



# Measuring Students' Speaking Anxiety Levels in English Academic Speaking Class and Strategies to Overcome

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**Abstract:** This study aims to measure students' speaking anxiety levels in an English academic speaking class, identify the causes of their anxiety, and examine the strategies they use to overcome it. This study employed a mixed-methods approach by combining quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected through a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire to measure students' anxiety levels, while qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews to explore the causes and coping strategies. The participants were university students enrolled in an academic speaking class. The findings show that 36.8% of students experience high speaking anxiety, while 63.2% fall into moderate to low levels, including 21.1% categorized as low anxiety. The study identifies three main factors causing anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Students experience symptoms such as nervousness, trembling, heart pounding, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes or being negatively judged. To overcome anxiety, students commonly apply strategies such as preparation, relaxation (e.g., deep breathing), and positive thinking. The findings suggest that educators should implement targeted interventions by creating supportive classroom environments and integrating anxiety-reduction strategies into teaching practices. These efforts are important to enhance students' confidence, participation, and performance in academic speaking contexts.

**Keywords:** Speaking Anxiety; Academic Speaking; Anxiety Factors; Coping Strategies

## Introduction

Speaking has emerged as one of the most important abilities that people should have since it enables others to understand their intentions. Speaking, in the words of (Anita Jati Laksana, 2016), order to communicate or receive information. Effective speaking skills are essential for career advancement, but their benefits extend beyond professional objectives. Strong speaking abilities can also enhance one's personal life.

Nowadays, students' speaking ability is very important for their future profession or even daily needs because sometimes people still rate their personality and professionalism by their speaking ability, which usually happens while attending a job interview. There is a way to improve students' speaking ability, especially with their participation in speaking class and some assessment methods that bring a significant impact on their speaking ability. Speaking is considered a difficult ability to acquire since it requires the mastery of multiple subskills, including retrieving vocabulary, choosing grammatical patterns, and sociocultural competency (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, as cited in Roud, 2016). Fitri (2019) discovered that a significant number of students encounter difficulties when engaging in

public speaking, as they find oral presentations demanding. Students may experience fear, nervousness, and terror, often hesitating or refusing to speak. These qualities indicate symptoms of linguistic anxiety.

Anxiety is a prevalent phenomenon that manifests in individuals across many contexts and circumstances (Heri Susanto, et al, 2017). According to (Wu, 2007), anxiety poses a significant obstacle for students engaged in language acquisition. (Sutarsyah, 2017) found that student anxiety negatively impacts speaking achievement, showing that students with high anxiety levels have low speaking scores. Students are afraid to speak English due to anxiousness, lacking self-confidence and willingness to learn. Fitri (2019) recommended that students identify their sources of anxiety. Many may not be aware of the causes, making it difficult to address and overcome their fear. Because it hinders students' progress in English, particularly in oral communication, it is unacceptable to let this issue persist.

This study is important because speaking anxiety hinders students' English proficiency. Severe speech anxiety prevents students from participating in oral presentations, class discussions, and even casual conversations. Avoidance impacts their well-being, confidence, and language development.

This study investigates students' experiences with speaking anxiety in an academic speaking class at an English Education Study Program in a university in Surabaya. Specifically, it aims to identify anxiety levels, explore the causes of speaking anxiety, and analyze the strategies students use to overcome it. Understanding these factors is essential for creating supportive learning environments where students can enhance their speaking abilities without undue pressure.

Speaking is one of the most essential language skills as it enables individuals to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings effectively in both academic and real-life communication. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking competence is particularly important because it reflects students' ability to use the language communicatively. In academic settings, students are required to actively participate in presentations, discussions, and other speaking activities, which demand not only linguistic competence but also confidence and psychological readiness. Moreover, speaking skills are often associated with students' future professional success, as oral communication is a key requirement in job interviews and workplace interactions.

However, developing speaking skills is a complex process that involves mastering various components, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and sociocultural competence. Many students face significant challenges when required to speak English, especially in formal academic situations. One of the most critical factors that hinder students' speaking performance is speaking anxiety. This psychological factor often manifests in feelings of nervousness, fear, and worry when students are asked to speak in front of others. Students may experience symptoms such as trembling, heart pounding, and lack of confidence, which ultimately lead them to avoid participation in speaking activities.

