



Exploring Speaking Anxiety Levels Among EFL Students: Evidence from the English Language Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

Frindi Meilani Hasan¹, Muziatun², Indri Wirahmi Bay³

^{1,2,3} Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Gorontalo

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-05-22 Revised: 2026-06-09 Accepted: 2026-06-10 Keywords: EFL Learners; Foreign Language Anxiety; Pre-Service English Teachers; Speaking Anxiety; Speaking Performance DOI: 10.24256/ideasv14i1.8479 Corresponding Author: Frindi Meilani Hasan frindihasan1@gmail.com Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Gorontalo	<i>Speaking anxiety remains one of the most common challenges experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in oral communication activities. This study aimed to identify the level of speaking anxiety among students of the English Language Education Study Programme at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design involving 110 students selected through purposive sampling from a population of 131 students who had completed speaking-related courses. Data were collected using the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ), an 18-item adaptation of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that 45% of the participants experienced moderate speaking anxiety, 36% experienced high anxiety, and only 19% demonstrated low anxiety. The results indicate that speaking anxiety remains a prevalent issue among EFL students, with the majority of participants experiencing moderate to high levels of anxiety during English-speaking activities. Furthermore, the most significant sources of anxiety were speaking with native speakers, misunderstanding teacher correction, lack of self-confidence, and speaking without preparation. These findings suggest that speaking anxiety is influenced by both internal and external factors that may hinder students' oral communication performance. The study highlights the importance of creating supportive classroom environments, providing constructive feedback, and implementing low-pressure speaking activities to help students develop confidence and reduce anxiety. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on pre-service English teachers in an Indonesian higher education context, contributing to the growing body of research on foreign language speaking anxiety.</i>

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the most challenging skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it requires learners to produce language in real time while managing vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and interaction. As a result, many learners experience speaking anxiety, which can reduce confidence, participation, and speaking performance. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified this phenomenon as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), consisting of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Among these dimensions, speaking is frequently reported as the most anxiety-provoking aspect of language learning.

Recent studies have investigated speaking anxiety using the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ), an adaptation of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Research by Febrikawati (2021), Firlas (2022), and Bashori et al. (2022) found that EFL learners commonly experience moderate to high levels of speaking anxiety. Fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and fear of negative evaluation were identified as major sources of anxiety.

Similar findings were reported by Liu and Jackson (2008), who found that speaking anxiety negatively affected students' willingness to communicate in English. Likewise, Dewaele and Al-Saraj (2015) reported that fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension were among the strongest predictors of foreign language anxiety among university students.

However, most previous studies focused on general EFL learners, while limited attention has been given to students in English teacher education programmes. As prospective English teachers, these students face additional pressure to demonstrate communicative competence, which may influence their level of speaking anxiety.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the level of speaking anxiety among students of the English Language Education Study Programme at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The research seeks to answer the following question: What is the level of speaking anxiety among EFL students in the English Language Education Study Programme at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo? The novelty of this study lies in its focus on pre-service English teachers in an Indonesian higher education context.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to identify the level of speaking anxiety among students of the English Language Education Study Programme at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The population consisted of 131 students from the 2023 cohort who had completed speaking courses. Using purposive sampling, 110 students who met the research criteria and agreed to participate were selected as the sample.

Data were collected using the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Questionnaire (FLSAQ), an 18-item adaptation of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and modified by Saltan (2003) as cited in Öztürk et al. (2014). The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument was distributed online through Google Forms, and participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire.

The Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) has been widely used and validated in previous studies investigating speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Previous studies reported satisfactory reliability coefficients, indicating that the instrument is appropriate for measuring speaking anxiety in EFL contexts.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Individual scores were calculated by summing responses to all questionnaire items and then classified into three anxiety levels following Öztürk et al. (2014): high anxiety (>72), moderate anxiety (54–72), and low anxiety (<54). The results were presented in frequencies and percentages to identify the dominant level of speaking anxiety among the participants. Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel.

3. Result

The Level of Speaking Anxiety Among EFL Students

The findings revealed the level of speaking anxiety among students of the English Language Education Study Programme at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. Based on the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) administered to 110 students, the participants were classified into three anxiety levels: low, moderate, and high.

