



Factors Causing Students' Speaking Anxiety in EFL Classrooms at English Education Study Program of Jambi University

Faktor Penyebab Kecemasan Berbicara Mahasiswa di Kelas EFL Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Jambi

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini meneliti tingkat dan faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap kecemasan berbicara mahasiswa di kelas Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) di Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Jambi. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan dari 69 mahasiswa semester empat melalui kuesioner Skala Kecemasan Kelas Bahasa Asing (FLCAS). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa mengalami tingkat kecemasan berbicara sedang (42%), diikuti oleh tingkat kecemasan tinggi (32%) dan rendah (26%). Kecemasan komunikasi muncul sebagai faktor kecemasan yang dominan, diikuti oleh kecemasan ujian dan ketakutan akan evaluasi negatif. Hasil penelitian ini menyoroti perlunya pendidik bahasa untuk mengembangkan lingkungan kelas yang suportif dan menerapkan strategi pedagogis yang dapat mengurangi kecemasan. Implikasi bagi guru EFL dan peneliti masa depan dibahas.

Kata Kunci: Kecemasan Berbicara, Kelas EFL, Kecemasan Komunikasi

Abstract

This study investigates levels and the factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at the English Education Study Program, Jambi University. Using a quantitative descriptive method, data were collected from 69 fourth-semester students through a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire. Findings revealed that most students experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety (42%), followed by high (32%) and low (26%) levels. Communication apprehension emerged as the dominant anxiety factor, followed by test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The results highlight the need for language educators to develop supportive classroom environments and implement anxiety-reducing pedagogical strategies. Implications for EFL teachers and future researchers are discussed.

Keywords: Speaking Anxiety, EFL Classroom, Communication Apprehension

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the most frequently taught and studied foreign languages in the world. This is undeniable, as English remains the world's number one international language (Sepniwati et al. 2025). This is evidenced by the number of English speakers, which reached 1.5 billion in 2023, making it the most widely spoken language in the world (Statista Research Department 2023, cited in Sepniwati 2025). Despite being a foreign language in Indonesia, English is crucial to our daily lives. The Indonesian education system exemplifies this. The Indonesian government has implemented English in formal educational institutions, starting with elementary school, in an effort to improve English language proficiency. This aligns with Roinah (2019) who stated that English



is taught from high school to university. The goal is to prepare students to become proficient in English communication.

Speaking is a functional oral language skill in everyday life. Through speaking, we can convey ideas and communicate with others. This is supported by Quereshi's (2010) opinion, cited in Qin (2023), that speaking is necessary for communication as we communicate with others, express our ideas, and exchange information through speaking. However, because English language skills are complex given the nature of what is involved in speaking, not all students in EFL (English Foreign Language) classes have the courage to speak. This aligns with the opinion (Aulia et. al. 2023) that when speaking, students sometimes suddenly experience feelings of anxiety and nervousness.

Tanveer (2007) stated that feelings of anxiety, worry, and nervousness are commonly expressed by foreign language learners when speaking the language they are learning in public. These feelings are considered potentially negative and have a detrimental effect when learners communicate in their target language. Student language anxiety can stem from several components, as identified by Horwitz and Cope (1986), who identified three types of foreign language anxiety (FLA): communication apprehension, negative test anxiety, and evaluation apprehension. Students suffering from anxiety appear to have more difficulty concentrating and mastering educational goals than other students, which then results in poor performance and poor academic achievement (Brown, 2004; Gani et al., 2015; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014).

Anxiety itself is defined as a distress or disturbance in the mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune (Suleimenova, 2013). On the other hand, Tridinanti (2018) explains that anxiety is excessive worry about everyday things. Kelsen (2019) also describes anxiety as one of a person's primary emotional experiences, which can affect speaking ability. Several studies have shown that self-anxiety is one of the factors that most significantly impacts speaking English as a foreign language. Self-anxiety is thought to hinder students' speaking abilities. Because of this anxiety, students will feel afraid to speak English. Students with low self-confidence and a lack of motivation to learn will be reluctant to demonstrate their speaking skills in front of a large audience.