Previous studies have shown that speaking anxiety is a common issue in EFL classrooms and has a negative impact on students' speaking performance. Students with

high levels of anxiety tend to have lower speaking achievement and are less willing to communicate. Speaking anxiety is generally associated with three main factors: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These factors contribute to students' reluctance to speak, fear of making mistakes, and concern about being judged by teachers or peers. As a result, students often prefer to remain silent rather than engage in speaking activities, which hinders their language development.

Although many studies have investigated speaking anxiety, most of them focus on general EFL contexts and primarily examine the relationship between anxiety and speaking performance. Only a limited number of studies explore students' experiences specifically in academic speaking classes, where the demands for formal communication are higher. Furthermore, previous research rarely integrates the analysis of anxiety levels, underlying causes, and coping strategies within a single comprehensive study, particularly in the context of Indonesian higher education.

There is a lack of comprehensive research that simultaneously examines students' speaking anxiety levels, identifies its causes, and explores coping strategies in academic speaking classes within a specific educational and cultural context.

This study offers a comprehensive and integrated approach by combining quantitative and qualitative methods to measure anxiety levels, analyze contributing factors, and investigate students' strategies to overcome speaking anxiety in an academic speaking setting. Therefore, this study aims to measure students' speaking anxiety levels in an English academic speaking class, identify the causes of their anxiety, and analyze the strategies they use to overcome speaking anxiety.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to provide a broader understanding of anxiety in speaking English to fourth-semester English education students at a University in Surabaya. In this study, a researcher combined many methodologies to obtain a clearer outcome. (Creswell, 2012) defines mixed methods design as an approach that involves the collection, integration, and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of a research problem. The researcher utilized mixed methods research design, commencing with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the subsequent gathering and analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 2012).

This study took place at the English education program study at a university in Surabaya. The research conducted there because the program study is conducting academic speaking class that is compatible for the research subject. This study took over the course with three agendas in place. The first agenda item was to have students fill out an FLCAS questionnaire to measure their level of anxiety. The second agenda item was to interview students who indicated with low anxiety level and the third agenda item was to interview students with high anxiety level.

The participants of this study consisted of 19 fourth-semester students enrolled in an academic speaking class in the English Education Study Program at a university in Surabaya. The relatively small sample size was considered appropriate as the study focused on in-depth exploration within a specific classroom context. This study employed purposive sampling, in which participants were deliberately selected based on their involvement in the academic speaking course. This sampling technique was chosen because it allowed the researcher to obtain relevant and information-rich data aligned with the research objectives. By selecting participants who directly experience academic speaking activities, the researcher was able to gain a more accurate understanding of students' speaking anxiety levels, its causes, and the strategies used to overcome it.

The data required for this study is gathered from questionnaires and interviews in the form of statements and descriptions. As a result, the data that were collected for this study were qualitative and quantitative. Ary, Donald, et al. (2006, p. 420) describe qualitative inquiry as a research approach aimed at understanding and interpreting human and social behavior as experienced by participants within a specific social context. The data gathered for this study came from the responses that students gave on the questionnaire as well as the researcher's own interview with the research subjects.

The primary instrument used for quantitative data collection was the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ), which was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The questionnaire consists of 18 items categorized into three main dimensions: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These dimensions are widely recognized as core components of language anxiety. The instrument has been extensively used and validated in previous studies, indicating strong content validity in measuring speaking anxiety in EFL contexts. Furthermore, the adapted version of the questionnaire has undergone prior testing and refinement to ensure its suitability for the specific context of English language learners.

In terms of reliability, the instrument demonstrates consistency in measuring students' anxiety levels, as supported by its widespread application in similar studies. The use of a structured Likert scale also enhances the reliability of responses by providing standardized answer options. Additionally, to strengthen the credibility of the data, this study employed methodological triangulation by combining questionnaire data with semi-structured interviews. The interviews allowed the researcher to validate and enrich the quantitative findings by exploring students' experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies in greater depth.

