables.

FINDINGS
Research findings
The findings of the study revealed that speaking anxiety is a prevalent issue among EFL students at PSDKU Aru. The majority of students reported experiencing some form of anxiety when speaking in English, with varying degrees of intensity.

Types of Speaking Anxiety
The table below summarizes the responses regarding the types of speaking anxiety experienced by students.

Survey table

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
I feel nervous when speaking in front of others	16.21	29.72	40.54	10.81	2.70
I feel tense when preparing for a presentation	8.10	62.16	27.02	2.70	-
My hands shake when I speak	8.10	35.13	27.02	18.91	8.10
I fear I will forget what I prepared to say	8.10	37.83	37.83	13.51	-

My body feels tense and stiff during presentation	8.10	24.32	32.43	27.02	5.40

These findings indicate that the most common forms of speaking anxiety include nervousness during speaking (reported by 45.93% of students) and tension during preparation for a presentation (reported by 70.26% of students). Physical symptoms, such as trembling hands and stiff body posture, were also reported by a significant number of students, reflecting the physiological dimension of speaking anxiety.

Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety

The study identified several key factors contributing to speaking anxiety among students, including lack of vocabulary, fear of making grammatical errors, low self-confidence, and fear of negative evaluation. The following are the key findings:

- Linguistic Factors: More than half of the students (56.75%) reported that they often felt anxious because they lacked the necessary vocabulary to express themselves effectively in English.
- Fear of Grammatical Errors: Approximately 51.35% of students indicated that they were afraid of making grammatical errors during their presentations.
- Low Self-Confidence: Nearly half of the students (48.64%) reported low confidence in their ability to speak English fluently. This lack of confidence was often linked to negative past experiences, such as receiving criticism from teachers or peers.
- Environmental Factors: Students reported that speaking in front of their peers heightened their anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation.

Coping Strategies for Speaking Anxiety

The coping strategies employed by students to manage speaking anxiety were diverse, and the findings revealed a combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Key findings include:

- Practice and Rehearsal: Approximately 40.54% of students practiced speaking by doing monologues or watching educational videos to help prepare for speaking activities.
- Relaxation Techniques: Around 43.24% of students used relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, to calm their nerves.
- Positive Thinking: Positive thinking and self-talk were used by many students, with 37.83% reporting that these strategies helped boost their confidence.
- Social Support: Many students relied on social support from peers and teachers, and 59.45% indicated that watching educational videos online was also beneficial in enhancing their speaking skills.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that EFL students at PSDKU Aru experience various forms of speaking anxiety, including psychological symptoms such as nervousness, as well as physiological symptoms such as trembling hands. These findings align with those of Horwitz et al. (1986), who highlighted communication apprehension as a common issue among language learners. Similarly, Liu (2006) found that anxiety in speaking often results in physical manifestations that further impair language learners' abilities, which is consistent with the findings in the present study.

Interestingly, the high percentage of students who reported experiencing nervousness during speaking (45.93%) contrasts with Park and Lee's (2005) findings, which indicated lower

levels of speaking anxiety among more confident learners. This suggests that students at PSDKU Aru may lack certain foundational elements in their language education that could help mitigate anxiety, such as practice in low-pressure environments or more personalized support from instructors.

The physiological symptoms reported by students, such as tense body posture and trembling hands, are consistent with prior research by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), who noted that anxiety has both psychological and physiological effects. These physical symptoms not only hinder students' ability to communicate effectively but also create a cycle where the fear of these symptoms appearing further heightens their anxiety. This cycle was evident among the PSDKU students, particularly those who reported that their hands trembled when speaking in front of others.

Additionally, the study identified a number of factors that contributed significantly to speaking anxiety among EFL students. Linguistic factors, such as lack of vocabulary, were cited by over half of the respondents, highlighting the importance of a strong vocabulary foundation in mitigating speaking anxiety. This finding supports the work of Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009), who argued that insufficient language skills often serve as the root of anxiety, particularly during speaking tasks. This is particularly significant given that many students at PSDKU Aru come from under-resourced educational backgrounds where exposure to English is limited.

