

SPEAKING ANXIETY OF PRESERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Deta Desvitasari^{1*}

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

*Corresponding Email: detadesvitasari_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

Abstract:

The objectives of this study were (1) to describe the preservice English teachers' speaking anxiety; and (2) to find out the teachers' perceptions towards the factors causing their speaking anxiety to emerge. This study employed a survey research design, involving 112 preservice English teachers taken by using convenience sampling method. The data were obtained using a ready-made questionnaire modified by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). The results showed that most of the preservice English teachers (58.03%) experienced low level of anxiety in speaking English, while 26.78% of them experienced medium level, and the rest (15.17%) had high level of speaking anxiety. In addition, based on the result of the questionnaire, all participants experienced all the factors of speaking anxiety, namely test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and communication apprehension. Besides, not only those negative factors were found, but most of the participants also expressed their comfort in using

English making the results found possible to emerge.

Keywords:

Speaking anxiety;
Preservice English teachers

Received: 20 December 2022

Revised: 18 April 2023

Accepted: 28 April 2023

INTRODUCTION

Language is described as a human communication system that consists of the systematic organization of sounds into larger components. (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). As a result, the capacity to communicate is the best goal for all language learners. Nowadays, the ever-increasing necessity for effective communication skills in English has produced a massive global need for non-native English speakers to get a good command of the language. In this regard, developing a good speaking skill has been one of the most important and necessary components of learning English for non-native speakers.

Some experts argue that speaking is the most important skill among four language skills. For example, Egan (1999) believes that speaking is the heart of the second language learning. Bygate (1987) also claims that the most essential task in second language is the practice of the oral skill. In addition, Aydogan et al. (2013) assert that the primary goals of all languages are to aid humans to communicate with each other and to convey their thoughts. In line with this, according to Gert and Hans (2008), speaking is defined as verbal utterances with the intention of being recognized by the speaker, and the receiver processes the statements in order to recognize their intentions. Consequently, because of its importance, the demand for English language skills and English language education, as English language professionals are most acutely aware, have exploded (Khamkhien, 2010). This leads to the interest of English language professionals to conduct research on speaking skill and to design the best methods in teaching speaking.

However, learning how to speak in English is a challenging task for Indonesian students. Based on the data from Education First-English Proficiency Index (2022), it was shown that in 2022, Indonesia is in the 81st rank out of 111 countries worldwide and is at a very low proficiency level which is 469 of the EF-EPI scores. Also, it is in the 15th rank out of 24 countries in Asia. This shows that English proficiency in Indonesia requires more attention.

There are many causes which make performance unsatisfactory in speaking a foreign language. Brown and Yule (1999, as cited in Efrizal, 2012) state that speaking depends on the complexity of the information to be communicated; however, the speaker sometimes finds it difficult to clarify what they want to say. In addition, according to Young (1992), speaking is probably considered as the most stressful skill among the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) from the perspective of both FL teachers and learners. Thus, students who participate in oral communication activities are more likely to suffer persistent anxiety, particularly in the classroom, where learners have little control over the communicative situation and their

performance is constantly scrutinized by both their teacher and classmates. (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Based on the informal interview with some of the preservice English teachers in a state university in Palembang, South Sumatra, it was found out that some of them were satisfied with the result of their current speaking achievement, while others were not. For those who are satisfied with the result, they claimed that they found the Speaking courses interesting and enjoyable. They also mentioned that they liked the way their lecturers taught them speaking. Meanwhile, the rest of the students felt the other way around. They sometimes found the Speaking courses intimidating, especially when the speaking activity was in the form of a debate (Personal Communication, February 23, 2022).

Many experts believe that the lack of competence or the unsatisfying result in speaking foreign language is the result of the existence of a foreign language anxiety. Foreign language anxiety is a distinct complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning arising process (Horwitz, et. al, 1986). A foreign language class can be more anxiety-provoking than any other course the students take (MacIntyre, 1995; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Liu, 2007; Ohata, 2005; Chan & Wu, 2004), especially on their oral performance (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). Likewise, Price (1991) found that oral skill is the most frustrating experience among foreign language learners and speaking was considered as the greatest source of anxiety. As a result, researchers, foreign language teachers, and even foreign language learners themselves have attempted to understand this phenomenon known as foreign language anxiety because it has been shown in the literature that anxious students are less willing to participate in learning activities and perform worse than non-anxious students (Horwitz, 2001; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