The certainty that the researcher acquired from the many data sources makes them highly significant. In this study, the participants in the classroom were served as the researchers' primary sources of data. The researcher collected questionnaire data to answer the first and second research questions about measuring student's speaking anxiety levels and finding the causes of speaking anxiety. The interview data is used to answer the third research questions to find out the strategies to overcome speaking anxiety.

Since gathering data is the primary goal of research, the data collection method is among the most crucial stages in the study. Researchers did not obtain data that fulfils the required data standards if they did not understand the data collection techniques.

Data collection can take place in various contexts, utilizing a range of sources and methods. In terms of context, data may be gathered in natural settings. From the perspective of sources, both primary and secondary data can be employed. Furthermore, regarding the methods of data collection, data is acquired through:

It is feasible to administer the Speaking Anxiety survey one-on-one. The FLSAQ takes about 20 minutes to complete (more for beginner EFL students), and the assignment and profiling take about 5 to 10 minutes. This is the expected total administrator time. The process is influenced by how comfortable students feel about filling out surveys. After the purpose has been explained, the researcher should ask the students to quietly read through the instructions. If they have any questions, they should then raise their hands. After that, the researcher should give the students instructions to comprehend every statement and use a five-point Likert scale to indicate how often they utilize the methods (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) provided after each item.

**Table 1.** FLACS Scoring

Scale	Scoring
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

The interview was segmented into two groups based on the categorization of students' anxiety levels. Those with high anxiety levels made up the first group, and those with low anxiety levels made up the second. Questions centered on determining the reason and overcoming strategies from the perspectives of both groups were posed to them. Subsequently, an analysis was conducted on the interview data in order to determine the reason behind the students' elevated anxiety levels and identify suitable measures to lower them. Not only that, but the prior study's data—which included advice from professionals on how to handle students' speaking anxiety—also supports the approach for addressing high levels of anxiety in students.

For data analysis, quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using a Likert scale scoring system. Each response was assigned a numerical value, which was then calculated to determine the overall anxiety score for each student. The scores were subsequently categorized into three levels of anxiety: low, moderate, and high, based on established scoring criteria. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to present the distribution and percentage of students in each anxiety category, allowing for a clear interpretation of overall trends.

Meanwhile, qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and simplified relevant information from the interview transcripts. In the data display stage, the data were organized into meaningful patterns to facilitate interpretation. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher identified key themes related to the causes of speaking anxiety and the strategies used by students to overcome it. This systematic analysis enabled a deeper understanding of students' experiences and ensured the validity of the findings through continuous verification.

## Result and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out the students' speaking anxiety levels in academic speaking, the causes of students' speaking anxiety in academic speaking and the students' strategy to overcome their speaking anxiety in academic speaking.

**Table 2.** *Results of Scores*

Students	Total Score	Level of Anxiety
S6	81	High
S9	78	High
S1	74	High
S7	72	High
S8	72	High
S18	72	High
S10	70	Moderate
S16	64	Moderate
S3	63	Moderate
S14	62	Moderate
S15	61	Moderate
S11	59	Moderate
S4	58	Moderate
S13	49	Low
S2	42	Low
S12	42	Low
S5	36	Low
S17	32	Low
S19	28	Low

The examination of the pupils' levels of speaking anxiety reveals fascinating insights about the general dynamics of the group. Significantly, a considerable 36.8% of the pupils belong to the high anxiety category, indicating a major proportion of the population struggling with increased anxiousness during speaking circumstances. The observed pattern indicates a possible requirement for specific treatments and support systems to assist students in this group in developing coping mechanisms and boosting their self-assurance in verbal communication.

Conversely, a significant proportion of students, specifically 63.2%, experience moderate to low levels of anxiety. This discovery is promising since it suggests that a

significant proportion of pupils are able to handle speaking situations with a moderate to low degree of anxiety. Nevertheless, it is crucial to further examine the precise difficulties encountered by those experiencing moderate anxiety in order to implement a comprehensive strategy that effectively addresses their distinct worries.