Low self-confidence was another key factor contributing to speaking anxiety. Almost half of the participants (48.64%) reported lacking confidence in their speaking abilities. This aligns with Young's (1991) findings that low self-esteem and a fear of being judged are prominent contributors to speaking anxiety. However, while Young suggested that a supportive learning environment could mitigate these issues, the findings in the present study suggest that the current learning environment at PSDKU Aru may still lack the support needed to fully alleviate students' fears of negative evaluation.

Environmental factors also played a significant role, with many students indicating that speaking in front of their peers increased their anxiety levels. This finding is consistent with Liu (2006), who identified peer pressure as a major contributor to language learning anxiety. However, the finding that students at PSDKU Aru also felt tense even during preparation (70.26%) indicates that anxiety is present not only during speaking tasks but also well before the task, suggesting a deeper psychological barrier that needs to be addressed.

The findings also revealed that students at PSDKU Aru employed both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies to manage their speaking anxiety. Problem-focused strategies, such as practice and rehearsal, were frequently reported by students. This aligns with the findings of Nakatani (2010), who emphasized the importance of practice in reducing anxiety. However, unlike Nakatani's findings that suggested structured practice in the classroom as a key strategy, students at PSDKU Aru often resorted to practicing independently, indicating a possible gap in classroom support.

Emotion-focused strategies, such as relaxation techniques and positive self-talk, were also commonly used by the students. These strategies helped students manage their emotional responses to anxiety and approach speaking tasks with a more positive mindset. This finding is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory of coping, which highlights the importance of emotion regulation in managing stress. However, the reliance on individual strategies, such as deep breathing exercises, may indicate a lack of formal instruction in anxiety management techniques within the classroom setting at PSDKU Aru.

Social support was another significant coping mechanism for students. The role of social support in managing speaking anxiety has been emphasized in previous research, including studies by Cheng (2004) and Vygotsky (1978). The students in the present study reported that receiving encouragement from their peers and teachers helped them feel more

comfortable speaking in front of an audience. This finding suggests that fostering a collaborative and supportive classroom culture is essential for reducing anxiety and encouraging students to engage in speaking activities.

The use of technology as a coping mechanism was also reported by a significant number of students. Watching educational videos on platforms like YouTube and Instagram provided students with additional opportunities to practice their speaking skills in a low-pressure environment. This finding aligns with recent research by Boonkit (2010), who argued that exposure to authentic language through multimedia can help students build their confidence and reduce anxiety. However, while the use of technology is a positive step, it may not be a substitute for direct practice in front of an audience, which remains a crucial component of reducing speaking anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the prevalence of speaking anxiety among EFL students at PSDKU Aru and identifies the key factors contributing to this anxiety. The findings suggest that speaking anxiety is influenced by a combination of linguistic, psychological, and environmental factors, including lack of vocabulary, fear of grammatical errors, low self-confidence, and fear of negative evaluation. The study also identifies several coping strategies that students use to manage their anxiety, including practice, relaxation techniques, positive self-talk, and seeking social support.

The findings of this study have important implications for educators and language instructors. By understanding the factors that contribute to speaking anxiety and the strategies that students use to cope with it, educators can develop targeted interventions to help students overcome their fear of speaking. Creating a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment, providing structured speaking activities, and encouraging the use of relaxation techniques and positive self-talk can help reduce speaking anxiety and improve students' language learning outcomes.

Future research should explore the effectiveness of specific interventions for reducing speaking anxiety, such as the use of technology-based tools, peer support programs, and mindfulness-based relaxation techniques. By continuing to investigate the factors that contribute to speaking anxiety and the strategies that can help mitigate it, educators can better support their students in developing the confidence and skills they need to succeed in language learning.

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