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Speaking Anxiety Levels

Anxiety Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	21	19%
Moderate	49	45%
High	40	36%
Total	110	100%

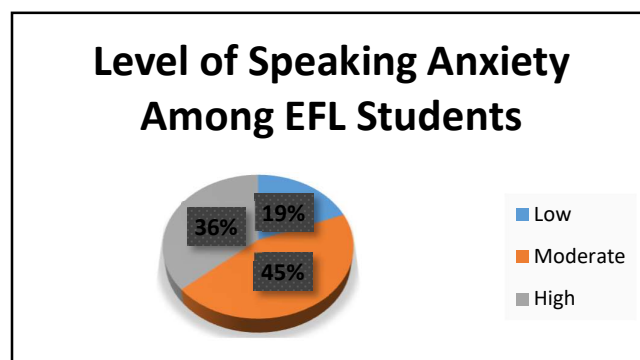


Figure 1. Level of Speaking Anxiety Among EFL Students

The results indicate that moderate anxiety was the most dominant category, accounting for 45% of the participants, followed by high anxiety (36%) and low anxiety (19%). These findings suggest that speaking anxiety remains a common issue among EFL students, with 81% of the participants experiencing either moderate or high levels of anxiety during English-speaking activities.

Major Sources of Speaking Anxiety

To identify the most anxiety-provoking situations, the mean scores of the 18 FLSAQ items were ranked from the highest to the lowest.

Table 2. Top Sources of Speaking Anxiety

Rank	FLCAS QUESTIONNAIRE	Mean	SD	Total Score	Percentage
1.	I feel nervous while speaking English with native speakers (Item 7)	4,25	1.00	463	6.49%
2.	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting (Item 8)	4.05	0.90	445	6.24%
3.	I don't feel confident when I speak English in classes (Item 9)	4.04	1.23	444	6.22%
4.	I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance (Item 18)	3.86	1.05	425	5.95%
5.	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes (Item 5)	3.85	1.06	423	5.93%
6.	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do (Item 12)	3.80	1.03	418	5.86%
7.	I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make (Item 10)	3.75	1.31	413	5.79%
8.	I am afraid of making mistakes in English classes (Item 2)	3.63	1.12	399	5.59%
9.	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students (Item 13)	3.62	0.92	398	5.58%
10.	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English classes (Item 11)	3.61	1.05	397	5.56%
11.	I get nervous when I don't understand every word my English teacher says (Item 15)	3.44	0.99	378	5.30%
12.	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English classes (Item 14)	3.46	1.07	377	5.28%
13.	I get frightened when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English (Item 4)	3.35	1.05	368	5.16%
14.	I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English classes (Item 3)	3.35	1.21	368	5.16%
15.	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me	3.27	1.33	360	5.04%

	when I speak English (Item 17)				
16.	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English (Item 16)	3.25	1.12	357	5.00%
17.	I am never quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English (Item 1)	3.22	1.00	354	4.96%
18.	I get embarrassed to volunteer answers in English classes (Item 6)	3.18	1.08	350	4.90%

These findings contribute to the growing body of research on foreign language anxiety by demonstrating that speaking anxiety remains prevalent among pre-service English teachers. The findings suggest that linguistic competence alone may not eliminate anxiety, as psychological and social factors continue to influence learners' willingness to communicate.

The findings show that speaking with native speakers was the strongest source of anxiety among the participants ($M = 4.25$). In addition, misunderstanding teacher feedback, lack of confidence, and speaking without preparation were identified as major factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety. These results indicate that both linguistic and psychological factors play an important role in shaping students' anxiety when communicating in English.

4. Discussion

The Level of Speaking Anxiety Among EFL Students

The findings revealed that speaking anxiety remains a prevalent issue among students of the English Language Education Study Programme at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The results showed that 45% of the participants experienced moderate anxiety, 36% experienced high anxiety, and only 19% were categorized as having low anxiety. This indicates that most students encounter emotional challenges when participating in English-speaking activities. The dominance of moderate and high anxiety levels suggests that speaking anxiety is not an isolated phenomenon but a common experience among EFL learners.

These findings support the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) framework proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which identifies communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety as the primary dimensions of foreign language anxiety. The large proportion of students in the moderate anxiety category suggests that anxiety is often situational and influenced by classroom conditions, speaking tasks, and social interactions. Meanwhile, the substantial percentage of highly anxious students indicates that speaking remains one of the most demanding language skills despite students having completed speaking-related courses.