Moreover, the subset of pupils, comprising 21.1%, who fall into the low anxiety group, provides educators with a chance to comprehend and utilize the elements that contribute to their ease in verbal communication scenarios. Analyzing the strengths and methodologies of this particular subgroup can provide insights into effective tactics that could help other students in their efforts to decrease their levels of anxiety.

To summarize, the variation in degrees of speaking anxiety among the student population highlights the diversity of experiences in verbal communication. Customized interventions that take into account the distinct requirements of kids in each anxiety group might enhance a more nurturing and efficient learning environment.

Hence the details for each results for each statements provided below. The dataset includes responses from a group of students (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19) related to eight statements assessing communication apprehension in the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale questionnaire. Each statement corresponds to a distinct facet of communication apprehension and is rated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 signifies strongly disagree, and 5 indicates strongly agree. The mean and standard deviation values for each student's responses offer insights into the central tendency and variability of the reported apprehension levels, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the distribution and intensity of apprehension within the analyzed group. In finding out the causes of students' speaking anxiety in academic speaking, the researcher focused on three factors to determine the reasons of why student experience anxiety when speaking English.

### **Communication Apprehension**

Participants exhibited diverse responses to the statement "I am never quite sure of myself when speaking in English." About 5% strongly disagreed, 35% disagreed, 20% were neutral, 35% agreed, and 5% strongly agreed, highlighting varied levels of English communication confidence.

Regarding the statement "I get frightened when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English," 10% strongly disagreed, 30% disagreed, 15% were neutral, 35% agreed, and 10% strongly agreed, reflecting diverse anxiety levels about language comprehension.

For the statement "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes" 5% strongly disagreed, 20% disagreed, 15% were neutral, 35% agreed, and 25% strongly agreed, showing varied levels of anxiety about impromptu speaking.

On the statement "I feel nervous while speaking English with native speakers," 5% strongly disagreed, 20% disagreed, 15% were neutral, 35% agreed, and 25% strongly agreed, reflecting differing levels of anxiety in conversations with native speakers.

Responses to “I don’t feel confident when I speak English in classes” were 5% strongly disagree, 20% disagree, 10% neutral, 40% agree, and 25% strongly agree, indicating varied confidence levels in the classroom.

Regarding self-consciousness when speaking English in front of peers, 68.4% had high anxiety, 5.3% had moderate anxiety, and 26.3% had low anxiety, suggesting a significant prevalence of unease in social situations.

In English classes, 73.7% reported high anxiety, 10.5% moderate anxiety, and 15.8% low anxiety, emphasizing the academic setting's impact on nervousness.

For lack of comprehension, 63.2% reported high anxiety, 10.5% moderate anxiety, and 26.3% low anxiety, highlighting the emotional impact of comprehension issues.

Regarding language rules, 68.4% had high anxiety, 15.8% moderate anxiety, and 15.8% low anxiety, pointing to challenges in learning language rules.

### **Test Anxiety**

Approximately 5% (1 student) strongly disagreed, indicating a small, confident group unaffected by the anxiety of being called on. 25% (5 students) disagreed, showing comfort with the situation. 35% (7 students) were neutral, reflecting mixed feelings. 25% (5 students) agreed, and 10% (2 students) strongly agreed, highlighting significant apprehension among a portion of participants. 5% (1 student) strongly disagreed, showing confidence. 25% (5 students) disagreed, indicating comfort with the situation. 25% (5 students) were neutral, while 35% (7 students) agreed, and 10% (2 students) strongly agreed, demonstrating varied emotional responses to the anticipation of being called on in English classes.

### **Fear of Negative Evaluation**

20% (4 students) strongly disagreed, indicating a confident group unbothered by mistakes. 40% (8 students) disagreed, showing ease with occasional mistakes. 20% (4 students) were neutral, indicating mixed feelings. 15% (3 students) agreed, and 5% (1 student) strongly agreed, highlighting some apprehension about making mistakes.