In the English Language Education Study Program at Jambi University, particularly in speaking lessons, lecturers require their students to speak English actively. Speaking is a skill they must master to become professional teachers. However, in reality, even though students in the English Language Education Department continue to study English continuously, they still experience some difficulties in learning English, especially speaking. Speaking is a crucial skill for improving English proficiency from the beginning of language learning, making it one of the most important language skills. This skill can be developed and improved as an effective means of communication (Morozova, 2013).

However, learning English speaking is not as easy as it seems. This is because English speaking is a complex skill (Megawati, 2016), and it is negatively correlated with anxiety and proficiency. Students' lack of time to express their ideas, offer opinions, and engage in other classroom activities causes them to become anxious when speaking in English. Speaking is another skill that makes most students fearful and anxious.



Based on these two previous studies, there are still gaps in the research that need to be filled, particularly regarding the measurement of speaking anxiety levels and the dominant factors that most influence students in the context of EFL learning at the University of Jambi. Therefore, this study aims to complement and deepen these previous findings by using a descriptive quantitative approach and a standardized instrument, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Through this study, the researchers not only identified the factors causing speaking anxiety but also measured students' anxiety levels and identified the most dominant factors.

This study not only describes the phenomenon of anxiety from a linguistic or demographic perspective but also highlights the psychological and social aspects that are the main causes of students' fear of speaking in English. Furthermore, this research offers practical implications for lecturers and students, particularly in designing more supportive learning strategies, creating a comfortable classroom atmosphere, and helping students increase their speaking confidence. Therefore, this research is expected to make a new contribution to the development of more effective English language learning that focuses on students' emotional needs.

So, for that reason the researcher decided the title of this research is: “Factors Causing The Students Speaking Anxiety In Efl Classroom At English Education Study Program Of Jambi University”.

Literature Review

Speaking

Speaking is a productive skill used to communicate, share information, convey messages, and express ideas through words. According to Brown in Leong et al, (2017) speaking is an interactive process to build meaning that involves the process of receiving, producing, and processing information. Speaking is the most important skill because it is one of the abilities needed to have a conversation. However, speaking English is not an easy task because the speaker must know many important components such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Learners must have sufficient English speaking skills in order to communicate easily and effectively with others (Leong et al, 2017). Speaking is a skill that involves more than just mouthing words; it also involves delivering information. In reality, speaking can be accompanied by body language and facial expressions in addition to the words that come from our mouths. It enables the listener to understand the concept or information the speaker is trying to get through. In other terms, speaking is a verbal or nonverbal communication activity.

The goal of language learning is to enable students to understand and utilize the language they are learning. Speaking, therefore, is an activity or goal that is the result of language learning. This is in line with Richards' opinion in Haidara (2016) said that language learners often evaluate their success in language learning and the effectiveness of their English courses based on how much they feel they have improved their spoken language skills.

In other words, people erroneously believe that language proficiency is equivalent to effective speaking. All of the aforementioned justifications suggest that speaking is the capacity to convey information via words, body language, and facial expressions. Speaking English fluently is frequently regarded as a useful skill and a goal of learning the language. Speaking is frequently used as a measure of someone's English proficiency.



There are five speaking skill components concerned with comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency (Harris, 1974).

1. Comprehension

In communication requires a people to talk and respond. In speaking activities, the recipient and the person sending the message are needed, so comprehension is an important aspect to know someone's understanding when speaking (Ilham et.al 2024). It is very important to make the listener understand what the speaker says to avoid misunderstanding in communication. This called comprehension. That is why, in communication, the speaker should explain clearly the message she or he wants to say to the listener. It will be easier for people to understand what we say with proper pronunciation. Articulation, intonation, and rhythm are examples of good pronunciation technique the case study, effective communication is also carried out through body language or gesturing as well as facial expressions to reduce miscommunication.

2. Grammar

According to Heaton cited in Kurniawati et al.(2015), grammar is the ability to construct structures and define grammatical forms' appropriateness. Speaking requires grammar so that the speaker may craft their words effectively. Additionally, using good grammar when speaking might help the speaker get the point through clearly and concisely. There won't be any ambiguity in meaning this way. such that the words provided are simple for others to understand.