Furthermore, Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) also state that students who exhibit speaking anxiety do not feel comfortable communicating in the target language in front of others, due to their limited knowledge of the language, especially in relation to speaking and listening skills. As a result, they are silent and withdrawn most of the time, and do not participate in language activities (Ely, 1986; Padmadewi 1998; Tuttyandari, 2005). In addition, the findings of the research conducted by Subasi (2010) found that fear of negative evaluation in speaking activity for 55 first-year ELT Department students at Anadolu University, Turkey, was a source of anxiety in the English FL classroom. According to Subasi (2010), the language student has sophisticated thoughts and concepts but a limited vocabulary and grammar. Students may believe they are unable to generate the correct social impression because they are unsure of themselves and what they are saying

(Subasi, 2010). Further, according to Subasi (2010), this anxiety of negative social judgment can lead to frustration and apprehension.

In terms of speaking anxiety, Agustina (2007) who investigated the relationship between language anxiety and English speaking achievement of 103 fourth semester students of English Education Study Program at Ahmad Dahlan University Yogyakarta found out that there was a negative and significant correlation between the students' language anxiety and English speaking achievement. On the other hand, Widoto (2013) found that there was no correlation between English language anxiety to the 20 English major students' speaking achievement at Muria Kudus University.

Taking into consideration what the literature has documented above concerning the role of speaking anxiety, the writer conducted an investigation to describe the preservice English teachers' speaking anxiety at tertiary level and the factors causing them to experience the feeling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the negative elements in second language acquisition is language anxiety. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), anxiety is one of the best predictors of second language achievement. Many research have been conducted to study the association between language anxiety and second language proficiency since language anxiety is one of the internal characteristics of second language learners that may hamper success in second language learning. In addition, Lefrancois (1997) says that anxiety is the effect of when arousal is too high. Lefrancois defines anxiety as "a feeling characterized by varying degrees of fear and worry; also it refers to mental disorder". Furthermore, Graham (1997) claimed that anxiety can be both positive and negative in terms of encouraging students to learn. It can be argued that a positive effect of anxiety may add to students' achievement, whilst a negative effect distracts. Brown (2007) categorizes anxiety into two kinds in order to provide a clear description of the positive and negative effects of anxiety. They are (1) debilitating anxiety, in which anxiousness refers to feelings of worry that are perceived as detrimental to a student's self-efficacy or that hinder student performance, namely the negative effect of anxiety; and (2) facilitative anxiety, which refers to 'helpful anxiety,' euphoric tension, or the beneficial effects of apprehension over a task to be completed, namely positive effect of anxiety.

Aside from general foreign language anxiety, many students are quite nervous about engaging in speaking activities. In fact, it has been stated that speaking is the most anxiety-provoking language skill in a foreign language learning environment (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). Because foreign language speaking anxiety is a widespread difficulty in the teaching of English

as a foreign language, there is an abundance of theoretical studies on the nature of this form of anxiety attempting to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon.

The cognitive method provides a solid foundation for the study of FL anxiety. The cognitive approach on language acquisition sees the learner as an independent actor who processes language data in the environment to rearrange preexisting ideas about language structure with limited attention (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Cognitivists see anxiety, cognition, and behavior as recursive or circular, with each influencing the other (MacIntyre, 1995). For example, if a student is forced to speak in the target language, this nervousness might lead to concern and rumination (MacIntyre, 1995). Other signs of anxiousness include nausea, sweating, weak knees, and a parched mouth (Boyce, Alber-Morgan, & Riley, 2007). Because of the divided attention, cognitive performance declines, resulting in unfavorable assessments and more self-deprecating cognition, which further affects performance, and so on. For some students, this happens repeatedly, and fear becomes inextricably linked to any situation involving the FL.

Speaking is a complex activity. Kramersch (1998) states that, if speakers of different languages do not understand one another, it is because they do not share the same way of interpreting the meaning or seeing the contexts and events. As a result, they may come to different meanings and the values of it will be different. This concept needs to be understood by both speakers as well as listeners when they communicate especially if they come from different cultural backgrounds. It also means that when people speak, they must also consider who their listener is.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Participants

This study was quantitative research with a survey design, involving 112 preservice English teachers from one state university in Palembang, South Sumatra. Those participants were taken by using a convenience sampling method.