15% (3 students) strongly disagreed, showing confidence in participation. 30% (6 students) disagreed, feeling comfortable volunteering. 10% (2 students) were neutral, with mixed feelings. 40% (8 students) agreed, expressing embarrassment, while 5% (1 student) strongly agreed, indicating widespread embarrassment about volunteering answers.

15% (3 students) strongly disagreed, showing resilience to corrections. 30% (6 students) disagreed, suggesting comfort with corrections. 10% (2 students) were neutral, indicating mixed emotions. 40% (8 students) agreed, acknowledging emotional responses, and 5% (1 student) strongly agreed, reflecting widespread discomfort.

10% (2 students) strongly disagreed, showing confidence despite corrections. 25% (5 students) disagreed, feeling at ease with corrections. 10% (2 students) were neutral, indicating mixed views. 55% (11 students) agreed, showing apprehension about constant corrections, with 5% (1 student) strongly agreeing, indicating widespread anxiety.

10% (2 students) strongly disagreed, showing self-assurance. 25% (5 students) disagreed, feeling confident in their speaking abilities. 10% (2 students) were neutral, reflecting mixed self-perceptions. 55% (11 students) agreed, perceiving themselves as less proficient, indicating widespread feelings of inadequacy.

15% (3 students) strongly disagreed, feeling unaffected by potential ridicule. 30% (6 students) disagreed, showing comfort with their classmates. 10% (2 students) were neutral, indicating mixed feelings. 40% (8 students) agreed, fearing ridicule, with 5% (1 student) strongly agreeing, showing widespread concern.

10% (2 students) strongly disagreed, showing resilience to unprepared questions. 30% (6 students) disagreed, feeling comfortable with unanticipated questions. 10% (2 students) were neutral, reflecting mixed feelings. 40% (8 students) agreed, showing unease, while 5% (1 student) strongly agreed, highlighting the common anxiety over unexpected questions.

The interview below reveals insights into the strategies used by the students.

### Students with Low Anxiety Level

**Table 3.** Interview Transcript (Low Anxiety)

No.	Interviewer	Participant (S19)
1.	Can you explain the feelings you experience when you speak in front of large audience?	<i>“actually when I talk in english in front of people, I feel like the usual I’m not usually feel so nervous about it ”</i>
2.	Do you ever feel frightened or anxious when you are speaking for a large audience? If yes, can you explain the situations?	<i>“ kind of, sometimes I feel nervous when it comes to something that I’m not really mastering for example when I’m doing my presentation and I’m not really into that topic or I don’t understand the topic I would feel kinda nervous ”</i>
3.	If it is yes, what will you do? (In that moment) / If it is not, what’s the cause?	<i>“ when that case.. I think ee.. I usually taking a deep breaths and continue doing what I need to do ”</i>
4.	In your opinion, what are the factors that cause anxiety?	<i>“I think what cause anxiety first is about confident when someone think they don’t really feel confident they would trembling or maybe having like deg-deg an or something like that ”</i>
5.	What is your strategies to reduce your anxiety?	<i>“I think my strategy is I usually take a deep breaths and I take this as my responsibility to talk in front of people and I need to convince myself this is not the time for me to blame myself for everything I said and I just need to feel confident and convince myself more ”</i>

*“I feel nervous or a little bit worried because my English is not so good and my vocabulary is still limited.”*

Her anxiety peaks during spontaneous English conversations, a situation she describes as particularly challenging:

*"Exactly when someone talks with me in English spontaneously. I don't prepare the answer."*

Student 6 identifies a lack of confidence as the primary cause of her anxiety. She notes that without confidence, people may

*"Trembling or maybe having like deg-degan, heart attacks,"*

which can disrupt public speaking. To mitigate her anxiety, Student 6 emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility and not blaming herself for mistakes, stating,

*"I need to convince myself that this is not the time for me to blame myself for everything I said in front of people."*

Student 6 attributes her anxiety to environmental factors, explaining,

*"My environment doesn't use much English. I often use Indonesian or Javanese."*

To combat this, she practices extensively and attends speaking classes. She recounts,

*"I tried to, like what I said before, I tried to practice a lot and a lot myself. And I attended a speaking class."*