3. Vocabulary

Vocabulary means the appropriate diction which is used in communication. Without having a sufficient vocabulary, one cannot communicative effectively or express their ideas both oral and written form (Irawan et. al 2021). Without vocabulary, we could not deliver any information. Learning vocabulary is essential since it increases the amount of information that can be communicated. Additionally, there is a great demand for vocabulary expansion, which is done to enable speakers to select the appropriate vocabulary or diction in a sentence and to enable them to build effective sentences in accordance with their purposes and meanings.

4. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the knowledge of studying about how the words in a particular language are produced clearly when people speak. In speaking, pronunciation plays a vital role in order to make the process of communication easy to understand (Irawan et. al 2021). Pronunciation also plays a vital role in speaking. To ensure that our words and sentences are understood by our listeners, they must be pronounced properly and accurately. English has many words that sound similar; if we pronounce one of them incorrectly, the meaning will alter, making it more challenging for listeners to understand what speakers are saying. As a result, the speaker must accurately pronounce the words in terms of intonation, emphasis, and other factors. It is done to remove any ambiguity that can cause miscommunication. Grammar errors are very important since they make it difficult for readers to understand the information.



5. Fluency

According to Luoma cited in (Winaryo & Gusdian, 2021; Irawan et. al 2021), fluency involves the flow, smoothness, the rhythm of speech, the length of utterances, the connection of ideas, the absence of long pauses. In other words, the speaker can read, understand and respond in a language clearly and concisely while relating meaning and context. When someone communicates with the audience in English clearly, they are speaking fluently. Speaking English fluently typically also entails utilizing precise grammar, choosing the perfect word diction, and pronouncing words correctly.

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is a prevalent phenomenon among language learners, characterized by feelings of nervousness and apprehension when speaking in a foreign language. This anxiety can significantly hinder learners' ability to communicate effectively, impacting their overall language acquisition and proficiency. Research indicates that FLSA is often rooted in fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and the pressure to perform well in front of peers and instructors (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Horwitz, 2001). These factors contribute to a cycle of anxiety that can deter learners from participating in speaking activities, ultimately affecting their confidence and willingness to engage in language practice.

To measure foreign language speaking anxiety, researchers often utilize standardized instruments designed to assess the level of anxiety experienced by learners. One of the most widely used tools is the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The FLCAS consists of 33 items that evaluate various aspects of anxiety related to foreign language learning, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Respondents rate their agreement with each statement on a Likert scale, allowing researchers to quantify anxiety levels and identify specific areas of concern. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986:127) in Mobarok (2020) have identified three anxiety-related performances: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

1. Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension (CA) is a significant psychological phenomenon that affects many individuals, particularly in academic and professional settings. It is characterized by feelings of anxiety or fear related to actual or anticipated communication with others. This apprehension can manifest in various forms, such as fear of public speaking, anxiety in group discussions, or discomfort in one-on-one interactions.

2. Test anxiety

Test anxiety is a prevalent issue among students that can significantly impact their academic performance and overall well-being. Defined as a combination of physiological, emotional, and cognitive responses to the pressure of taking exams, test anxiety can lead to feelings of fear, worry, and apprehension (Zeidner, 2014).

3. Fear of negative evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) is a psychological construct that significantly affects an individual's interactions and social performance in a variety of contexts, including academic



and professional settings. FNE refers to the fear that an individual feels about being judged or evaluated poorly by others, which can lead to anxiety and avoidant behavior.

Review Previous Study

Based on the research Batiha, Jaffar Mohamad et. al (2016). This research entitled "Speaking Anxiety among English as a Foreign Language Learner in Jordan: Quantitative Research". The research aimed to investigate factors that contribute to EFL speaking anxiety in the Jordanian context. The researcher used quantitative method with questionnaire as the data collection instrument and used T-test to identify differences between male and female groups regarding these factors. Then the results revealed that there are four main factors that cause students' speaking anxiety, namely: fear of negative evaluation, unpreparedness, fear of being in public and shyness, and general speaking anxiety. And there are no significant gender differences in the levels of speaking anxiety among Jordanian EFL learners.

