

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY IN SPEAKING CLASSES: STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

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**Abstract:** This study aims to identify the factors that cause English speaking anxiety in the classroom, understand students' perceptions of such anxiety, and explore the strategies and solutions applied to overcome it. This research design uses a qualitative approach. The research subjects were 5th semester students of English Study Program at IAIN Palangkaraya. Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of open and closed questions, and analyzed using a thematic approach. The results showed that the main factors causing anxiety were lack of vocabulary (73%) and fear of making mistakes (20%). The most frequently used strategies to overcome anxiety include relaxation techniques such as deep breathing (46.7%) and practicing speaking in front of a mirror (33%). Most respondents felt these strategies were quite effective in helping them reduce anxiety. This study recommends the importance of consistent speaking practice, relaxation techniques, as well as the reinforcement of a supportive learning environment to help students overcome speaking anxiety.

### INTRODUCTION

Anxiety about speaking English in class is a common phenomenon faced by students, especially in non-English speaking countries. It can hinder communication skills and affect students' academic performance. Language anxiety, or foreign language anxiety, is a combination of communication fears, test anxiety, and low self-esteem related to foreign language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). This is reinforced by (Tanveer, 2008) research, which shows that anxiety in speaking a foreign language often stems from a lack of confidence and pressure to perform perfectly. In the context of globalization and the need to communicate in English, it is important to understand the factors that influence this anxiety and find effective solutions to overcome it.

Based on this background, the problem formulations in this study are:

1. What are the factors that cause students' anxiety in speaking English in class?
2. How do students perceive the anxiety they experience?
3. What strategies and solutions do students apply to overcome this anxiety?

These questions will guide the research to dig deeper into the students' experiences. As a reference, (Young, 1991) state understanding anxiety factors can assist teachers in identifying more effective strategies to support students in language learning.

This research will be limited to students of English study program at IAIN Palangkaraya. The main focus of the study will be on speaking anxiety in a classroom context, without addressing other aspects of English learning such as reading or writing. In addition, this study will not include external factors that might affect anxiety, such as the social environment outside the classroom. As stated by (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994), situational anxiety in foreign language learning is often influenced by the learning context, so this limitation aims to provide a more specific focus on the classroom experience.

The purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions of anxiety in speaking English in class, as well as identify the strategies and solutions they employ to overcome such anxiety. By understanding students' experiences and views, it is hoped that this research can provide useful insights for teachers and educational institutions in designing more effective teaching methods. According to (Shand & Wood Publisher, n.d.), reducing anxiety is one way to increase the success of language learning through increasing students' motivation and courage to communicate.

The benefits of this research are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research can add to the knowledge of language anxiety and English learning strategies. Practically, the results of this study can be used by teachers to develop approaches that are more sensitive to the needs of students, as well as creating a more supportive learning environment for students who experience anxiety in speaking English. As stated by (Liu & Jackson, n.d.), the reduction of speaking anxiety can significantly improve students' confidence, which in turn contributes.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study used a qualitative approach to analyze the data and short answers from the questionnaires. This approach aims to provide an in-depth understanding of students' experiences and perceptions of English speaking anxiety in speaking classes.

### **Research Instruments**

The questionnaire in this study consisted of:

- Multiple choice questions: Exploring the experiences, causal factors, and strategies used by students.
- Open-ended questions: To dig deeper into the solutions applied by students to overcome English speaking anxiety.

The population of this study were IAIN Palangkaraya students majoring in English in semester 5. The sample was drawn using the Purposeful Sampling technique, which selects respondents based on certain criteria relevant to the research topic. The respondents selected are 15 active students majoring in English and have experiences or observations related to English speaking anxiety. The number of samples will be adjusted to the availability of respondents who meet these criteria, with the aim of obtaining in-depth and representative data related to students' perceptions of speaking anxiety and the strategies and solutions they apply.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data collection was carried out through questionnaires distributed using google form. This method facilitates online data collection, allows respondents to fill out questionnaires efficiently and flexibly, and facilitates automatic data processing.

### **Data Analysis**

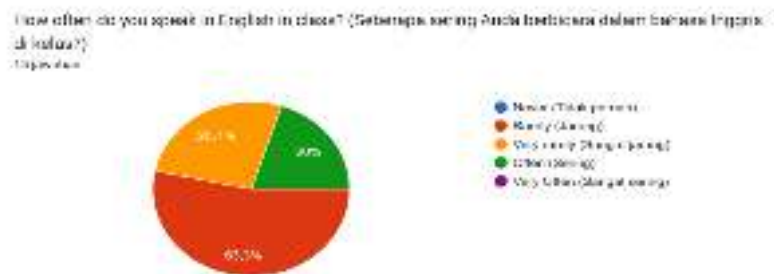
Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis for short and multiple choice answers from respondents. This method allows the researcher to identify patterns and themes that emerge from the data collected, providing further insight into English speaking anxiety among university students.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

These results were taken from a questionnaire to collect data from 15 respondents regarding their experiences with English speaking anxiety in a speaking classroom environment. The following is an analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire.

