

## SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG EFL STUDENTS

**Yulia Kurniasari<sup>1</sup>, Kurniasih<sup>2</sup>, Ika Hidayanti<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3</sup> *Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Islam Malang*

Email: <sup>1</sup> [yuliakurniasari2209@gmail.com](mailto:yuliakurniasari2209@gmail.com) ,

### Abstrak

This research aimed to investigate the level of speaking anxiety, whether speaking anxiety differ significantly across gender, and whether speaking anxiety is significantly different depending on the level of proficiency. This research was carried out by using quantitative research and adopted a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire designed by Horwitz & Cope (1986) as the instrument. The participants of this study were 47 third-semester English students at Universitas Islam Malang consisting of 14 male students and 33 female students. Mean and standard deviation was used to find out the level of speaking anxiety, an independent t-test was carried out to identify whether differ significantly across gender, and ANOVA was used to determine whether speaking anxiety differ significantly depending on proficiency level. The result of this research reveals that the average score of speaking anxiety was categorized as mildly anxious (M=102.30). Moreover, the writers found that there is no significant difference level of speaking anxiety between male and female students. The last finding of this study concludes that there is no significant difference in speaking anxiety level on proficiency level.

**Keywords:** Speaking Anxiety, FLCAS, Gender, Proficiency

## INTRODUCTION

Learning English has become a genuine need for everyone in this world. Especially for a country where English has become a foreign language, like Indonesia. In this era, English has become an international language for communication. Mehmoodzadeh (2012) stated that excellent communication abilities in English had obtained a great worldwide demand for everyone, even non-native speakers. In a country where English has become a foreign language, it's a challenge to learn the English language. Indonesia has many different languages in every area and also with different accents too.

Language proficiency is the root of students' speaking difficulties, among which are a paucity of vocabulary, awful grammar, a lack of topic sentences, wrong inflection, and improper pronunciation (Mulyono, 2019; Perez-Castillejo, 2019). In addition to their verbal competence, students have difficulties responding to their psychological characteristics, such as a loss of self-assurance, worry, and anxiety (Woodrow, 2006; Galante, 2018). Those problems can make the learner feel unconfident and find it hard to speak English. Based on my experience, I also think doubtful and suddenly nervous when speaking English because I feel nervous and terrified of making mistakes.

Most of the time In an EFL classroom, students can develop their speaking abilities, but they rarely take advantage of this potential. Many students' inability to express themselves in class has proven to be a significant cause that may affect their capacity for language learning. Students in an EFL classroom often remain silent when their teacher asks them a question. They frequently remain silent even when they understand the teacher's questions and can provide answers. Speaking anxiety may negatively impact our learning process and achievement. This statement is also reinforced by

the result of Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel's (2013) research at Bond University's English Language Institute, Australia; they said that students' speaking anxiety also feels competitiveness, worry about making mistakes, and frightened of making a mistake in the presence of others.

Referring to Alrabai (2015), the majority of English as a Foreign Language instructors believed that necessary to judge the students sometimes. The teachers hoped that it could fix the student's mistakes. Due to the students that are out of control, working in groups or pair is not recommended. Another finding of the study stated that the teacher should be the center of the class and talkative. The teacher also being a controller and the leader in the class. In a previous study, Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014) also supported these findings. They reviewed several situations where students experienced pressure when speaking in class, including when they had to answer a direct question without prior preparation. This makes them feel awkward and uncomfortable when speaking in front of the whole group.

Male and female participants may have different feelings when learning English. Wardhaugh (2006, p.21) said, "Gender becomes one of the great 'growth areas' in language study." We can infer from the previous sentence that gender has a significant part in speaking anxiety. According to Kumar (2011), gender plays a crucial part in the classroom atmosphere for learning a foreign language. Bernat and Rosemarie explain that in language learning, females tend to speak more than one language and have a more significant role in intelligence play than males. Another difference is that males more enjoy practicing English with native speakers than females.