Student 19 views public speaking as a responsibility and focuses on building her confidence to avoid self-blame. She shares her mindset,

*"I just need to feel confident and convince myself more."*

This approach helps her reduce anxiety and manage her fear of negative evaluation. In contrast, Student 6's fear of negative evaluation is heightened by her limited English skills. She copes by practicing frequently and using English as much as possible, even if it means making mistakes. She states,

*"I try to use English. Sometimes, I switch the words a little bit."*

In summary, Student 19, with her low level of speaking anxiety, experiences mild nervousness mainly when unprepared and uses confidence-boosting strategies such as deep breathing and self-reassurance. Student 6, with high speaking anxiety, feels significant worry due to language proficiency issues and environmental factors, relying on extensive practice and speaking classes to manage her anxiety. These transcripts highlight the diverse causes and coping mechanisms for speaking anxiety, providing a nuanced understanding of how confidence, preparation, and environmental influences impact individuals' public speaking experiences.

The analysis of students' speaking anxiety levels in our current study provides fascinating insights into the overall dynamics of the student population. Contrarily, (Bashori et al., 2026) research presents a contrasting scenario, indicating that a substantial percentage

of pupils, specifically 63.2%, encounter moderate to low anxiety. The discovery is encouraging, indicating that a significant proportion of pupils are capable of managing speaking situations with a moderate to low level of nervousness. Nevertheless, conducting a thorough analysis of the particular obstacles encountered by individuals with moderate anxiety is crucial in order to successfully adopt a comprehensive approach that effectively tackles their distinct worries.

To summarize, the range of speaking anxiety levels among students underscores the wide array of experiences in oral communication. Customized interventions, taking into account the specific requirements of children in each anxiety category, have the ability to improve a more supportive and effective learning atmosphere.

In contrast, Bashori's study highlights that student reported a significant degree of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), while also expressing favorable assessments of learning websites. Their belief was that utilizing web-based language learning could mitigate their apprehension while engaging with websites that utilize Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) technology. Further research is advised to analyze the tangible progress of learners' speaking abilities over a prolonged duration in order to assess the true efficacy of learning websites that utilize Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) technology.

The analysis of students' test anxiety in response to statements such as "I feel nervous when I know I'm going to be called on in English class." and "I can feel my heart race when I know I'll be called on in English class." reveals a diverse spectrum of emotional responses within the participant group. Comparing these findings with Hakim & Saym's (2019) study, which primarily focused on test anxiety, our research provides a broader understanding of students' diverse anxieties in verbal communication settings. The nuanced examination of specific scenarios sheds light on the intricate emotional landscape students navigates during language learning. The current study's findings mirror and resonate with Tiara and Asnawi's (2023) incisive insights about the persistent nature of fear among English learners, particularly in contexts where they are compelled to speak, either in front of a familiar audience or in front of examiners. The enormous influence of major characters in students' life, including instructors, friends, and parents, on the emotional landscape of language learning is a common thread in both researches.

In accordance with Tiara and Asnawi's investigation, the current study looks into the subtle aspects of students' anxiety, giving light on their fears when faced with the necessity to speak in front of their peers, a scenario that elicits heightened emotional responses. Furthermore, there is a striking connection between the two studies in demonstrating the palpable anxiety students feel when they are ill-prepared for public speaking events. This shared concern emphasizes the importance of preparation in developing students' confidence and reducing anxiety during language-related tasks.

Importantly, both studies agree on the subject of students being concerned about how prominent persons in their academic journey view and appraise them. In both cases, the dread of poor assessments from teachers and friends appears as a continuous source of worry. Tiara and Asnawi underline students' concerns about potential negative performance assessments, which is mirrored in the current study, which reveals a range of

emotional responses connected to the fear of making mistakes, feeling embarrassed, and being subjected to peer laughing.

In essence, the same observation of the nuanced interplay between social appraisal and students' anxiety within language learning settings underpins the current study and Tiara and Asnawi's findings. Educators and researchers acquire a more holistic grasp of the varied characteristics of students' emotional experiences by drawing on these parallel discoveries, paving the path for customized interventions that address the nuanced issues associated with language acquisition anxiety.

