



Speaking Anxiety and The Development of Self-Confidence in Oral Communication Among Regional Language and Literature Education Students

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01 Revised: 2026 06-18 Accepted: 2026 06-24 Keywords: Speaking anxiety; Makassar Language; Speaking Skills DOI: 10.24256/ideasv14i1.9666 Corresponding Author: Ilma Rahim Ilma.rahim@unm.ac.id Department of Regional Language and Literature Education, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Sulsel	<i>This study aims to analyze how speaking anxiety is experienced by university students and how they cope with it in the Abbicara (speaking skills) course of Makassar language learning. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The participants were 36 students of the Regional Language and Literature Education Program (Class of 2025, Class C) who were enrolled in the Abbicara course. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and written reflections describing students' experiences of speaking anxiety and their coping strategies. The data were analyzed through data reduction, thematic categorization, descriptive interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that students' speaking anxiety appears in various interconnected forms, including linguistic insecurity, cognitive interference, physiological reactions, and social concerns during oral performance. Students cope with their anxiety through cognitive-affective and practical strategies such as strengthening self-confidence, reframing perceptions of mistakes, engaging in repeated practice, and managing physical tension. This study contributes novelty by focusing on speaking anxiety in a regional language context (Makassar), rather than in foreign language learning. The findings imply the need for structured confidence-building activities, gradual speaking exposure, and supportive feedback practices to foster psychologically safe and culturally responsive local language instruction.</i>

1. Introduction

Speaking competence is a central component of language learning, particularly in higher education programs that prepare future language educators. In the context of Makassar language instruction, speaking ability carries dual significance: it reflects linguistic proficiency and at the same time represents students' capacity to enact and preserve local cultural identity. For students of the Regional Language and Literature Education Program, the ability to speak Makassar formally and publicly is not optional but integral to their academic formation and professional readiness.

This competence is systematically developed through the *Abbicara* course, a speaking skills course designed to strengthen students' understanding of the concepts of public language use, the functions of oral communication, and the practical application of speaking in academic and socio-cultural settings. The course covers general speaking theory, characteristics of ideal speakers, speaking anxiety and body language, speech preparation, debate, teaching speaking skills, news reading, and promotional speaking related to Makassar tourism, traditional cuisine, and customary ceremonies. What makes *Abbicara* unique is its integration of linguistic performance and cultural responsibility. Students are required not only to speak accurately but also to demonstrate cultural appropriateness when presenting traditional content. This dual demand may intensify psychological pressure during oral performance.

Despite structured training, many students experience hesitation, nervousness, and reduced confidence during classroom speaking tasks. These reactions correspond to what has been described in language education research as speaking anxiety, a condition characterized by tension, apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation. Previous studies indicate that speaking anxiety is commonly associated with fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary mastery, inadequate preparation, and concern about peer judgment (Asysyfa et al., 2019). It may also manifest physically through trembling and nervousness, while coping strategies often include increased preparation and confidence-building efforts (Khafidhoh et al., 2023).

Furthermore, students' perceptions of pronunciation difficulties and linguistic limitations can intensify anxiety during oral interaction (Andestina, 2025). Synthesizing these findings, speaking anxiety can be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon involving linguistic, cognitive, affective, and physiological aspects that influence oral performance.

However, most empirical discussions of speaking anxiety are situated within foreign language contexts, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Research examining anxiety in regional language learning, particularly in higher education settings, remains limited. The Makassar language context differs from foreign language learning in several ways. Students often possess cultural familiarity with the language, yet may lack structured academic speaking

experience. In addition, expectations of cultural authenticity and community-based evaluation may shape anxiety differently from foreign language environments.

Given this gap, a contextualized examination of speaking anxiety in the *Abbicara* course is necessary. Understanding how students experience anxiety in Makassar language learning and how they attempt to manage it can provide a stronger empirical foundation for improving regional language pedagogy.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What forms of speaking anxiety are experienced by students in the *Abbicara* course of Makassar language learning?
2. What strategies do students employ to cope with their speaking anxiety?
3. What pedagogical implications can be derived to enhance Makassar speaking instruction in higher education?