Some previous studies about the relationship of speaking anxiety across gender discovered that women experience more anxiety than men do. This result was found by Tercan and Dikilitas (2015), Çağatay (2015), Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013), Karatas et al. (2016), Suparia et al. (2022). Another researcher found contrasting results from the previous study. According to the findings, male students show more speaking stress than female students. This research was found by Abrar (2017) and Mahmoodzadeh (2012). However, Fauziyah et al. (2022) and Gaibani and Elmenfi (2014) found that there is no discernible disparity in speaking anxiety between male and female students.

Anxiety in speaking is one of the many aspects that affect EFL speakers' ability to communicate. Besides gender, students' proficiency also has a relationship with speaking anxiety. Sena et al. (2007) stated that, in general, low-ability students' lower performance was more closely correlated with a high level of anxiety. A person with some kind of anxiousness is a facilitator tool for someone to perform ineffectively. The effect of feeling anxious can contribute to impaired performance through restricted thoughts, attentional resources, more cognitive impairment, worry, and frightened caused by anxiety (Vitasari et al. 2010). In line with the previous statement, Luigi et al. (2007) added that a high level of anxiety will be linked to worse academic performance.

Some researchers' results (Balemir 2009, Çağatay 2015, Tridinanti 2018) found no considerable correlation between speaking anxiety and level of proficiency. However, these study results contradict Tianjian's (2010) research; low proficiency levels have a high level of anxiety. This result also aligns with the result of Bensalem (2018), who found that students with high English self-perceived proficiency in a minimum level of anxiety.

Related to the previous explanation, this research was targeted to investigate certain factors that possibly lead the students to experience anxiety in speaking, the significant correlation across gender, and the significant difference of EFL students depending on proficiency.

## **METHODS**

This study intended to identify the level of anxiety among EFL students, investigate the effect of gender on EFL students' anxiety levels, and find out whether there is a significant difference in speaking anxiety among EFL students based on their proficiency level among third-semester students at the Universitas Islam Malang.

Related to the aims above, the writer used a causal-comparative design to identify the correlation of speaking anxiety across gender and proficiency based on their level of speaking anxiety. Refer to Gall et al. (2007), causal-comparative research is a non-experimental method for determining a cause-and-effect relationship between groups of people with different levels of an independent variable present, as well as how these groups differ in terms of a dependent variable.

The data for this study was acquired through a questionnaire, and the writer employed a quantitative methodology. Sugiyono (2019) defines quantitative research methods as philosophy positivism-based research techniques utilized to inspect certain groups of people or samples, collecting data through study instruments, and quantitative or statistical data analysis to test pre-existing hypotheses.

The selection of the participants of this study has several criteria: the participants are students in Universitas Islam Malang and currently taking the Speaking III course for the 2022/2023 academic year. For the accuracy of the assessment, the respondent was taken by English students from third-semester students at the Universitas Islam Malang. To select three classes as the population for this study, the writer employed the technique of sample random sampling. From the total number of participants (48 students), it's only 47 students that calculated in this study. One student didn't get a score in their public speaking class, so the writer eliminated it.

This study adopted a questionnaire on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz & Cope (1986). FLCAS consists of 33 questions with answer response options ranging from 1-5 for each item. The options are SA (strongly agree), A (agree), N (neutral), D (disagree), and SD (strongly disagree). Mr. Dr. Dzul Fikri, S.S., M.Pd has validated this questionnaire as the expert lecturer at translating at Universitas Islam Malang. The writer also finds Cronbach's alpha and the result is 0.934. It shows that the level of validation from FLCAS is high. The questionnaire was translated into Indonesian to minimize misunderstandings among respondents. The FLCAS questionnaire consists of two types of positive and negative statements. The score of positive statements ranged from 1-5 with the answer "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". There are nine positive statements in the FLCAS questionnaires. Positive statements are in numbers 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, and 32. While the negative statement is ranging from 5-1 with the answer "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". The negative statement is in numbers 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, and 33.