Data Collection and Analysis

In obtaining the data of the participants' speaking anxiety, a ready-made questionnaire, Public Speaking Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) modified by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) was distributed. The questionnaire is based on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et. al (1986); Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) and Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA-34) by McCroskey (1970); and Speaker Anxiety Scale (SA) by Clevenger and Halvorson (1992).

There are 17 items in the questionnaire and these items are related to foreign language speaking anxiety. The following table presents the specification of speaking anxiety questionnaire.

Table 1
The Specification of Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire

Aspects of Speaking Anxiety	Items in the Questionnaire
Test Anxiety	1, 7, 17
Communication Apprehension	2, 3, 5, 11, 15
Fear of Negative Evaluation	6, 9, 13, 14, 16
Comfort in Using English	4, 8, 10, 12

Source: Yaikhong, K., & Usaha, S. (2012).

PSCAS comprises 17 items, each of which was answered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). However, since item number 4, 8, 10, 12 of PSCAS express positive attitudes, they have the values reversed. Therefore, for item number 4, 8, 10, 12 of PSCAS, the response Strongly Disagree receives a score of 5 instead of 1 and vice versa. Thus, the total multiplied scores of a PSCAS are 85 and then subtracted by 17 as the score interval. The scores higher than 68 are categorized as high anxiety, between 68-51 as medium anxiety, and lower than 51 as low anxiety. The following is the score interval of speaking anxiety level.

Table 2
Score Interval of Speaking Anxiety Level

Score Interval	Level of Language Anxiety
< 51	Low
51 – 68	Medium
> 68	High

Source: Yaikhong, K., & Usaha, S. (2012)

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FINDING

Descriptions of Preservice English Teachers' Speaking Anxiety

The result of the PSCAS (Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale) showed that most of the students (58.03%) experienced low level of anxiety in speaking English and there were very few students (15.17%) who experienced high level of anxiety (see Table 3).

Table 3
The Distribution of the Students' Speaking Anxiety

Level of Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage
Low	65	58.03%
Medium	30	26.78%
High	17	15.17%

Factors Causing the Speaking Anxiety

A closer look at each item of PSCAS was done in order to find out the main reason of the students' speaking anxiety. As previously explained, there were four speaking anxiety aspects as mentioned by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) which were checked by using PSCAS and the required analysis ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strong Disagree.

Table 4 presents the result of the analysis for the first aspect of speaking anxiety, which was test anxiety. Shabani (2012) defines test anxiety as a fear of failing in tests and an unpleasant experience held either consciously or unconsciously by learners in many situations.

Table 4
The Data Distribution of the Students' Test Anxiety

Item No.	Statement	SA %	A %	Total %	D %	SD %	Total %
1	I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English.	7.46	35.82	43.28	34.33	2.99	37.31
7	I get nervous when the English teacher asks me to speak English which I have prepared in advance.	4.48	19.40	23.88	43.28	19.40	62.69
17	Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.	4.48	25.37	29.85	43.28	7.46	50.75

The result of item number 1 showed that 43.28% of the students acknowledged that they felt unsure when they had to speak in English. However, the students' responses for item number 7 and number 17 showed that they were not nervous while speaking in English as they had been well prepared. From this result, it can be inferred that they felt unsure not because

they were nervous to speak in English. It might occur because of other reasons, for example, lack of vocabulary and limited grammar (Subasi, 2010).

Table 5 presents the result of the analyses for the second aspect of speaking anxiety, which was communication apprehension. The results showed that most students experienced communication apprehension. Communication apprehension is a type of shyness that is felt when communicating with people and that manifests itself through anxiety (Horwitz, et. al., 1986). The sources why they felt anxious were shown through their responses for item number 2 and number 11. Item number 2 and number 11 indicated that the students experienced communication apprehension by the time they were asked to speak in English without any preparation in advance and were asked to voluntarily speak in English. Item number 3 also described the students' communication apprehension. It indicated that their nervousness led them to forgetting things they wanted to express while speaking in English and to getting lower speaking achievement.

