



## EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY: A CASE STUDY AT THE FIRST GRADE OF SMA AL HUDA JATI AGUNG

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### Abstract

This study examines the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) of EFL students and the possible reasons and solutions for it. Anxiety during speaking performances is a common phenomenon that is often experienced by every EFL learner, including students who have English subjects. With this in mind, the purpose of this study was to examine and find out what factors influence their anxiety when speaking in class, from the perspective of students among EFL students in first grade of SMK AL-Huda Jati Agung. In this study, the researcher applied descriptive qualitative to investigate the speaking anxiety of EFL students in English class. The instruments used are questionnaires and interviews. There were 34 students of class X SMA Al-Huda Jati Agung as participants of this study. They consist of men and women. The data gained from questionnaire that was distributed to students, and interview which focused on students' perspectives to identify instructional practices that could help reduce students' speaking anxiety. The results of data analysis showed, among other things, that Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) was not only student anxiety but also speaking anxiety in front of the class. Furthermore, the relaxed attitude shown and positive error correction from the teacher can also greatly help reduce language anxiety of the students in the classroom. As well as additional suggestions for reducing language anxiety are offered.

**Keywords:** *FLSA, foreign language, speaking anxiety*

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## INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning processes in formal educational processes certainly need an effective learning strategy (Mandasari and Oktaviani, 2018). Every learner employs certain strategies and styles (Wahyudin and Rido, 2020). On the other side, interaction is also needed to create good interactive systems and interaction design to promote for it in the classroom (Sari, 2019). The use of effective interaction patterns is a critical aspect of the effectiveness of any activity and the attainment of goals. Different interaction patterns in the classroom may serve the goals of various types of activities such as pair work (a student with another student) and group work (students with students). Changing interaction patterns helps to alter the speed while selecting the proper pattern aids in achieving learning goals and increasing learning productivity (Sari, 2018).

Speaking is one of the ways of communication that is mostly used by people to interact with others in their daily. To be able to communicate with people all over the world, speaking English is considered an important skill. However, it is made clear in the study by Mandasari and Oktaviani (2018) that the majority of students employed language acquisition techniques such as emotional, memory, social, metacognitive, cognitive, and compensatory. Moreover, it aids students in achieving their academic performance goals (Mandasari, 2020). Students should have good communication skills in English to prepare for their future careers and in life. Even though English has been taught for at least six years at the school level in Indonesia, which is at the junior and senior high school levels as well as in many elementary schools as a local content subject, students still have difficulty learning English whether it's productive or receptive skills, especially speaking. The large number of school graduates who are unable to communicate in English has become a national problem in Indonesia. The successful development of interactive systems also requires interaction and interaction design (Sari, 2018). Richards (2008) explains that speaking requires speaking performance which includes the extent to which the speaker can organize information in an order that is easy to understand, use of markers, repetition, emphasis, etc.

This means that in speaking activities, speakers must use spoken language well to be able to convey information to other people (Komariah et al, 2020)

Among the affective factors that can affect the learning process in foreign languages in general and also speaking in particular, anxiety appears as an important factor that often affects students' oral production in the use or selection of foreign languages that they should use. Anxiety in foreign languages has long been discussed since the 1980s by many researchers, e.g. Horwitz et al. (1986), and was found to be one of the unique factors influencing students' oral production. In particular, these anxious foreign language learners identified speaking a foreign language as a particularly intimidating skill. It is also often reported that students feel stressed when they have to take turns in class to speak (Wörde, 2003). The existence of a phenomenon in the form of anxiety and its relationship with a foreign language in performance or also in learning, the possibility of the relationship becomes increasingly complex. Research on language anxiety to date has established the existence of a relationship and investigated its effect on learning particularly in language and performance. Some of these studies have also shown that there is a negative relationship between anxiety and unfamiliarity or both language performance Young (1990).