Based on these questions, the objectives of this study are to:

(1) describe the forms of speaking anxiety experienced by students in Makassar language learning, (2) analyze the strategies students use to overcome speaking anxiety, and (3) formulate pedagogical implications for developing psychologically supportive and culturally responsive speaking instruction in the *Abbicara* course. By focusing on a regional language setting, this study extends the discourse on speaking anxiety beyond foreign language frameworks and contributes to the strengthening of Makassar language education in higher education.

2. Method

This study employed an empirical qualitative descriptive design to explore students' experiences of speaking anxiety and the strategies they used to cope with it in Makassar language learning. A qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to understand participants' subjective psychological experiences within their natural instructional setting, without manipulating variables or testing hypotheses. The design allowed for an in-depth examination of how speaking anxiety is experienced and interpreted by students in the *Abbicara* course context (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The participants were 36 students of the Regional Language and Literature Education Program who were enrolled in the *Abbicara* (Speaking Skills) course during the 2025 academic year. Participants were selected purposively because they were actively engaged in structured Makassar speaking activities and were in the developmental stage of building academic public speaking competence. (John W. Creswell, Cheryl N. Poth, 2016). *Abbicara* was selected as the research setting because it specifically emphasizes oral performance, public speaking confidence, debate, speech delivery, news reading, and cultural presentation in Makassar language. These performance-based tasks make the course particularly relevant for examining speaking anxiety in a regional language context.

Data were collected over one academic semester through open-ended questionnaires in the form of written reflections. Students were asked to:

- a. Describe situations in which they experienced speaking anxiety during *Abbicara* activities.
- b. Explain the feelings and reactions they experienced.
- c. Describe the strategies they used to manage or reduce their anxiety.

The questionnaire items were developed based on established constructs of speaking anxiety in language learning literature and were reviewed by two colleagues in language education to ensure clarity and relevance. Written reflections were chosen instead of direct interviews to reduce psychological pressure and allow students to express their experiences more openly and honestly, particularly given the sensitive nature of anxiety-related topics (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis following the framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, (2014). The analysis was conducted inductively, meaning that themes emerged from the data rather than being imposed from predetermined categories.

The analysis proceeded through the following stages:

- a. Data Reduction All written responses were read repeatedly to identify statements relevant to experiences of speaking anxiety and coping strategies. Irrelevant information was excluded.
- b. Initial Coding and Categorization Meaningful units were coded and grouped into emerging thematic categories, such as linguistic insecurity, fear of negative evaluation, cognitive disruption, physiological reactions, and coping strategies.
- c. Theme Development and Data Display, Codes were organized into broader themes and presented in a structured narrative. Representative quotations were selected based on clarity, relevance, and their ability to illustrate dominant patterns across participants. Participant identities were anonymized using codes (e.g., P1, P2, P3).

Conclusion Drawing and Interpretation, Patterns and relationships among themes were interpreted to identify dominant tendencies and derive pedagogical implications for Makassar speaking instruction. (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014).

3. Result

This study involved 35 students. The findings indicate that speaking anxiety was experienced by nearly all participants, with varying levels of intensity and manifestation. The results are organized into five major dimensions of anxiety, followed by students' coping strategies. Frequency indicators are provided to clarify the distribution of responses across themes.

Affective Anxiety

Affective anxiety emerged as the most dominant category. A total of 28 out of 35 students (80%) reported fear of mispronouncing words or making speaking errors. Additionally, 26 students (74%) explicitly mentioned low self-confidence when speaking in front of others.

This is reflected in the following statements:

"The anxiety I experience is fear of mispronouncing words and lack of confidence when speaking in front of others." (P1)

"I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking, I feel nervous, and I am not confident when presenting in class." (P2)

"My anxiety when speaking is fear of mispronouncing words and lack of self-confidence." (P3)

These data indicate that students perceive speaking errors as something that must be avoided, which directly affects their confidence.

Emotional Anxiety: Nervousness and Stage Fright

Emotional anxiety was reflected in feelings of nervousness and stage fright. A total of 24 students (69%) reported experiencing nervousness during presentations, while 18 students (51%) specifically described stage fright when becoming the center of attention.

This can be seen in the following reflections:

"I always feel nervous and have stage fright, especially when all eyes are on me." (P4)

"When speaking in front of many people, I often feel extremely nervous and unable to overcome my anxiety." (P5)

This emotional anxiety often appeared alongside social pressure, especially when students felt that they were being evaluated by their peers.