Data was calculated manually, with results ranging from 33 to 165. After each score from the student's FLCAS results is obtained, it was categorized into several anxiety-ranging levels. The criteria for a student's FLSA score was adopted from Oetting's scale and will be classified as below:

**Table 1.** Level of anxiety

| Level of anxiety | Criteria of Students' FLCAS Score |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 124-165          | Very Anxious                      |
| 108-123          | Anxious                           |
| 87-107           | Middly Anxious                    |
| 66-86            | Relaxed                           |
| 33-65            | Very Relaxed                      |

## FINDINGS

### *The level of speaking anxiety among third-semester English students at Universitas Islam Malang*

A 33-item questionnaire was employed to measure the level of speaking anxiety. The total score on the questionnaire, which used a 5-grade Likert scale, ranged from 33 to 165. First, the final scores from the FLCAS questionnaire for each student were calculated manually. The criteria level of anxiety was adopted from the Oetting scale. A total score of more than 124 classified as very anxious, a total score range of 108 -123 presented an anxious, a total score range of 87 – 107

categorized as mildly anxious, a total score of 66-86 showed a relaxed, and a participant who had a total score less than 65 proved very relaxed.

The participants' average total anxiety scores were calculated to measure their speaking anxiety levels. Table 4.1.1 shows the result of means and standard deviation calculated using SPSS, the average score of third-semester students at Universitas Islam Malang shows a level mildly anxious of speaking anxiety (N= 48. M=102, SD =16.117).

**Table 2.** The level of speaking anxiety

| The level of speaking anxiety | N  | Mean   | SD     |
|-------------------------------|----|--------|--------|
|                               | 47 | 102.30 | 16.157 |

In addition, descriptive statistical methods were used to calculate frequencies and percentages of very relaxed, relaxed, mildly anxious, anxious, and very anxious speaking anxiety levels in students. The analysis's findings showed that 46.8% of the students were categorized with mildly anxious levels of speaking anxiety. Another is that, it is evident that whereas 10.6% of students feel speaking anxiety at a relaxed level, 31.9% of participants exhibit it at an anxious level of speaking anxiety. Another finding was that 8.5% of students showed very anxious speaking anxiety levels, whereas 2.1% showed very low relaxed.

**Table 3.** Percentage and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

| The level of speaking anxiety | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Very Anxious                  | 4         | 8.5%    |
| Anxious                       | 15        | 31.9%   |
| Mildly Anxious                | 22        | 46.8%   |
| Relaxed                       | 5         | 10.6%   |
| Very Relaxed                  | 1         | 2.1%    |
| Total                         | 47        |         |

After calculating the mean and standard deviation, the writer concluded the possible causes of speaking anxiety in this study. There are several statements related to the factor of speaking anxiety, 37% of students agree with statement no 9 "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in public speaking class", no 10 "I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign public speaking class" (36%), no. 13 "It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my public speaking class" (38%), no 16 "Even if I am well prepared for a language class, I feel anxious about it" (36%), no 27 "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my public speaking class" (37%), no 29 "I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says"(38,6), no 19 "I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make" (43,2 %), and no. 33 "I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance" (43,2%).

*Is there any significant difference level of speaking anxiety across gender among third-semester English students at Universitas Islam Malang?*

To figure out whether speaking anxiety levels differ between male and female third-semester students at the Universitas Islam Malang, an independent sample t-test was carried out. To know the essential value means on gender and anxiety, the writer presented the result as follows:

**Table 4.** Gender Difference in speaking anxiety score

|                  | Gender | N  | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|------------------|--------|----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Speaking_anxiety | Male   | 14 | 106.36 | 14.752         | 3.943           |
|                  | Female | 33 | 100.58 | 16.630         | 2.895           |

The table above demonstrates that there were a total of respondent 47 students and it's divided into 2 groups based on gender, male (14 students) and female (33 students). The results demonstrated a statistically significant disparity that occur between students who were male and those who were female. For male students, the mean score is 106.36 (middly anxious), and the mean score for female students is shown on the number 100.58 (middly anxious).

