



Correlation between Mini-Seminar Activities, Speaking Anxiety, and Speaking Skill in Vocational EFL Classroom

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-06-23 Revised: 2026-06-29 Accepted: 2026-09-21 Keywords: <i>mini seminar;</i> <i>speaking anxiety;</i> <i>speaking skill;</i> <i>vocational EFL</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.11398 Corresponding Author: Mutiara mutiara.2024@student.uny.ac.id Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta	<i>Speaking skill is essential for vocational students, yet anxiety often limits oral participation in EFL classrooms. This study examined the correlations among mini-seminar activities, speaking anxiety, and speaking skill in a vocational EFL context. A quantitative correlational design was employed with 72 students in grade 12 majoring in Network and Application Information Systems at a public vocational high school in Sleman, Yogyakarta. Data were collected using a mini-seminar observation rubric, an adapted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale questionnaire, and an analytic speaking rubric, and were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression. The results showed no significant correlations among mini-seminar activities, speaking anxiety, and speaking skill. These findings indicate that speaking development is shaped by broader contextual and learner-related factors beyond mini-seminar participation and anxiety alone.</i>

1. Introduction

Speaking competence is one of the most important components of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it reflects learners' ability to communicate meaningfully in real-life situations. In vocational high schools, speaking ability has a practical function beyond classroom achievement. Students are expected to use English for workplace presentations, interviews, client communication, project briefings, and professional collaboration. Therefore, speaking competence contributes directly to vocational students' career readiness and employability (Anzanni & Dewi, 2022; Brown, 2004).

Despite this importance, many vocational students still experience difficulties in English speaking activities. These difficulties include linguistic problems, such as limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and grammatical inaccuracy, as well as affective barriers, particularly speaking anxiety. Students may understand classroom materials but remain silent because they are afraid of making mistakes or being negatively evaluated by peers and teachers. This condition limits speaking practice and may create a cycle of low

confidence, weak performance, and increasing anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Syahbani & Apoko, 2023).

Mini-seminar activities are relevant to this problem because they provide a structured and authentic context for oral communication. In a mini-seminar, students take different communicative roles, such as presenter, moderator, master of ceremony, and audience. Unlike ordinary presentations, mini-seminars involve role-based interaction, question-and-answer sessions, collaboration, and repeated participation in semi-formal speaking situations. Previous studies suggest that structured oral activities can support speaking development and reduce anxiety through preparation, rehearsal, peer interaction, and feedback (Daud et al., 2020; Lestari & Wati, 2022; Wu, 2024).

Research on speaking anxiety and speaking performance has produced mixed findings. Studies rooted in Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis predict that higher anxiety suppresses language output, and this negative relationship has been empirically documented in multiple EFL contexts (Horwitz et al., 1986; Anzanni & Dewi, 2022; Oktavia & Syahrul, 2021). However, a growing body of evidence challenges this linear view: the anxiety-performance relationship is moderated by task familiarity, classroom climate, and student preparedness (Botes et al., 2020; Kasim, 2024; Mamang et al., 2023). Similarly, while structured speaking tasks have been linked to performance gains (Daud et al., 2020; Lestari & Wati, 2022; Wu, 2024), the strength of this relationship varies by context, assessment design, and participant characteristics.

Crucially, most prior studies treated these variables in isolation or used simple bivariate designs, leaving unexamined how mini-seminar participation, anxiety, and oral proficiency interact simultaneously in the vocational EFL classroom. This is a substantive gap: in an authentic learning environment, pedagogical, affective, and proficiency variables operate in concert rather than independently. Examining them together provides a more ecologically valid picture of speaking development.

The conceptual framework of this study positions mini-seminar activities (X_1) and speaking anxiety (X_2) as independent variables hypothesized to predict speaking skill (Y). Drawing on Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety model and Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, speaking anxiety is expected to relate negatively to speaking skill: higher anxiety is theorized to disrupt language processing and oral output quality. Conversely, drawing on authentic learning theories (Daud et al., 2020; Wu, 2024), higher engagement in mini-seminar activities is hypothesized to correlate positively with speaking skill and negatively with anxiety through mechanisms of repeated exposure, peer scaffolding, and task desensitization.