Table 5
The Data Distribution of the Students' Communication Apprehension

Item No.	Statement	SA %	A %	Total %	D %	SD %	Total %
2	I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance.	14.93	38.81	53.73	32.84	5.97	38.81
3	In a speaking class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	7.46	46.27	53.73	23.88	8.96	32.84
5	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.	1.49	37.31	38.81	38.81	4.48	43.28
11	It embarrasses me to volunteer to go out first to speak English.	8.96	32.84	41.97	29.85	4.48	34.33
15	I dislike using my voice and body expressively while I am speaking English.	2.99	14.93	17.91	47.76	16.42	64.18

Table 5 presents the result of the third aspect of speaking anxiety, which was fear of negative evaluation. Fear of negative evaluation can be defined as

apprehension about other's evaluations or the expectation that other would evaluate oneself negatively (Horwitz, et. al, 1986).

Table 6
The Data Distribution of the Students' Fear of Negative Evaluation

Item No.	Statement	SA %	A %	Total %	D %	SD %	Total %
6	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.	10.45	25.37	35.82	38.81	13.43	52.24
9	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on.	11.94	40.30	52.24	13.43	8.96	22.39
13	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English.	1.49	34.33	35.82	22.39	7.46	29.85
14	I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English.	5.97	34.33	40.30	25.37	4.48	29.85
16	I have trouble to coordinate my movements while I am speaking English.	1.49	22.39	23.88	37.31	16.42	53.73

The result indicated that the students experienced the fear of negative evaluation the most from their teacher (as shown by the result of the students' responses for item number 9). In contrast, the students were found neither afraid nor embarrassed when they were asked to speak English in front of other students (as shown by the result of the students' responses for item number 6).

Table 7 presents the result of the last aspect of speaking anxiety, comfort in using English. This aspect measures the students' comfort while using English in speaking classes.

Table 7
The Data Distribution of the Students' Comfort in Using English

Item No.	Statement	SA %	A %	Total %	D %	SD %	Total %
4	I feel confident while I am speaking English.	10.45	38.81	49.25	26.87	0	26.87
8	I have no fear of speaking English.	11.94	29.85	41.79	29.85	7.46	37.31
10	I feel relaxed while I am speaking English.	7.46	37.31	44.78	25.37	4.48	29.85
12	I face the prospect of speaking in English with complete confidence.	5.97	37.31	43.28	25.37	1.49	26.87

As shown in Table 7, most of the students felt comfortable while speaking English as shown by the students' responses for item number 4, number 8, and number 10. In addition, item number 12 indicated that the students had a positive point of view of having a good speaking skill in the future.

DISCUSSION

It was found that most undergraduate EFL students of Sriwijaya University experienced low level of anxiety in speaking English (58.03%) and there were very few students (15.17%) who experienced high level of anxiety. According to the results of the students' responses on PSCAS, the low level of anxiety occurred due to the fact that most of them had a positive point of view of having a good speaking skill in the future.

On the other hand, the high level of anxiety still existed even though there were only few students who experienced it. According to the students' responses on PSCAS, it was revealed that the students experienced the fear of negative evaluation the most from their teacher. According to Horwitz (1986), pupils with high levels of speaking anxiety are afraid of making mistakes and being corrected by the teacher. Furthermore, Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) note that most students saw language faults as a threat to their image and a source of unfavorable assessments, either from the teacher or from their classmates. As a result, they are mostly silent and withdrawn, and they do not engage in language activities (Ely, 1986).

These findings were in line with the result of the students' speaking achievement which showed that most of the students (59.70%) were only in

the average level of speaking anxiety. Brown (2004) states that the students who are in the average level of speaking anxiety are able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Meanwhile, according to the goals of the university's study program (2014), in order to be qualified and professional alumni competing in the globalization era, students are expected to have an excellent speaking skill that is functionally equivalent to that of a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker and reflects the cultural standards of the country where the language is spoken.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study also shows that the main sources of the students' speaking anxiety is the communication apprehension in which the students are afraid of communicating with other people, especially their teacher/lecturer, and this feeling manifests itself through anxiety. Therefore, the lecturers/teachers should not consider withdrawn students as lazy, having no motivation to participate, or even lacking in attitude, when in fact they actually suffer from anxiety. Instead, they should identify those anxious learners and make interventions to help them overcome speaking anxiety. By recognizing the main sources of the students' anxiety, the lecturers are then able to decide and employ better strategies in teaching to foster their motivation and to overcome their speaking anxiety.