The relationship between anxiety and language learning and performance cannot be seen without taking into account various language variables, such as language setting, the definition of anxiety, skills, and also the design of the anxiety study. Factors that are often overlooked when describing research outcome anxiety include: whether the study examines the context of learning a foreign or second language; are the definitions and measures of anxiety are equivalent; whether the interpretation of anxiety (ie, situational, trait, test anxiety, facilitating or debilitating, class anxiety) has been described that fits the basic objectives of the study; and whether the study was designed to examine one variable (anxiety) or several other variables (motivation, anxiety, personality, self-esteem, etc.). Research that concentrates first on determining the relationship between anxiety and language skills could lead to a better understanding of the relationship between anxiety and language learning and performance. Frequent comparisons across all studies are hindered by the lack of consistency in anxiety research. already explained, anxiety is a feeling that can cause a decrease and also an ineffective level of learning in high school students. However, if anxiety is included in a reasonable amount, it can also lead to an increased potential for learning or also more commitment, namely to achieve the desired goals. However, if it is too much, anxiety can also cause failure in student achievement. Therefore, this level of anxiety is naturally viewed as one of the best predictors of achievement in a second language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Excessive anxiety is often experienced by students, who may also have low levels of achievement, while those who experience the required amount of anxiety may feel more especially motivated and more ambitious to learn.

Speaking anxiety that occurs in EFL classrooms often has a quite detrimental impact and also has a widespread impact and affects the adaptation of students, that is to their school and learning environment, and ultimately affects the achievement of their educational goals (Melouah, 2013). FLSA or Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety also happened in the first grade of SMA Al Huda Jati Agung. The students felt not confident in learning English, moreover in their speaking skill. Lots of factor influencing students' performances in speaking, such as teacher's role and responses, students' mother tongue, and learning environment. This study also explains various phenomena such as the reluctance of students to participate in speaking classes, and unfortunately even because of their low performance and achievement. Foreign language students who show speaking anxiety do not feel comfortable when asked to perform in a foreign language. As a result, they prefer to remain silent seeing other students speaking in front of the whole class as a threat rather than an opportunity to improve their communication skills. I

In this article, the researchers set the scene of a case study, is to examine the presence of anxiety and speak from the perspective of students. In other words, anxiety can prevent students from achieving their English learning goals. Therefore, the researcher wanted to investigate what factors are perceived by the students in English class and the potential sources, factors, or situations that make them feel anxious or nervous when they are speaking in English and can contribute to the anxiety in trying to understand anxiety problems in English foreign language in the tenth grade of SMA Al Huda Jati Agung

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a qualitative method with a case study as research design. In qualitative research, researchers study things in their natural setting, trying to understand or interpret phenomena (Creswell, 2000). Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore social or human problems. In case study, cases such as events, problems, processes, activities, programs, one person, or several people are investigated (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers are concerned with perspectives to explore the ideas and perceptions of the participants.

The qualitative method was chosen because this study aims to provide an overview of cases of language anxiety in the tenth-grade students of SMA Al-Huda Jati Agung. Researchers used questionnaire and interview as research instruments. There were ten statements in the questionnaire and eight questions for the interview. The questionnaire was adapted from Horwitz Foreign Language Classroom (1986). Semi-structured interview was also employed to get the credible data. According to Patton (1990) in Apsari and Satriani (2016), a semi-structured interview is meant to get in-depth replies from the respondents and to provide clear boundaries for questions to prevent responses from students who are more broadly minded. The interview guide, which Mukminin (2015) developed from Price (1991), emphasizes language anxiety. To further prevent miscommunication and ambiguity between the interviewer and respondent, the interview was conducted in Indonesian. The questionnaire was distributed to 34 tenth-grade students at SMA Al-Huda Jati Agung. The questionnaire uses close-ended questions regarding the students in the form of "Yes" or "No" answers through Google Forms.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

From the research that has been conducted, this section describes the research findings of the study by the observation to find out the factor of students' speaking anxiety. The table below describes the result of each item of the questionnaire. The result can be seen as follows:

Table 1. The Statement Result of EFL students speaking anxiety at the first grade.