The results of research conducted by Mobarak, Mubash Shera Karishma (2020) entitled "Reason For English Language Speaking Anxiety Among Students in Private Universities of Bangladesh". the purpose of this research is to explore the factors that contribute to the students' speaking anxiety among University Students of Bangladesh. This research used mixed methods and questionnaire (FLCAS) and semi-structured interviews as data instruments. The study findings uncovered that the main causes of the students' speaking anxiety are communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation as primary concerns. Students' fear of immediate questioning and negative peer evaluation were significant factors contributing to their anxiety in classroom settings.

Other research was done by Sokoy (2021). The research entitled "Factors Influencing Speaking Anxiety at One Public University of Jambi : Language and Academic" the participants of this study was the students from third, fifth and seventh semester of English study. The study used qualitative approach with a study design. In this research the researchers found seven factors that cause students feel anxious in speaking. Such as grammatically incorrect, lack of vocabulary, classmates, unfamiliar topic, mispronunciation, not fluent were a part of language proponent, and lecturer.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a quantitative descriptive design. The participants were 69 fourth-semester students from the English Education Study Program of Jambi University, selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through a questionnaire based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which consists of 33 statements categorized into three subscales: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine anxiety levels and identify dominant factors.

Technique Of Collecting Data

The data collection technique is a stage where the researcher collects the data needed in the research. This is in line with the opinion of Creswell (2014) stated that data collection techniques



are a systematic way to collect information from respondents to answer research questions. In this study, the data collection technique used by the researcher is the survey method.

In this study, the research used online survey method because questionnaire is distributed directly through WhatsApp application with the google forms. The questionnaire distribution was carried out in a period of approximately one month.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a research process that is carried out when all data has been collected to answer research problems. This is in line with the opinion of Creswell (2014) that data analysis is the process of organizing and interpreting information that has been collected in research. In helping researchers to make it easier for research to process data, data analysis is used with quantitative methods and statistical analysis tools to analyze data in the form of numerical data so that it can show accurate measurement results in calculations. According to Creswell (2014) data analysis is a systematic process for processing, interpreting, and describing data so that valuable conclusions can be drawn. In other words Data analysis is required to answer the research questions. It discusses the level of students' anxiety when learning English. In the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) Questionnaire, statements consist of three aspects of language anxiety according to Horwitz (1986); test anxiety, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation. The FLCAS Statement consists of thirty three items using likert's score from 1-5 varied from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree

1. Arrange the Data

The FLCAS questionnaire was adapted from Aarif et. al (2020) adapted from Horwitz (1986)

2. Calculate the Data

The researcher will calculate the score of the questionnaire by using a Likert scale summation score. The researchers add up the scores for each individual by entering data into the table using Microsoft Excel, then the data displayed in the form of a table that has been categorized based on the level of foreign language anxiety experienced by each respondent. Then the researcher calculated manually with range of score from 1 to 124..

3. Categorize the Data

After the researcher found the result of each students' anxiety level, it will categorized into some levels started from "Low", "Moderate", and "High" anxiety. The scoring table adopted from Bilqis and Haidlor (2018) cited in Faherah and Uri (2024).



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Level of Anxiety

LEVEL OF ANXIETY					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	18	26,0	26,0	26,0
	Moderate	28	41,0	42,0	68,0
	High	23	33,0	32,0	100,0
	Total	69	100,0	100,0	