## 1. English Speaking Experience

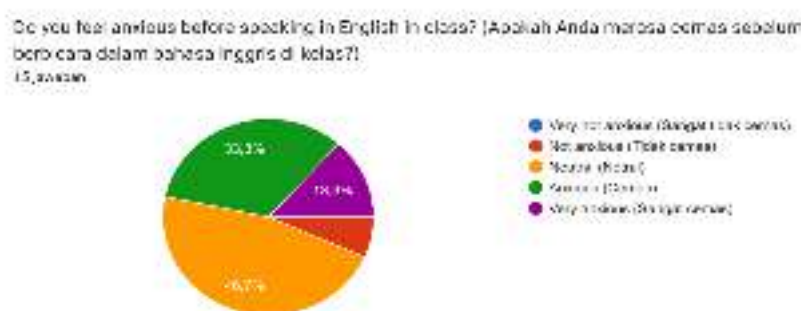
- Frequency of English speaking in class



Picture 1.

Based on the data obtained, the majority of the class participants spoke English with low frequency. A total of 53.3% of the respondents indicated that they spoke in English rarely, while 26.7% reported that they did so very rarely. Only 20% of the respondents stated that they used English frequently in class, and no one reported speaking in English very frequently.

- Comfort Level when Speaking

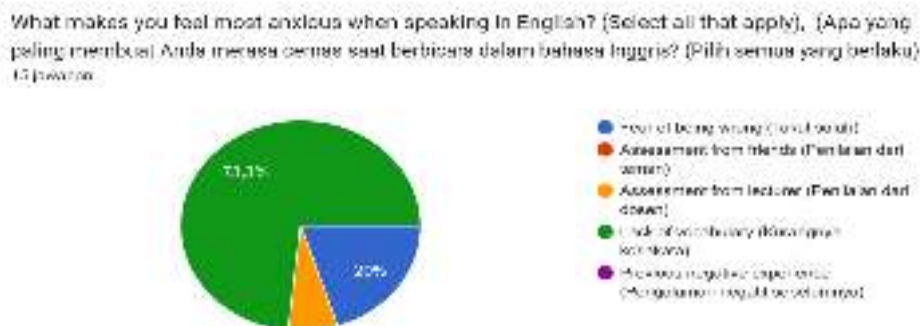


Picture 2.

Most respondents felt neutral when speaking in English in front of the class, with the percentage reaching 73.3%. Meanwhile, 20% felt comfortable, and the rest experienced discomfort, either very uncomfortable or uncomfortable. This shows that although there are some who feel comfortable, the majority are still in the neutral zone regarding the experience of speaking in English in a classroom environment.

## 2. Causes of Anxiety

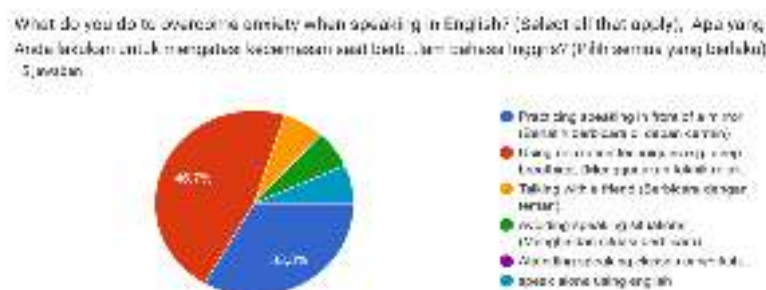
Respondents identified several factors that cause anxiety when speaking in English:



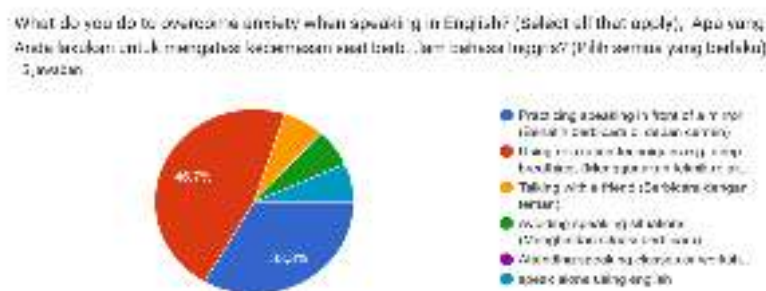
Picture 1.

From the diagram presented, it can be seen that the main cause of lack of vocabulary contributes significantly to anxiety, with the percentage reaching 73%. This shows that a lack of vocabulary can trigger a deep sense of anxiety. In addition, fear of mistakes is also an important factor, albeit at a lower percentage of 20%. The combination of these two factors creates a real challenge for individuals to communicate confidently.

## 3. Strategies to Overcome Anxiety



Picture 1.



Picture 2.

Based on the data obtained, the most common strategies used to overcome anxiety when speaking in English are using relaxation techniques such as deep breathing (46.7%) and practicing speaking in front of a mirror (33%). Despite the various approaches, most respondents felt that the strategies they used were quite effective, with 60% considering them effective and 33.3% being neutral. This shows that despite the challenges of speaking English, many individuals manage to find ways that help them reduce anxiety and increase confidence when speaking.

#### 4. Advice for Overcoming Anxiety

Many respondents shared personal experiences with speaking anxiety. They stated that practice and confidence are essential. Some of the advice given included:

- Practicing regularly.
- Using relaxation techniques before speaking.
- Increasing vocabulary through reading and watching movies.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of this study provide important insights for teachers in designing learning methods that are more sensitive to students' needs. Approaches that encourage continuous speaking practice, create a supportive classroom environment, as well as provide strategies for coping with anxiety, can help reduce psychological barriers to speaking English. Thus, this study contributes theoretically and practically to improving the quality of English language learning and supporting students' academic success.

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