**Table 5.** Independent Sample Test for Quality Mean

|                                         |                                                        | Total anxiety          |                            |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
|                                         |                                                        | Equal variance assumed | Equal variance not assumed |
| Levene's test for equality of variances | F                                                      | 0.169                  |                            |
|                                         | Sig.                                                   | 0.683                  |                            |
| t-test for equality of means            | T                                                      | 1.125                  | 1.182                      |
|                                         | Df                                                     | 45                     | 27.543                     |
|                                         | Sig. (2-tailed)                                        | 0.266                  | 0.247                      |
|                                         | Mean difference                                        | 5.781                  | 5.781                      |
|                                         | Std. Error difference                                  | 5.138                  | 4.891                      |
|                                         | 95% confidence interval of the difference: upper lower | 16.131<br>-5.68        | 15.808<br>-4.246           |

From the data presented above, It can be reported that there is no substantial disparity between males and females in terms of their average anxiety score. This can be seen from the significance value of 0.266, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. When the significance value exceeds 0.05, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is rejected. Therefore, The outcome of the study reveals that speaking anxiety scores between male and female students are not substantially different.

*Does speaking anxiety differ significantly for third-semester English students of Universitas Islam Malang depending on their level of proficiency?*

The use of analysis of variance (ANOVA) aims to confirm the clout of proficiency level on speaking anxiety level. Respondents were separated into two categories following their level of proficiency; high (80-100) and medium (70-79).

**Table 6.** Descriptive statistics

|        |    |        |                |            | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean |             |         |         |
|--------|----|--------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
|        | N  | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | Lower Bound                      | Upper Bound | Minimum | Maximum |
| High   | 31 | 102.35 | 15.400         | 2.766      | 96.71                            | 108.00      | 67      | 132     |
| Medium | 16 | 102.19 | 18.060         | 4.515      | 92.56                            | 111.81      | 57      | 134     |
| Total  | 47 | 102.30 | 16.157         | 2.357      | 97.55                            | 107.04      | 57      | 134     |

In light of the previously reported SPSS result, it was possible to figure out the various means for each level of proficiency. For high level (N= 31, M= 102.35, SD=15.400), medium level (N=16, M=102.19, SD=18.060) and total (N=47, M=102.30, SD=16.157)

**Table 7.** Test of Homogeneity of Variances

| Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|------------------|-----|-----|------|
| .031             | 1   | 45  | .861 |

The result of the SPSS "Test Homogeneity of Variance" above, shows that a significance value (Sig) of 0.861 was determined. With a significance value of 0.861 which is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the level of proficiency of the group is the same or homogeneous. So that the assumption of homogeneity in the one-way ANOVA test is accomplished.

**Table 8.** ANOVA

|                | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F    | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | .296           | 1  | .296        | .001 | .974 |
| Within Groups  | 12007.534      | 45 | 266.834     |      |      |
| Total          | 12007.830      | 46 |             |      |      |

In hypothesis testing, there are two levels of significance used, namely 0.05 and 0.01. (1) The alternative hypothesis (Ha) is approved and the null hypothesis (Ho) declines if the significance value is below 0.01. Thus, it can be concluded that intercourse is significant at the 0.01 level. (2) If the significance value is between 0.01 and 0.05, then Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. If the correlation has been determined to be significant at the 0.05 level, it is claimed. (3) If the significance value is greater than 0.05, then Ho is agreed and Ha is refused. The conclusion is that the correlation is not significant.

From the results listed in the table above, it can be seen that the significance value is 0.974, which is preponderant than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is agreed and the alternative hypothesis is denied. Thus, it can be summed up that there is no disparity in the valuable level of speaking anxiety depending on their proficiency.

## DISCUSSION

This part discussed the answer to the research problems based on the findings above. It was divided into three parts, there are: the level of speaking anxiety among EFL students, speaking anxiety differ significantly across gender, and speaking anxiety differ significantly among EFL students depending on their level of proficiency.

The outcome of the first question demonstrates that third-semester English students of Universitas Islam Malang in a mildly anxious level of speaking anxiety, which was proven by Table 2 The average score of 47 participants shows 102.30. This research is related to several previous studies. According to Suparlan (2022), the research's findings indicate that 15 (35,7%) of the students were characterized as relaxed, 6 (14,2%) as nervous, and 21 (50%) as moderately anxious. This study is also supported by Audia et al. (2019) found that most of the students (47%) are at mildly anxious level.