The simultaneous examination of both predictors is intended to capture possible interaction effects that single-predictor studies obscure. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the correlations among mini-seminar activities, speaking anxiety, and speaking skill among Grade 12 Network and Application Information Systems students in a vocational EFL classroom.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative correlational design (Creswell, 2023). This design was selected because the study examined the strength and direction of relationships among naturally occurring variables without manipulating the classroom program. Unlike experimental designs that require control groups and random assignment, correlational research is appropriate when the goal is to map the nature and magnitude of association among variables in situ (Creswell, 2023; Field, 2018). Pearson correlation and multiple regression were chosen specifically over partial correlation or structural equation modeling because the study involved three variables measured at the continuous level with assumed

linearity, and the sample size of 72 participants is adequate for the number of predictors in an ordinary least squares regression framework.

Alternative techniques such as path analysis or structural equation modeling were not pursued because the sample size and the bivariate nature of most hypotheses did not justify the additional model complexity. The independent variables were mini-seminar activities (X_1) and speaking anxiety (X_2), while the dependent variable was speaking skill (Y).

The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 2 Depok, Sleman, Yogyakarta, during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants were 72 Grade 12 students majoring in Network and Application Information Systems, consisting of 36 students from Class A and 36 students from Class B. Total sampling was used because all members of the population participated in the mini-seminar program and were accessible for the full data collection period.

Three instruments were used. Mini-seminar activities were measured using an observation rubric covering three dimensions: public speaking quality, collaborative participation, and creative task execution. The content validity of the rubric was established through expert judgment by two EFL lecturers, and the rubric was piloted in one session before formal data collection to confirm usability and inter-observer clarity. Speaking anxiety was measured using an adapted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) consisting of 33 Likert-scale items originally developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The reliability of the adapted questionnaire was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .886$), indicating strong internal consistency. Speaking skill was assessed using an analytic speaking rubric covering pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Speaking performances were scored by two trained raters. The inter-rater reliability was computed using Cohen's Kappa ($\kappa = .81$), indicating substantial agreement between the raters and confirming the consistency of the scoring process (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Ethical procedures were observed throughout the study. Prior to data collection, written consent was obtained from each participant, and school administration approval was secured from SMK Negeri 2 Depok, Sleman. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their involvement, their right to withdraw at any time without consequence, and the confidentiality of their individual scores. The study did not involve deception or any intervention that could affect students' academic standing.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, prerequisite tests, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple regression through SPSS 25.0. Normality was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, while linearity was examined using the Deviation from Linearity test. Pearson correlation was used to test pairwise relationships, and multiple regression was used to examine the simultaneous contribution of mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety to speaking skill.

3. Result

The descriptive analysis summarized the distribution of the three variables: mini-seminar activities, speaking anxiety, and speaking skill. The summary is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Median
Mini-Seminar Activities (X_1)	72	61	97	80.31	10.25	81.00
Speaking Anxiety (X_2)	72	63	141	97.03	12.67	96.00
Speaking Skill (Y)	72	64	96	80.11	8.00	80.50

Table 1 shows that the mean score of mini-seminar activities was 80.31, indicating generally high student engagement. When scores were categorized using predetermined interval ranges, 65.3% of students fell into the “active” or “very active” categories, 28.2% were categorized as “moderately active,” and only 6.5% were classified as “inactive.”

This right-skewed distribution confirms that the sample had limited variability at the lower end of the mini-seminar activity scale. The mean score for speaking anxiety was 97.03. Examining the categorical distribution, 12.5% of students were classified as “not anxious,” 61.1% as “mildly anxious,” 22.2% as “moderately anxious,” and only 4.2% as “highly anxious.” The absence of highly anxious participants and the concentration in the mild anxiety band is methodologically significant: the restricted range of anxiety scores reduces statistical power for detecting a correlation with speaking skill. The mean score for speaking skill was 80.11. Categorically, 8.3% of students were rated as “very good,” 70.8% as “good,” 19.4% as “moderate,” and 1.4% as “poor.” The strong concentration in the “good” category indicates a ceiling effect in the speaking assessment, which substantially constrains the detectable variance necessary for significant correlation analysis (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

The prerequisite tests indicated that parametric analysis was appropriate. The normality test showed that all variables and regression residuals had significance values of .200, which exceeded the .05 criterion. The linearity tests also indicated linear relationships among all variable pairs, including mini-seminar activities and speaking skill ($p = .131$), speaking anxiety and speaking skill ($p = .218$), and mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety ($p = .271$). Therefore, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were considered suitable for hypothesis testing.

The hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statistical Result	Sig.	Decision
Mini-seminar activities and speaking skill	$r = .113$	.343	Not significant
Speaking anxiety and speaking skill	$r = .036$	.763	Not significant
Mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety	$r = -.087$	.470	Not significant
Mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety $\rightarrow$ speaking skill (simultaneous)	$R^2 = .016$; $F = .565$	.571	Not significant

The first hypothesis test showed a weak positive correlation between mini-seminar activities and speaking skill ($r = .113$, $p = .343$). Because the p-value was higher than .05, the correlation was not statistically significant. The effect size was also very small, indicating that mini-seminar activities alone explained less than 1.3% of the variance in speaking skill. In practical terms, students who were rated higher on mini-seminar participation did not consistently demonstrate higher speaking scores, suggesting that participation frequency and quality alone are insufficient predictors of summative speaking proficiency within this sample.

The second hypothesis test showed a near-zero correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking skill ($r = .036$, $p = .763$). This result indicates that speaking anxiety did not show a significant linear relationship with speaking skill in this sample. Although anxiety is theoretically expected to interfere with oral performance, the present data did not provide statistical support for that relationship.

The positive direction of the correlation, albeit trivially small, further suggests that in this particular sample anxiety did not function as a performance suppressant, consistent with the possibility that mild anxiety may be neutral or even slightly facilitative in familiar task contexts.

The third hypothesis test showed a weak negative correlation between mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety ($r = -.087$, $p = .470$). This direction suggests that students with higher mini-seminar engagement tended to report slightly lower anxiety, consistent with exposure-based desensitization accounts, but the relationship was too weak to reach statistical significance. The simultaneous regression analysis also showed a non-significant model ($R^2 = .016$, $F = .565$, $p = .571$), meaning that mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety together explained only 1.6% of the variance in speaking skill. This very low explanatory power indicates that the chosen predictors do not adequately account for the outcome variance in this sample.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that mini-seminar activities were positively but not significantly correlated with speaking skill. This result is directionally consistent with previous studies suggesting that structured oral activities support speaking development (Daud et al., 2020; Lestari & Wati, 2022; Rizqi & Haryanto, 2024), yet the effect in the present study was negligible. The divergence from positive findings in prior work can be explained in part by differences in study design. Daud et al. (2020) used a pre-post design within a semester-long speaking class, while Lestari and Wati (2022) employed group comparison across different instructional conditions.

In contrast, the present correlational study measured a snapshot of activity scores and speaking performance at a single point in time, making it difficult to capture the developmental trajectory that structured activities are theorized to produce over multiple sessions. This temporal limitation is compounded by the homogeneity of the sample: all 72 participants came from the same school, grade level, major, and mini-seminar program. When students experience identical pedagogical conditions, their scores converge, and between-participant variance the very variance that correlation analysis depends on diminishes.

The concentration of speaking scores in the “good” and “very good” categories confirms a ceiling effect, a well-documented methodological threat in correlational research with homogeneous samples (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). When the outcome measure lacks sufficient range, even a genuinely present relationship cannot reach statistical significance because there is not enough score variability to be partitioned by the predictor. This is not a trivial technical caveat: it fundamentally reframes the interpretation of the null findings. The non-significant results should not be read as evidence that mini seminars are pedagogically ineffective. Rather, the evidence base in this study was structurally limited in its ability to detect an effect. Future research using more diverse samples across schools or proficiency levels would more accurately test the hypothesis that mini-seminar engagement predicts speaking skill improvement.

The correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking skill was also non-significant, a finding that diverges from the broader literature on language anxiety and oral performance. Horwitz et al. (1986) established theoretically and empirically that foreign language classroom anxiety impairs oral participation, and subsequent meta-analytic work has confirmed a moderate negative anxiety-performance relationship across contexts (Botes et al., 2020).