3. Cognitive Anxiety: Mental Blocks, Disfluency, and Forgetting Material

Cognitive interference was another significant finding. Twenty-one students (60%) stated that they experienced sudden mental blocks or "blank" moments while speaking, even after preparation. Nineteen students (54%) reported becoming tongue-tied or speaking incoherently during presentations.

This condition is illustrated in the following statements:

"When I stand in front of many people, I become tongue-tied and suddenly blank even though I prepared the material beforehand." (P6)

"I am afraid that when speaking, I will suddenly forget what I want to say and end up stumbling over my words." (P7)

These findings suggest that psychological pressure during speaking performance interferes with students' ability to retrieve and organize information effectively.

Physical Reactions as Manifestations of Anxiety

Some students experienced physical reactions as manifestations of speaking anxiety. These reactions occurred spontaneously and were difficult to control when speaking in public.

This is reflected in the following statements:

"When speaking, my body trembles, my heart beats fast, and I sweat excessively because I am afraid of being judged by my classmates." (P8)

"When I mispronounce a word, my body feels cold and shaky." (P9)

These physical symptoms reinforce the finding that speaking anxiety is not only psychological but also affects students' physiological condition.

Social-Cognitive Anxiety: Fear that the Audience Does Not Understand

Seventeen students (49%) reported anxiety related to audience perception. They expressed concern that their classmates might not understand the material or might lose interest during the presentation.

This is reflected in the following statements:

"I feel anxious because I am afraid that the people listening do not understand the material I present." (P10)

"I am afraid that the audience is not interested or does not understand what I am saying." (P11)

This type of anxiety indicates that students place high expectations on audience response, which ultimately increases their cognitive burden during speaking performance.

Coping Strategies Employed by Students

In addition to identifying anxiety types, the data reveal several coping strategies employed by students. The most frequently reported strategy was repeated practice prior to presentation (31 students; 89%). Students practiced in front of mirrors, rehearsed aloud, or reviewed material multiple times.

Mastering the material thoroughly was mentioned by 27 students (77%) as a way to increase confidence. Other strategies included:

- Positive self-talk and changing negative thinking patterns (15 students; 43%)
- Breathing regulation techniques to reduce nervousness (9 students; 26%)

- Expanding vocabulary through reading (11 students; 31%)
- Accepting mistakes as part of the learning process (12 students; 34%)
- Warming up articulation before speaking (5 students; 14%)

These findings indicate that students predominantly rely on preparation-based and self-regulation strategies to manage anxiety. Overall, the results demonstrate that speaking anxiety among students is multidimensional, encompassing affective, emotional, cognitive, physiological, and social-cognitive dimensions. Affective anxiety related to fear of mistakes and low confidence emerged as the most dominant form. Repeated practice and material mastery were identified as the primary coping strategies.

The inclusion of frequency indicators strengthens the empirical clarity of the findings and provides a more comprehensive representation of students' experiences.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students' speaking anxiety in the Abbicara (speaking skills) course is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing affective, emotional, cognitive, physiological, and social-cognitive dimensions. This finding reinforces the view that speaking anxiety cannot be understood merely as temporary nervousness, but rather as a complex psychological construct shaped by the interaction between self-perception, linguistic demands, and the social context of communication (Horwitz et al., 1986). Thus, speaking anxiety in Makassar language learning demonstrates characteristics consistent with speaking anxiety in other language learning contexts.

The dominance of fear of mispronunciation and low self-confidence in this study aligns with the theory of communication apprehension proposed by McCroskey et al. (1977), which explains that individuals who hold negative perceptions of their communicative competence tend to experience high levels of tension and anxiety in oral communication situations. In language learning contexts, this finding is also consistent with the concept of foreign language anxiety, which identifies linguistic errors and fear of negative evaluation as primary sources of learner anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Although this study focuses on a regional language, the results suggest that the psychological mechanisms underlying speaking anxiety operate universally across different language learning contexts.