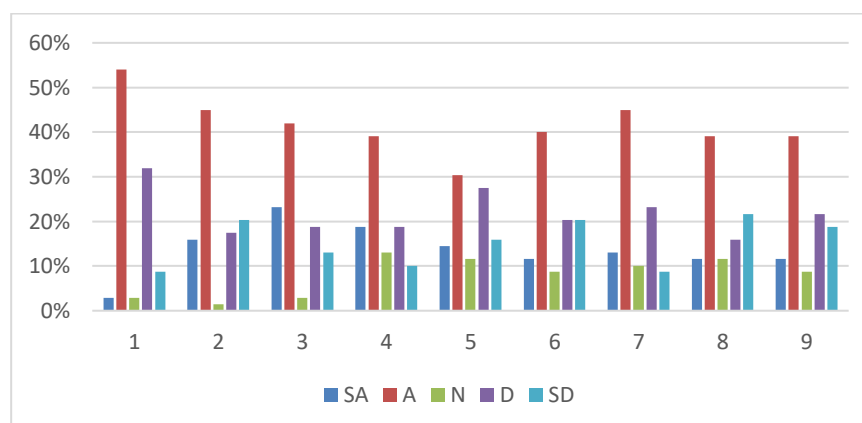
Based on the results of the table above, in the score range 100- 132 there are 22 respondents (32%) with the "High" level, in the score range 66-99 there are 29 respondents (42%) with the "Moderate/Medium" level, in the score range . 65 there were 18 respondents (26%) with the "Low" level. The results above show that the dominant participants feel anxious, this is normal when someone feels anxiety, especially when speaking in foreign languages with other people of in public.

Dominant Factor of Anxiety that Occured in EFL Classroom.

In the table below, the researcher summarizes the 3 components of anxiety, Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. Based on the table (*Appendix 6. The Percentage of Students' Preference*), a graph of Communication Apprehension can be made, which is as follows:

Table 2. The Percentage of Students' Communication Apprehension

The Percentage of Students' Communication Apprehension



Based on the results of the tables and graph above, it can be concluded that the highest result is in statement number 1 with 54% of the respondents (69 participants) with the contents of the statement "*I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English*". Meanwhile number 2

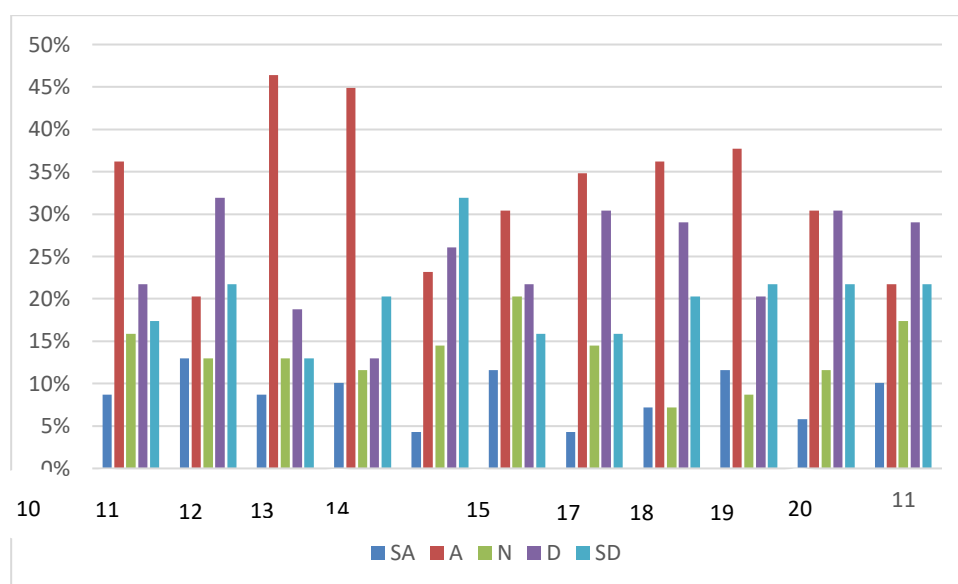


and 7 "It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English" and "I get nervous when I am speaking in my English class." with 45% respondents (69 participants). Based on these results in statement number 1 the answer is dominated by "Agree" and in statement number 2 and 7 the answer is dominated by "Agree" too. The researcher can concluded that students' feel insecure when they speaking in English, and they feel afraid if they do not understand what the teacher says in English.