The present null finding is therefore surprising from a theoretical standpoint, but it is not unprecedented. Several studies have found context-dependent and moderated relationships, particularly when anxiety is mild or when students have task familiarity (Kasim, 2024; Mamang et al., 2023).

In this study, 61.1% of students were categorized as “mildly anxious,” and none fell into the extreme anxiety range. Low-to-moderate anxiety may not disrupt performance and may even serve as a slight motivational activator what Scovel (1978) termed “facilitative anxiety” particularly when students have internalized the speaking task structure through repeated mini-seminar cycles. The absence of highly anxious participants, combined with the ceiling effect in speaking scores, creates a statistical environment in which the anxiety-performance relationship is essentially undetectable.

The weak negative correlation between mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety ($r = -.087$) is theoretically meaningful even without reaching significance. Repeated exposure to structured speaking tasks, including preparation cycles, role rehearsal, peer feedback, and teacher scaffolding, should logically reduce uncertainty and desensitize students to performance demands over time (Duong & Trang, 2023; Wu, 2024). The direction of the correlation is consistent with this account. The failure to achieve significance reflects the sample’s restricted range on both variables rather than an absence of the underlying process. This interpretation supports viewing mini-seminars as process-oriented interventions whose effects unfold across multiple cycles and cannot be captured adequately in a single-semester correlational snapshot.

The simultaneous regression result underscores that speaking skill is multifactorial. Mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety together explained only 1.6% of the variance, strongly suggesting that other variables dominate speaking outcomes in this context. Probable candidates include prior English proficiency, vocabulary breadth, motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, quality and specificity of teacher feedback, classroom climate, and exposure to English outside school. For vocational English teachers, these findings carry several practical implications. First, mini-seminar activities should be implemented with explicit formative assessment feedback cycles rather than solely evaluated through summative performance rubrics.

Students benefit most from structured oral tasks when feedback is specific, timely, and tied to identifiable speaking sub-skills such as pronunciation accuracy, discourse coherence, or turn-taking management. Second, anxiety management in the vocational speaking classroom should not focus exclusively on performance-stage interventions. Pre-task preparation phases, including role clarification, script drafting, peer rehearsal, and familiarity-building, are more likely to reduce anxiety at a process level. Third, because speaking skill is multifactorial, teachers should resist attributing variation in student oral performance solely to anxiety or participation levels and instead consider broader learner profiles including proficiency background and self-efficacy.

Overall, the findings contribute to the discussion on vocational EFL speaking instruction by demonstrating that authentic speaking activities and affective factors do not always produce direct and statistically detectable relationships with speaking outcomes. The results support a cautious interpretation: mini seminars are pedagogically valuable as formative, authentic, and collaborative activities, but their measurable impact on speaking proficiency scores in correlational research depends substantially on sample variability, assessment design, and the timeline over which measurements are taken.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the correlations among mini-seminar activities, speaking anxiety, and speaking skill in a vocational EFL classroom. The findings showed that mini-seminar activities were positively but not significantly correlated with speaking skill. Speaking anxiety was also not significantly correlated with speaking skill. Mini-seminar activities and speaking anxiety did not significantly predict speaking skill in the simultaneous regression model.

The non-significant results are best interpreted through the lens of sample homogeneity, restricted score variance, and a ceiling effect in the speaking assessment rather than as evidence against the pedagogical value of mini-seminar activities. In an overly homogeneous sample where most students are performing well and experiencing only mild anxiety, the statistical conditions necessary to detect between-individual associations are not met. Findings from such a context should not be generalized to suggest that mini-seminar activities are ineffective or that speaking anxiety does not matter; they suggest, instead, that measuring these relationships requires greater sample diversity and a research design capable of capturing longitudinal change.

From a practical standpoint, vocational EFL teachers should approach mini-seminars as formative, process-oriented activities that build collaborative skills, reduce task unfamiliarity, and desensitize students to public speaking demands over time outcomes that summative correlation studies are not well positioned to measure. Future studies are recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples spanning multiple schools and proficiency levels, apply experimental or longitudinal designs, use speaking-specific anxiety measures distinct from general FLCAS subscales, and incorporate additional predictors such as motivation, self-efficacy, prior English proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, and teacher feedback quality. Such designs may offer a more comprehensive and methodologically robust explanation of speaking development in vocational EFL contexts.

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