Additionally, the writer also concluded the possible causes of speaking anxiety, based on the high presentation in the questionnaire. There are several factors such as lack of preparation, afraid to do wrong, shyness, nervousness, and fear of teachers' judgment. The result is also supported by the previous study, Suparlan (2022) concludes 10 factors that possibility causes anxiety in speaking such as frightened to speak in English, avoiding a sanction from the teacher, inadequate confidence,

dread of being inferior to other students in ability, pudency, less preparation, worry over to do wrong, lack of English word, application of the English language as routine, and test of language.

In terms of differences between male and female students in speaking anxiety, the answer to the second question was that in both groups of students, speaking anxiety was present at similar rates in both men and women. This assertion was corroborated by the result of gender difference in speaking anxiety score in Table 4. The mean score for male students is 106.36 (Middly anxious) and for female students is shown on 1005.58 (middly anxious). The outcome of the Independent Sample Test for Quality Means in Table 4.1.4 which represented the significant value (sig 2-tailed) was 0.266. It means that there was no different significant score of anxiety between males and females.

Along with the findings of this study, research by Fauziyah et al. (2022) and Gaibani and Elmenfi (2014) also showed that there was no different significant in speaking anxiety between male and female students. Some researchers found contradicting results from the previous study. Çağatay (2015), Fındıklı, S., & Büyükkarcı, K. (2023), Karatas et al. (2016), Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013), Suparia et al. (2022), and Tercan and Dikilitas (2015) found that female students seem more anxious than male students. Abrar (2018) and Mahmoodzadeh (2012), two additional investigators, observed that male students typically exhibit higher levels of speaking anxiety.

Based on Table 4.1.5, indicated that high (102.35) and medium (102.19) levels of proficiency are shown in the same level of anxiety which is middly anxiety (87-107). The finding of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test in Table 6 is the answer to the third question which clearly shows that proficiency level has no bearing on their speaking anxiety. This study is match up with the result of Alqahtani (2019), Balemir (2009), Çağatay (2015), and Tridinanti (2018). They also found that there was no significant difference between speaking anxiety and proficiency level. They also found that there is no significant correlation between speaking anxiety and level of proficiency. This outcome is contradictory to the previous study as Tianjian (2010), Abrar et al (2016), and Bensalem (2018). The results showed that there is a statistically significant difference between proficient and less-proficient students in their speaking anxiety.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Referring to the findings and discussion in the preceding section, it can be summed up that third-semester students of English study programs at the Universitas Islam Malang have a level of anxiety in speaking that is categorized as middly anxious. From the total participants, there were 4 students (8.5%) who were at a very anxious level, 15 students (31.9%) were classified as anxious, 22 students (46.8%) were at a middly anxious level, 5 students (10.6%) showed a relaxed level, and 1 student (2.1%) showed a very relaxed level. The writer also sum up the causes of speaking anxiety. There were lack of preparation, afraid to do wrong, shyness, nervousness, and fear of teachers judgement

Regarding the second study regarding the difference in speaking anxiety levels between genders, the author used an independent t-test and obtained a result of 0.266 which is greater than the significance value of 0.05. it is confirmed that there is no significant difference comparing male and female students in concerns of speaking anxiety. This finding is in line with the previous statement, where the results of descriptive statistics show that males and females have similar or moderate levels of anxiety.

The results of this study concluded that anxiety in speaking does not have a significant difference in students, regardless of their proficiency level. This observation is confirmed by the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a value of 0.974 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that the null hypothesis gets approved and the alternative hypothesis is ignored.

From the results of this investigation, students were grouped at a middly anxious level of speaking anxiety. Based on the writer's opinion, suggested to the students to reduce their speaking

anxiety. To minimize the frightened of speaking in front of people, try to do more practice speaking English. Before speaking in front of many people try to speak in a small circle of friends first. Furthermore, try to accept all of the suggestions related to the way you speak and stay positive during the speaking test.

This study about speaking anxiety among EFL students discussed the level of anxiety in speaking and the different level of anxiety in speaking across gender and also depending on their proficiency. The writer hopes that in future research, there will be a comparative study on anxiety between freshmen and seniors and also between English students majoring and non-English students majoring in Universitas Islam Malang.

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