No	Statements	Yes	No
1.	I am not confident in speaking English. My Indonesian is better	27.3%	72.7%
2.	I feel afraid when answering my friend's or my teacher's questions in English	56.8%	43.2%
3.	I feel nervous when speaking English in class	72.7%	27.3%
4.	I feel dizzy while speaking in English in class	72.7%	27.3%
5.	My heart beats faster when the teacher suddenly asks me to come to the front of the class to tell something in English	84.1%	15.9%
6.	The look in the teacher's eye or the gaze of a friend make me nervous when speaking in front of the class	52.3%	47.7%
7.	I feel afraid or anxious when the teacher asks me to retell the material in English	68.2%	31.8%
8.	My body sweats when I come in front of the class to deliver material in English	50%	50%
9.	I feel my breath is unstable when come forward to say something in English	61.4%	38.6%
10.	The result of my low grades make me feel unsure about speaking English fluently	59.1%	40.9%

From the table above, ten questions of the questionnaire conclude students' statements toward EFL students speaking anxiety in the first grade. In the first statement, 27.3% of students said "Yes," and 72.7% said "No" this is regarding students' confidence this statement demonstrates that they are not confident because their speaking is not good, and fear making mistakes. In the second statement, 56.8% said "Yes," and 43.2% of students said "No" is regarding feel afraid this statement, students agreed that they feel afraid when answering my friend's questions in English. in the third statement, 72.7% of students said "Yes" and 13.8% said "No". From this statement, students agreed that they feel nervous when speaking English in class. In the fourth statement, there were 72.7% of students said: "Yes" and 27.3% of students said "No". This statement shows that students had agreed they feel dizzy while speaking in English in class.

The next is the fifth statement, 84.1% of students said "Yes" and 15.9% of students said "No". Based on this response students had agreed if they breathed fast when a teacher asks to come forward to the class. The sixth statement that was obtained was 52.3% "Yes" and 47.7% "No" From this statement students agreed if the teachers' eye contact or friend's views make students nervous when speaking. In the seventh statement, there were 68.2% of students said "Yes" and 31.8% of students said "No". From this statement, students had afraid or anxious when the teacher asked them to retell the material. The eighth statement obtained, there were 50% "Yes" and 50% "No" if their body sweat when they come in front of the class to deliver material in English. In the ninth statement, there were 61.4% of students said "Yes" and 38.6% of students said "No". From this statement, students feel their breath is unstable when coming forward to say something in English. In the tenth statement, there were 59.1% of students said "Yes" and 40.9% of students said "No". Based on this response students agreed that students' low grades make them feel unsure about speaking English fluently.

Based on the questionnaire result above, it could be seen that most of the students are mildly worried when speaking English in the classroom because they do not feel confident, anxious, tense, or worried about falling behind in understanding the learning material. Students are less confident in speaking English because of their lack of confidence, anxiety, uneasiness, and concern. The conclusion was reinforced by the idea from Arnold and Brown (1999) in Maulidiyah (2014) that anxiety has a downward spiral once it occurs within the room, implying that a vicious loop exists between learners' bad sentiments and poor performance. It is also supported by Gardner and MacIntyre's (1993) theory, which states that language anxiety may be defined as the concern or nervousness that occurs when a learner is expected to perform in a second or foreign language.

The interview was the second type of data used in this study. The purpose of the interview was to determine what factors contributed to the students' anxiety. Five students were chosen to participate in the interview. The interview consisted of eight questions. To strengthen the results, some students were interviewed for several questions related to their students' speaking anxiety in their EFL classroom. From the interview, it was found out that most students still have difficulty learning English. Students also feel less confident in speaking English because of their lack of skill that led to anxiety, uneasiness, and concern.

Firstly, there were some students stated their anxiety toward studying English in class responses toward the studying English in class.

- ABM : *"I like learning English, but I think it is so difficult."*  
ADA : *"I am happy and excited to learn English, Miss, but I often do not understand what the teacher explained. I find it difficult to understand. I also don't know the meaning of many words in English. I'm afraid if I am asked to speak English."*  
AAN : *"My feeling when learning English is happy, easy and pleasant."*  
AEP : *"I'm dizzy, Miss, and I don't know the meaning of English words."*  
ADM : *"I don't really like it, because I think English is difficult and hard to learn. I also have a hard time pronouncing the words."*

The second, researchers asked about what disturbs students when learning English in class. The summary results are described below.