REFERENCES

- Agustina, E. (2007). *The relationship between language anxiety and English speaking achievement of the fourth semester students of English education study program of Ahmad Dahlan university Yogyakarta in the academic year of 2006-2007* (Undergraduate Thesis, Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia). Retrieved from <http://www.archive.eprints.uad.ac.id>.
- Aydogan, H., Akbarova, A., Dogan, A., Gonen, K., Tuncdemir, E., & Kerla, M. (2013). I can understand but cannot speak: Language anxiety for oral communication. *Global Challenge International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 1(2), 1-17.
- Boyce, J. S., Alber-Morgan, S. R., & Riley, J. G. (2007). Fearless public speaking: Oral presentation activities for the elementary classroom. *Childhood Education*, 83(1), 1-11.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching (5th Ed.)*. New York, NY: Longman.

- Bygate, M. (1987). Speaking. In Carter, R., & Nunan, D. (Eds.) *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Chan, D. Y., & Wu, G. (2004). A study of foreign language anxiety of EFL elementary school students in Taipei county. *Journal of National Taipei Teachers College*, 17(2), 287-320.
- Education First-English Proficiency Index (EF-EPI). (2013). *EF English proficiency index trends*. Technical Report. Retrieved from <http://www.ef.com/epi>
- Egan, K. B. (1999). Speaking: A critical skill and a challenge. *CALICO Journal*, 16(3), 277-294.
- Ely, C. M. (1986). An analysis of discomfort, risk-taking, sociability, and motivation in the L2 classroom. *Language Learning*, 36(1), 1-25.
- Gert, H., & Hans, S. (2008). *Handbook of communication competence*. Berlin, Germany: Hubert & Co., Gottingen.
- Graham, S. (1997). *Effective language learning: Positive strategies for advanced level language learning*. New York, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Horwitz E. K. (2001). *Language anxiety and achievement: Annual review of applied linguistics*. Cambridge University Press, USA.
- Horwitz, E. K., & Young, D. J. (1991). *Language anxiety: from theory and research to classroom implications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.
- Khamkhien, A. (2010). Teaching English speaking and English speaking tests in the Thai context: A reflection from Thai perspective. *English Language Teaching*, 3(2), 184-190.
- Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lefrancois, G. R. (1997). *Psychology for teaching*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Liu, M. (2006). Anxiety in Chinese EFL students at different proficiency levels. *System*, 34(1), 301-316.
- MacIntyre, P. D. (1995). How does anxiety affect second language leaning? A reply to Sparks and Ganschow. *Modern Language Journal*. 79(1), 90-99.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Investigating language class anxiety using the focused essay technique. *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(3), 296-304.
- Mitchell, R., & Myles, F. (1998). *Second language leaning theories*. London, UK: Arnold Publication.

- Ohata, K. (2005). Potential sources of anxiety for Japanese learners of English: Preliminary case interviews with five Japanese college students in the U.S. *TESL-EJ*, 9(3), 1-21.
- Öztürk, G., & Gürbüz, N. (2014). Speaking anxiety among Turkish EFL learners: The case at a state university. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 10(1), 1–17.
- Padmadewi, N. N. (1998). Students' anxiety in speaking class and was of minimizing it. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 5(Supplementary Edition), 60-67.
- Price, M. L. (1991). The subjective experience of foreign language anxiety: Interviewers with highly anxious students. In Horwitz, E.K. and Young, D.J. (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory to research to classroom implications* (p. 101-108). New Jersey, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Malaysia: Pearson Educated Limited.
- Subasi, G. (2010). What are the main sources of Turkish EFL students' anxiety in oral practice? *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(2), 29-49.
- Tsiplakides, I., & Keramida, A. (2009). Helping students overcome foreign language speaking anxiety in the English classroom: Theoretical issues and practical recommendations. *International Education Studies*, 2(4), 39-44.
- Tutyandari, C. (2005). *Breaking the silence of the students in an English language class*. Paper presented at the 53rd TEFLIN International Conference, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
- Widoto, A. A. (2013). *A correlational study between in the English learning anxiety and the speaking achievement of the second semester students of English education department teacher training and education faculty Muria Kudus University* (Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Muria Kudus, Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia). Retrieved from eprints.umk.ac.id.
- Yaikhong, K., & Usaha, S. (2012). A measure of EFL public speaking class anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation and reliability. *English Language Teaching*, 5(12), 23-35.
- Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a Low-Anxiety Classroom Environment: What Does Language Anxiety Research Suggest? [Electronic version]. *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(4), 426-439. Retrieved from onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111