The emotional anxiety manifested in nervousness and stage fright supports affective theories in language learning, particularly (Damayanti et al., 2017). Affective Filter Hypothesis. This theory posits that negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and low confidence raise the affective filter, thereby obstructing language production. Nervousness experienced when students become the center of attention increases emotional pressure and disrupts speaking fluency. These findings are consistent with Gregersen and (MacIntyre, 2017) who argue that

performative pressure in public speaking situations often triggers negative emotional responses, especially among learners who lack psychological safety in the classroom.

Beyond emotional aspects, this study identified cognitive anxiety manifested in mental blocks, disfluency, and forgetting prepared material despite prior preparation. This phenomenon can be explained through cognitive load theory, which states that working memory capacity is limited and can be disrupted by psychological pressure, including anxiety (John W. Creswell, Cheryl N. Poth, 2016). Speaking anxiety consumes cognitive resources that should be allocated to speech planning and idea organization, thereby hindering students' ability to retrieve knowledge they have already mastered. These findings support Teimouri, Goetze, dan Plonsky, (2019) who reported a significant relationship between speaking anxiety and decreased cognitive performance in oral communication.

Physical reactions such as trembling, rapid heartbeat, and excessive sweating further demonstrate that speaking anxiety manifests physiologically. This aligns with stress response theory, which explains that perceived threats activate the sympathetic nervous system, triggering a fight-or-flight response (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In speaking performance contexts, such physiological responses not only signal anxiety but may also exacerbate performance difficulties by increasing self-focused attention, which interferes with communicative fluency (MacIntyre, 2017).

The finding of social-cognitive anxiety, reflected in concerns that the audience may not understand or be interested in the material, indicates that students possess communicative awareness toward their listeners. This aligns with the concept of communicative competence, which emphasizes audience orientation in effective communication (Canale, 1980). However, when such awareness is not accompanied by adequate self-confidence, audience orientation may evolve into a source of anxiety. This study extends previous research by demonstrating that speaking anxiety is not solely triggered by fear of negative evaluation but also by concern over message effectiveness.

The solutions articulated by students provide empirical support for cognitive-affective approaches to managing speaking anxiety. Efforts to enhance self-confidence and reframe perceptions of mistakes align with (Saiful et al., 2023), growth mindset theory, which views errors as integral to the learning process (Teimouri et al., 2019) also suggest that accepting mistakes can reduce anxiety and enhance speaking willingness. In language learning contexts, errors should not be framed as failures but rather as indicators of communicative development.

Furthermore, technical strategies such as repeated practice, thorough preparation, speaking at a controlled pace, mirror practice, and breathing regulation highlight the importance of physiological regulation and practical skill development in reducing speaking anxiety. These findings are consistent with (MacIntyre, 2017) who emphasizes that structured practice and simulated

speaking experiences enhance self-efficacy and reduce communication anxiety. Therefore, this study does not contradict previous findings but rather reinforces the notion that speaking anxiety is most effectively addressed through a holistic approach encompassing cognitive, affective, and technical dimensions.

Overall, this study offers theoretical and pedagogical contributions by affirming that students' speaking anxiety in Abbicara should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon. Pedagogically, Makassar language speaking instruction should not focus solely on linguistic achievement but also on fostering a psychologically safe classroom environment. Integrating reflective practices, gradual exposure to speaking tasks, and the reinforcement of positive mindsets toward errors may enhance students' confidence, fluency, and overall oral communication quality.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that students' speaking anxiety in Makassar language speaking instruction (*Abbicara*) is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing affective, emotional, cognitive, physiological, and social-cognitive dimensions. The findings indicate that speaking anxiety is not solely triggered by fear of making linguistic errors, but is also influenced by performative pressure, cognitive load, physiological responses, and concerns about audience comprehension.

The innovation of this study lies in strengthening the perspective that speaking anxiety in regional language learning operates through mechanisms similar to those found in foreign language contexts, thereby extending the scope of speaking anxiety research to local language settings. Pedagogically, these findings highlight the importance of designing *Abbicara* instruction that moves beyond a sole emphasis on linguistic accuracy toward fostering a psychologically safe classroom environment, enhancing self-confidence, embracing errors as part of the learning process, and implementing gradual speaking practice combined with reflective activities. Such an approach has the potential to sustainably improve students' confidence, fluency, and overall oral communication quality.

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