- BAS : *"I feel disturbed when I am asked to sing in English, and speak English in front of the class. I am embarrassed because my friends laughed when I stood up and talked on front class."*  
DWP : *"If I speak English, for example speaking in front of the class, my friends laugh. That's what bothers me."*  
NRS : *"I feel annoyed when I want to speak English, my friends make noise, and laugh at me, so I can't focus."*  
CRI : *"The annoying thing is, when class starts, there are still friends who like to be noisy and don't listen well. Friends who disturb my concentration when learning English."*

There are also some reasons the students felt anxious in speaking English in class.

- FNF : *"Because I'm anxious of being wrong and shaking (nervous) in front of the class if I'm asked to speak English, I don't speak in front of the class."*  
FRI : *"Because I can't memorize a lot of words. I'm afraid I'm wrong in saying the word, Miss. I'm embarrassed in front of my friends."*  
IAA : *"I'm anxious because it's hard for me to remember vocabulary in English, Miss, and am worried that the pronunciation is incorrect because if it is, the meaning will be incorrect as well."*  
KDI : *"I am afraid of being wrong. When I speak English I like to get convoluted, it will have a different meaning later. Because different words have different meanings, so do I I'm afraid my friends will laugh at me, and I'm also not confident"*

The students will respond to their friends' performance in the classroom. Those responses that can make the students' feel anxious when speaking English in the classroom.

- DAA : *"I'm nervous to be in front of many friends; therefore I find myself blanking on what to say because other students constantly laugh and make fun of me when I speak English."*  
FGB : *"My English speaking is frequently mocked by friends, especially when I speak in front of the class."*  
TNS : *"I was afraid to be asked to speak in front of the class because the*

- other students often laughed when I did, and because I was anxious about speaking English, I frequently forgot my vocabulary. However, some students help me in correcting my incorrect pronunciation.”*
- RDS : *“The other students were always going to laugh and make fun of me when I speak English incorrectly because, in their opinions, it was funny”.*

Students’ anxiety in speaking English might come from the lack of ability of English that students have. They think that learning English is difficult. This mindset then influences students’ English skill, including speaking skill.

- FSH : *“It’s difficult since I have trouble remembering English vocabulary and because I’m confused of how to pronounce some things”.*
- SFH : *“Yes, in my opinion, English is quite difficult. Not only is it difficult to understand the words, but also memorize them. I also find it tough to pronounce the words correctly”.*
- IAS : *“Very difficult to learn English, especially vocabulary”.*
- RAS : *“It’s not terrible, but you can understand it if you study.”.*
- SFF : *“Yes, because the language is challenging to understand and the process of learning is hard.”*

Besides, students’ lack of skill, the teachers also bring impacts for students’ speaking anxiety. Sometimes, teacher’s method in the classroom work well for some students, but not for others.

- ARA : *“If the teacher is boring, I feel that I am not in the mood to study in class because I do not understand the material being conveyed”.*
- HHI : *“If the teacher delivers the material in a friendly manner and patiently explains it, I am more interested and try to study harder”.*
- AFA : *“My teacher motivated me to be more active in learning English, because of that I became more diligent in studying and doing the assignments given. I like my English teacher; she is patient in teaching”.*

Students’ expectations to the teachers’ strategies are hoped to bring some considerations for teacher to improve their way of teaching English as well as reducing students’ English-speaking anxiety. These are some students’ responses related to the teachers’ role in the classroom to motivate them learning English.