Several strategies can be employed by students to overcome speaking anxiety. Research findings identify five primary strategies that students utilize to overcome their speaking anxiety. The first strategy is preparation, which plays a vital role in enhancing students' fluency in academic speaking classes. This involves diligent efforts to create well-organized summaries of class notes, contributing to improved self-perceptions of subject mastery and subsequently reducing anxiety during academic speaking activities.

The second strategy focuses on relaxation. Achieving a relaxed state while speaking English fosters greater confidence and reinforces students' belief in their ability to communicate effectively. Therefore, it is essential for students to take a moment to calm themselves before engaging in English speaking tasks. Techniques such as deep breathing contribute to a sense of comfort and ease. Tseng (2012) supports this notion, asserting that controlled breathing exercises help convert nervous energy into productive energy, thereby facilitating smoother speech delivery.

The third strategy is positive thinking, which helps reduce the stress and anxiety that students feel. This strategy encourages students to focus on positive and pleasant thoughts instead of the stressful situation, making it easier to manage speaking anxiety. Tseng (2012) also stressed the importance of understanding that being perfect is impossible, and students should accept this reality.

From this explanation, the researcher concluded that there are three main strategies to overcome students' speaking anxiety: preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking. (David Shinji Kondo, 2004) identified five strategies in total—preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer support, and resignation. However, this study only focused on the first three strategies. Resignation is seen as a last option when nothing else works. This is because students need to change their habits through practice, but this will not help if they are still unhappy with their feelings or have not found a solution to their problem.

## **Discussion**

### **Students' Speaking Anxiety Levels**

The findings indicate that 36.8% of students experience high speaking anxiety, while 63.2% fall into moderate to low levels. This result confirms that speaking anxiety remains a significant issue among EFL learners, particularly in academic speaking contexts. These findings are consistent with Horwitz et al. (1986), who conceptualized Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) as a situation-specific anxiety that affects learners' performance in language classrooms. The categorization of anxiety into low, moderate, and

high levels in this study aligns with the FLCAS framework, demonstrating its continued relevance in measuring students' emotional responses.

Compared to previous studies, the findings are in line with Sugiati and Indriani (2021), who found that most students experience moderate levels of speaking anxiety. However, this study reveals a relatively higher percentage of students with high anxiety, suggesting that academic speaking classes may create more pressure than general speaking contexts. This can be interpreted as a result of increased expectations, formal assessment, and performance demands in academic settings.

From a deeper perspective, the variation in anxiety levels indicates that students have different coping capacities and levels of confidence. Students with low anxiety may have better self-regulation skills and prior exposure to English, while those with high anxiety may lack confidence and experience greater fear of evaluation. This highlights the importance of addressing individual differences in language learning.

### **Causes of Students' Speaking Anxiety**

The study identifies three main causes of speaking anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These findings strongly support the theoretical framework proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which states that these three components are the core dimensions of language anxiety. The high frequency of responses related to nervousness, confusion, and lack of confidence reflects the psychological pressure experienced by students when speaking English.

In comparison with previous studies, these findings are consistent with Rafada and Madini (2017), who found that communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are dominant factors influencing students' anxiety. Similarly, Fitri (2019) emphasized that students often feel anxious due to fear of making mistakes and being judged by others. However, this study provides deeper insights by showing how these factors specifically occur in academic speaking situations, such as spontaneous speaking, teacher correction, and peer comparison.

A deeper interpretation suggests that speaking anxiety is not solely caused by linguistic limitations but also by social and environmental factors. For instance, students' fear of negative evaluation reflects their concern about social judgment, while test anxiety is linked to performance pressure in formal assessments. Additionally, limited exposure to English in daily life may further intensify anxiety, as students feel unprepared when required to speak spontaneously. This indicates that speaking anxiety is a multidimensional issue influenced by both internal and external factors.