Based on the table (*Appendix 6. The Percentage of Students' Preference*), a graph of Test Anxiety can be created, which is as follows:

Table 3. The Percentage of Students' Test Anxiety

The Percentage of Students' Test Anxiety



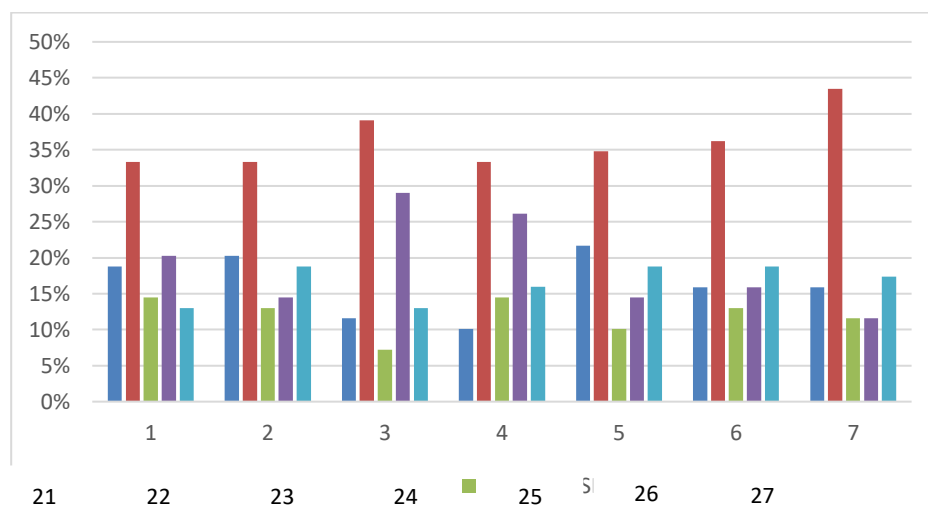
Based on the results of the tables and graph above, it can be concluded that the highest result is in statement number 12 with 46% of the respondents (69 participants) with the contents of the statement "I tremble when I know that i'm going to be called on in English class". Then for number 18 "The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get" with 38% respondents (69 participants) Based on these results in statement number 12 the answer is dominated by "Agree" and in statement number 18 the answer is dominated by "Agree" too. Based on these results it can be concluded that students' feel trembling when they know they will be called on in English class, and even though they have studied for the English test they feel even more confused.

Based on the table (*Appendix 6. The Percentage of Students' Preference*), a graph of Fear of Negative Evaluation can be created, which is as follows:



Table 4. The Percentage of Students' Fear of Negative Evaluation

The Percentage of Students' Fear of Negative Evaluation



Based on the results of the tables and graph above, it can be concluded that the highest result is in statement number 27 with 44% of the respondents (69 participants) with the contents of the statement "*I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I have not prepared in advance*". Then for number 23 "*It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in English class*" with 39% respondents (69 participants). The answer is dominated by the choice of "Agree" where students' agree with the statement. It can be concluded they will feel nervous when English teacher asks questions that are not prepared in advance, and they are embarrassed to answer voluntarily in English class.

As shown in Table 1, most students (42%) experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety, indicating that anxiety is common but manageable among EFL learners. A smaller percentage (32%) reported high anxiety, suggesting that some students face significant emotional barriers when speaking English. The dominant sources of anxiety were analyzed based on three factors: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. And based table 2, 3, 4, communication apprehension was the most dominant source of speaking anxiety, consistent with previous research (Horwitz et al., 1986; Aarif et al., 2020). Students often reported nervousness and fear of making mistakes when speaking in front of others. Test anxiety also contributed significantly, especially when students anticipated being called on during class or assessed on their speaking performance. Fear of negative evaluation, while less dominant, still played a notable role in increasing students' reluctance to participate in classroom interactions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that most students in the English Education Study Program at Jambi University experience moderate levels of speaking anxiety. Communication apprehension emerged as the most influential factor, followed by test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Educators are encouraged to foster supportive learning environments, provide constructive feedback, and design communicative activities that reduce students' anxiety. Future research should explore intervention strategies to minimize speaking anxiety and examine its long-term effects on language performance.

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