EFL Students' Anxiety Level in English Speaking as Performance in the Third Semester of English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the level of anxiety experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students during English speaking performances and identifies the coping strategies they use to manage it. The research was conducted among 25 third-semester students and two lecturers of the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data were collected through the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) and the Coping Strategies Questionnaire adapted from Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004). The findings revealed that 12% of students had a high anxiety level, 72% moderate, and 16% low, with a mean score of 60.76, categorized as moderate anxiety. The most common coping strategies used were preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking, followed by peer seeking and resignation. The results highlight the importance of supportive teaching environments and the integration of anxiety-reducing strategies in language learning to enhance students' confidence and speaking performance.

Keywords: *EFL students, speaking anxiety, coping strategies, speaking as performance.*

1) INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important aspects of English language learning, as it represents the ability to communicate ideas clearly and effectively. However, many EFL students face difficulties in speaking English, especially when it involves public performance such as presentations or speeches. Richards (2008) categorizes speaking into three functions: interaction, transaction, and performance. Speaking as performance refers to speaking in front of an audience to deliver information, such as giving a presentation or speech. Unfortunately, this type of speaking often causes anxiety for learners, as supported by Beebe (2013) who stated that public speaking is one of the most anxiety-inducing activities. Anxiety in speaking can lead to nervousness, trembling, and avoidance of communication, which in turn affects students' confidence and academic performance. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three main sources of language anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of

negative evaluation. These factors often appear during performance-based speaking activities, where students are required to speak spontaneously or perform in front of others.

In the context of UIN Alauddin Makassar, preliminary research conducted in October 2023 revealed that many third-semester students experienced anxiety when performing English speaking tasks. This issue can negatively impact their ability to express themselves and demonstrate their speaking competence. Therefore, this research aims to describe the students' anxiety levels and explore the strategies they use to overcome such challenges. The results are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the understanding of EFL speaking anxiety and offer recommendations for teachers to support their students in managing anxiety during English-speaking performances.

2) METHODS

This study applied a survey research design with a descriptive quantitative approach. The participants consisted of 25 third-semester students from Class C of the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar and two lecturers who used presentations as the main classroom activity. Cluster sampling was used to select participants, as this method is suitable when dealing with large populations divided into groups or classes.

Two main instruments were used to collect data: the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) by Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) and the Coping Strategies Questionnaire by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004). The FLSAQ consists of 18 items that measure three components of anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation using a 5-point Likert scale. The coping strategies questionnaire includes 15 items divided into five categories: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation. Both questionnaires were distributed directly to students and lecturers in printed form. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics through Microsoft Excel, showing frequency, percentage, and mean scores. The categorization of anxiety levels followed Öztürk and Gürbüz's (2014) classification: high (>72), moderate (54–72), and low (<54).

3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed that the majority of students (72%) experienced moderate anxiety in English speaking as performance, 12% had high anxiety, and 16% had low anxiety. The mean score was 60.76, which falls within the moderate category. This indicates that while students are somewhat anxious during English-speaking performances, their anxiety levels are manageable and do not completely prevent them from participating.

Observation data supported these findings, as students often showed physical symptoms of anxiety, such as trembling, avoiding eye contact, and stuttering during presentations. These symptoms align with Horwitz et al. (1986) and Peplau (1989), who describe moderate anxiety as involving physiological and behavioral responses like increased heart rate, nervous gestures, and hesitation.

Further analysis based on the FLSAQ categories showed that communication apprehension had a mean score of 64 (moderate), test anxiety had a mean of 72 (moderate), and fear of negative evaluation had a mean of 65 (moderate). Students reported feeling especially anxious when speaking without preparation and when unexpectedly called upon by the teacher. This suggests that lack of readiness and fear of sudden evaluation are significant sources of anxiety.

In terms of coping strategies, the results indicated that students most frequently used preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking, each accounting for 23% of responses. Peer seeking accounted for 21%, while resignation was the least used (10%). Both students and lecturers agreed that preparation plays a crucial role in reducing anxiety, as it builds confidence and familiarity with the speaking material. Relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and praying, were also found effective in calming students before presentations. Positive thinking helped students manage self-doubt and replace negative thoughts with confidence.

These findings are consistent with Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), who emphasized that preparation and relaxation are essential coping mechanisms for managing language anxiety. The results also echo studies by Horwitz (1991) and Aida (1994), which found that students with lower anxiety levels tend to perform better in speaking tasks. This suggests that integrating coping strategy instruction into speaking courses could improve students' performance and emotional well-being.

Overall, this study reinforces the idea that speaking anxiety among EFL learners is common but can be effectively managed through proper preparation, teacher support, and a positive classroom atmosphere. Teachers should provide clear guidelines, encourage practice, and create a non-

threatening environment that allows students to make mistakes without fear of judgment. Institutions can also hold workshops on relaxation and self-confidence to help students improve their communication skills.

4) CONCLUSION

This study concluded that third-semester students of the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar generally experience a moderate level of anxiety when speaking in English as performance. The findings show that preparation, relaxation, and positive thinking are the most effective coping strategies. Teachers are encouraged to create supportive learning environments and guide students in managing anxiety through consistent practice and self-encouragement. Institutions should also consider providing programs or workshops that help students overcome their fear of public speaking to improve their overall English-speaking performance.

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