The findings are also consistent with previous studies. Febrikawati (2021), Firlas (2022), and Bashori et al. (2022) similarly reported that EFL learners commonly experience moderate to high levels of speaking anxiety. The consistency

of these findings across different educational settings suggests that speaking anxiety continues to be a persistent challenge in EFL learning, particularly in Indonesian contexts where students often have limited opportunities to use English in authentic communication.

This finding is also consistent with Liu and Jackson (2008), who argued that students experiencing higher levels of anxiety tend to avoid oral communication opportunities. Similarly, Young (1991) emphasized that speaking activities frequently trigger anxiety because learners fear making mistakes and receiving negative evaluations from teachers and peers.

Sources of Speaking Anxiety

The analysis of the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) identified several factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety. The highest-ranked item was "I feel nervous while speaking English with native speakers," indicating that interaction with native speakers is the most anxiety-provoking situation for students. This finding may be explained by students' perceptions that native speakers possess superior language competence, leading to fear of making mistakes and negative self-comparison. Such feelings reflect the concept of communication apprehension proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which occurs when learners feel uncomfortable communicating in a foreign language.

The finding also supports Wilang and Thanh (2018), who reported that communication with more proficient speakers often increases learners' self-consciousness and anxiety. In addition, Quvanch et al. (2024) found that low self-confidence and fear of making mistakes remained dominant sources of speaking anxiety among EFL learners.

Another significant source of anxiety was students' difficulty understanding teacher correction. This finding suggests that corrective feedback is sometimes perceived as criticism rather than guidance, resulting in increased fear of negative evaluation. Similar findings have been reported by previous studies, which emphasize that teacher feedback plays an important role in shaping learners' emotional responses during speaking activities. Therefore, the manner in which feedback is delivered can either reduce or intensify students' anxiety.

The findings also revealed that low self-confidence and speaking without preparation were major contributors to speaking anxiety. Students tended to feel more anxious when they were required to respond spontaneously or participate in speaking activities without prior preparation. This result supports previous research indicating that limited self-confidence and insufficient preparation often reduce learners' willingness to communicate. In addition, students who perceived their classmates as more proficient in English were more likely to experience anxiety, suggesting that social comparison remains an important factor affecting oral communication.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that speaking anxiety is influenced by

both internal and external factors. Internal factors include low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and fear of failure, while external factors involve teacher feedback, peer comparison, and communication demands. These findings support previous studies that view speaking anxiety as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction between learners' psychological conditions and their learning environment.

These findings contribute to the growing body of foreign language anxiety research by confirming that speaking anxiety remains prevalent among pre-service English teachers. The results support previous studies suggesting that linguistic competence alone does not eliminate anxiety, as psychological and social factors continue to influence learners' willingness to communicate (Dewaele & Al-Saraj, 2015; Liu & Jackson, 2008).

The results of this study imply that reducing speaking anxiety requires not only improving students' linguistic competence but also creating supportive classroom environments. Lecturers should provide constructive feedback, encourage collaborative speaking activities, and create low-pressure opportunities for oral communication. Such strategies may help students develop confidence, reduce fear of negative evaluation, and increase their willingness to communicate in English. Ultimately, addressing speaking anxiety is essential for promoting effective language learning and improving students' oral communication skills. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution because the study was limited to one study programme and employed descriptive statistics only. Future studies may include larger samples and additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety.

5. Conclusion

This study identified the level of speaking anxiety among students of the English Language Education Study Programme at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The findings revealed that most students experienced moderate (45%) and high (36%) levels of speaking anxiety, while only 19% showed low anxiety. The major sources of anxiety were speaking with native speakers, misunderstanding teacher correction, low self-confidence, and speaking without preparation. These findings indicate that speaking anxiety remains a significant challenge for EFL students.

The study suggests that supportive classroom environments, constructive feedback, and low-pressure speaking activities can help reduce students' anxiety and improve their confidence in oral communication. However, this study was limited to one study programme and focused only on identifying anxiety levels.

Future research is recommended to examine factors influencing speaking anxiety and explore effective strategies to reduce anxiety among EFL learners using qualitative or mixed-method approaches.

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