- GAA : *“Maybe English lessons are more relaxed if the teacher can use learning media such as movies in the classroom after giving material which can be very useful if it is integrated with several learning activities”*
- LLD : *“In my opinion, teachers can also motivate students, so that they can influence student achievement in learning process. Students with low motivation will face difficulties in the learning process while students with high motivation can achieve learning goals easily. Therefore, teachers need to be more encouraging, especially for those who still have low motivation and achievement in learning English.”*
- ZAA : *“To make students as relaxed as possible with the teaching and learning process. Make an enthusiastic and active learning activity by providing motivation to direct student. I think. this will change the way students learn in the classroom”.*

Besides teachers role, students also need to use their own strategy in learning English because the students are the ones who know their own ability. Below are some strategies used by students in decreasing anxiety in speaking English and improve their English skill.

- LDN : *“I usually study by myself at home, Miss, reading English books or memorizing and practicing to pronounce English vocabulary every day, because I’m afraid of being wrong and embarrassed if I speak*

- English incorrectly”.
- SNK : “I have to be confident, I usually take a deep breath, so I don't get nervous. I also study at home. If I find some difficulties, I will also ask my teacher to help.”
- SIH : “Before speaking I take a deep breath, slowly speak. I feel very nervous when I see friends' faces and I also lower my voice. If I'm wrong, my friends will not hear. So, they will not laugh if I do something wrong”.
- ZAA : “I studied English first at home, and when I spoke in front of the class, I thought all my friends weren't there, so I could focus. Besides that, I will practice in front of the mirror to build my confidence.:

As shown from the result of questionnaire and interview, students' anxiety is affected by their understanding of the material, noisy class, fear of their classmates laughing or trying to fix their mistake or do not care about the mistake that they made, feeling bored during the learning process because the teacher taught them in an uninteresting way, did not know how to pronounce the words correctly, and the teacher taught them to focus so that students do not relax and have no motivation. Students' solutions for lowering speaking anxiety include practicing pronouncing words correctly, speaking in front of a mirror or with friends, improving their vocabulary knowledge, and motivating themselves to speak in front of their classmates.

The data on the causes of student anxiety was discovered using interview data. In English class, the first is less prepared, the main cause of students' anxiety in English classes is their lack of preparation because they are afraid the teacher will ask them about the material. The second situation is when the students do not comprehend the information that the teacher has presented. The third is if the students have a negative mindset when they are speaking. For example, they may be fearful of using words incorrectly or inappropriately, or they may worry that their friends would laugh at them if they make mistakes. It makes the students feel anxiety and lack confidence in speaking in front of their friends and teacher in English class. What factors are supported by the theory from Krashen (2003) in Sulastrri & Ratnawati (2018) that elements like timorousness, worry that you'll make a mistake, lack of confidence, anxiety, and many emotional aspects have an impact on the effectiveness of one's language.

Furthermore, based on the interview data, all of the student samples mentioned using four strategies to lessen their anxiety when speaking, including (1) practicing their English pronunciation; (2) speaking in front of a mirror or with friends to boost confidence; (3) increasing their vocabulary knowledge to help them identify the words that are appropriate to use in speaking; and (4) increasing their motivation by cultivating a positive outlook. Sulastrri & Ratnawati's argument that students' self-motivation and focus when studying English might help them feel less anxious while speaking is reinforced. This case proves that interaction plays an important role in shaping learners' language skills (Rido and Sari, 2018).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that there are some reason students feel anxious in speaking English. The first was less prepared in English or material, which causes students to be worried, nervous, and unsure if the teacher will ask them about the material. Second, students sometimes fell behind in understanding the material, which formed an obstacle for them. Third, students reported difficulties presenting or speaking in English, such as misspelling, mispronunciation, and word selection. According to the findings, students were also anxious to speak because of a lack of preparation, afraid of falling behind in understanding the material or what the teacher was saying, afraid of making mistakes, afraid of being laughed at by their peers, and unsure of how to spell, pronounce, and select words in English. As stated by Sari and Putri (2019), learners should be given access to user-friendly instructional learning materials to aid in the development of their language skills. Students use four strategies to reduce their anxiety when speaking in English: (1) practice pronouncing the words in English, (2) try to speak in front of the mirror or with their friends to build self-confidence, (3) improve their vocabulary knowledge to know which words are appropriate to use in speaking, and (4) increase their motivation by developing a positive mindset when asked to speak in English by their teacher.

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