### **Students' Strategies to Overcome Speaking Anxiety**

The findings reveal that students employ several strategies to overcome speaking anxiety, with preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking being the most dominant. These strategies align with the framework proposed by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), who identified preparation and relaxation as effective techniques for reducing language anxiety. Preparation helps students feel more confident by improving their understanding of the

topic, while relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, help reduce physical symptoms of anxiety.

In comparison with previous research, these findings are consistent with Liu (2018), who highlighted that students use cognitive and behavioral strategies to manage anxiety in speaking tasks. However, this study provides a more detailed understanding of how these strategies are applied in academic speaking contexts, particularly in dealing with spontaneous speaking and presentation tasks.

From a deeper perspective, these strategies indicate that students actively attempt to regulate their emotions and improve their performance. Preparation represents a cognitive strategy that enhances readiness, while relaxation reflects emotional regulation. Positive thinking, on the other hand, helps students reshape their mindset by reducing fear of mistakes and negative evaluation. This suggests that effective anxiety management requires both mental and behavioral adjustments.

Overall, the findings highlight that while speaking anxiety cannot be completely eliminated, it can be managed through appropriate strategies. Therefore, educators should play a crucial role in guiding students to apply these strategies and creating a supportive learning environment that reduces anxiety and encourages active participation.

## Conclusion

The research on students' speaking anxiety in English academic speaking classes reveals that 36.8% of students experience high anxiety, signaling a need for targeted support to boost their confidence. In contrast, 63.2% report moderate to low anxiety, requiring attention to manage moderate challenges. Additionally, 21.1% exhibit low anxiety, offering insights into effective coping strategies that can help others.

The study also identifies communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation as key causes of speaking anxiety. Students' emotional responses range from nervousness to physiological reactions, highlighting the need for interventions. Strategies like preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking were found to be the most effective in reducing anxiety. Preparation helps students feel more confident, relaxation techniques manage nervous energy, and positive thinking promotes a calm, optimistic mindset. Other strategies like peer seeking and resignation were noted but are secondary to the first three in effectively managing anxiety.

Future studies on speaking anxiety could explore the long-term effects of interventions through a longitudinal approach, providing insights into students' verbal communication skills over time. Research could also investigate disparities in anxiety across educational levels, language proficiency, and cultural backgrounds. Evaluating the efficacy of specific interventions, including technology (e.g., language apps, VR), and teacher strategies in reducing anxiety is crucial. Teacher training programs and culturally sensitive interventions may foster supportive environments. Additionally, the role of language policies, collaboration with psychologists, and parental involvement could be examined. A mixed-methods approach and global perspectives would deepen understanding and improve strategies to reduce speaking anxiety in language learning.

This study highlights that speaking anxiety remains a significant challenge in English academic speaking classes, with a considerable proportion of students experiencing high levels of anxiety. The findings confirm that communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation are the primary contributing factors. Although many students demonstrate moderate to low anxiety, those in the high-anxiety category require more structured and targeted support to enhance their confidence and participation.

Practical implications for teaching suggest that educators play a crucial role in minimizing students' speaking anxiety by creating a supportive and low-threatening classroom environment. Teachers are encouraged to integrate anxiety-reduction strategies into their instructional practices, such as providing adequate preparation time, encouraging the use of relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing), and fostering positive thinking. Additionally, implementing interactive and student-centered activities, offering constructive feedback, and reducing excessive correction can help students feel more comfortable and confident when speaking. Teachers can also model supportive behavior and promote peer collaboration to build a more inclusive learning atmosphere.

Specific recommendations for future research include conducting longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effectiveness of anxiety-reduction strategies in improving students' speaking performance. Future studies are also encouraged to explore the role of technology, such as virtual reality or AI-based language learning tools, in reducing speaking anxiety. Furthermore, expanding the research to different educational levels, cultural contexts, and larger sample sizes would provide more comprehensive insights. Researchers may also investigate the impact of teacher training programs and psychological interventions in addressing language anxiety more effectively.

Overall, while speaking anxiety cannot be entirely eliminated, it can be effectively managed through appropriate pedagogical strategies and continuous research development, ultimately supporting students in achieving better performance in academic speaking contexts.

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