



## AN ANALYSIS OF SPEAKING ANXIETY EXPERIENCED BY THE THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS AT SMPN 2 BAYAT OF ANAMBAS ISLAND

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### ABSTRACT

*This article focuses on the study that aims to find out the levels and the major causes of speaking anxiety experienced by the third-year students at SMPN 2 Bayat of Anambas Island. Total sampling was used in this research since the pool of participants was relatively small consisting of 13 students overall. In collecting the data, students were asked to fill out a set based on a modified version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire developed by Horwitz et al (1986). After analyzing the data, it was found that most students experienced speaking anxiety on a moderate level. The results suggested that 4 students with a percentage of 30.77% were classified as a high level, 9 students with a percentage of 69.23% were classified as a moderate level and none of the students or 0% was classified to have a low level of anxiety. Additionally, "lack of preparation", "afraid of being laughed at" and "afraid of being called in English classes" were the major causes of speaking anxiety that most participants agreed with. Thus, some suggestions were provided with the expectation of reducing students' anxiety while speaking English.*

**Keywords:** *speaking, anxiety, speaking anxiety, FLCAS*

## ANALISIS KECEMASAN BERBICARA YANG DIALAMI OLEH SISWA KELAS TIGA DI SMPN 2 BAYAT KABUPATEN KEPULAUAN ANAMBAS

### ABSTRAK

Artikel ini berfokus pada sebuah penelitian yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui tingkat dan penyebab utama kecemasan berbicara yang dialami oleh siswa kelas tiga di SMPN 2 Bayat Kabupaten Kepulauan Anambas. Total *sampling* digunakan dalam penelitian ini karena jumlah peserta relatif kecil yang terdiri dari 13 siswa secara keseluruhan. Untuk pengumpulan data, siswa diminta untuk mengisi satu set kuesioner versi modifikasi dari FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) yang dikembangkan oleh Horwitz dkk (1986). Setelah analisis data, ditemukan bahwa sebagian besar siswa mengalami kecemasan berbicara tingkat sedang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 4 siswa dengan persentasi 30.77% berada pada tingkat kecemasan tinggi, 9 siswa dengan persentasi 69.23% berada pada tingkat kecemasan sedang dan tidak ada satu pun siswa atau 0% yang berada pada tingkat kecemasan rendah. Selain itu, "kurangnya persiapan", "takut ditertawakan", dan "takut dipanggil dikelas bahasa Inggris" adalah penyebab utama kecemasan berbicara yang disetujui oleh sebagian besar siswa. Maka, beberapa saran diberikan dengan harapan dapat mengurangi kecemasan siswa saat berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris.

**Kata Kunci:** *berbicara, kecemasan, kecemasan berbicara, FLCAS*

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### INTRODUCTION

To be successful in speaking English inevitably takes a lot of time for students. Frequent practice, clear focus, and building up confidence are all essential. It is said that speaking could be quite challenging because it is necessary to think fast, respond quickly, and act with little hesitation in the middle of a

conversation (Desfitranita, 2017). Besides, people tend to judge a speaker's knowledge of English based on how fluent he or she is. For example, pauses or interjections like *uhh*, *hmm* are generally a sign of lack of fluency.

Some students might find it difficult to speak in their target language because of some

obstacles they may encounter, such as shyness, not being confident, anxiety, and so forth. However, of the several problems that students often struggle with when trying to speak in their target language, anxiety seems to be a barrier that hinders students from speaking. Hence, if students experience this sort of feeling, they might feel stressed during classroom activities. It also leaves open the possibility that anxiety will be preventing them from achieving their goal in language learning.

Based on the pre-interviews that have been conducted with 13 third-year students at SMPN 2 Bayat, most students asserted they were anxious while speaking English. During the interview, some of them openly admitted that this was influenced by several factors such as afraid of being laughed at, not being confident enough, being the center of attention, fear of making pronunciation mistakes, etc.

The researcher began to think that this kind of phenomenon probably arises due to several reasons. Firstly, one of the schools located in a rural area of Riau Archipelago Province, SMPN 2 Bayat still lacks trained and qualified English teachers. The teaching processes in this school are mainly focused on remembering vocabulary, reading texts, phrases, etc. It is rare for students to speak English during the learning process. Secondly, these students

take the English subject lightly. They just learn the language to pass a test or examination.

Since anxiety has widely been discussed as an issue in language learning, the researcher is interested in the topic and has carried out a study entitled “An analysis of speaking anxiety experienced by the third-year students at SMPN 2 Bayat Kabupaten Kepulauan Anambas”

### REASERCH METHOD

A quantitative method was employed in this research project. Since the population was relatively small, total sampling was used; that is all 13 students were taken as samples in the current study. The data were collected by distributing a set of a modified version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al (1986).

To determine the level of students’ speaking anxiety, data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed. The questionnaire used in this research was a 5-graded Likert scale type. It is ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Since the items in the FLCAS questionnaire was 18, the total score started from 18 to 90. Later, participants’ scores were calculated and then classified into levels of anxiety based on Öztürk & Gürbüz’s speaking anxiety scale (2014).

**Table 1. FLCAS Anxiety Scale Adopted from Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014)**

Range	Level
>72	High
54-72	Moderate
<54	Low

Furthermore, to find out the major causes of students’ speaking anxiety, the alternatives of “agree” and “strongly agree” were combined to demonstrate the number of students who agreed to each item. The items with the highest percentages were considered to be the sources provoking students’ anxiety. In line with this, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to strengthen the results from the questionnaire. One of the questions posed by the researcher during

the interview was “What kind of situations make you feel anxious while speaking English?”

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results of First Research Question

The first research question of this study is: ‘What are the levels of the third-year students’ speaking anxiety at SMPN 2 Bayat Kabupaten Kepulauan Anambas?’ The results from the questionnaire were presented in the following figure:

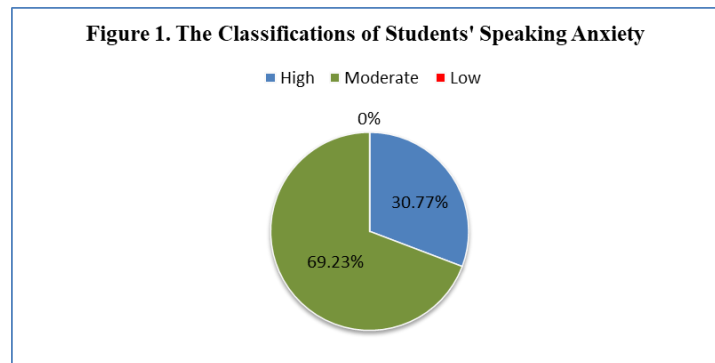


Figure 1 showed that the third-year students at SMPN 2 Bayat Kabupaten Kepulauan Anambas had different levels of speaking anxiety. The findings indicated that 9 out of 13 students (69.23%) gained scores 54-72 suggesting they were at a moderate anxiety level. It is also seen from the table that 4 students (30.77%) had it at a high level by getting scores of more than 72, while none of them (0%) were at a low level. To sum up, it can be concluded that more than half of the students experienced a moderate level of

speaking anxiety with 9 students gaining scores 54-72.

### Results of Second Research Question

The second research question of this study is ‘What are the major causes of students’ speaking anxiety?’ To answer this research question, based on the FLCAS questionnaire results, the items which received the highest percentages are determined as speaking-anxiety sources. The following figures illustrate students’ responses to each item in the FLCAS:



**Figure 2. Frequencies and Percentages of Communication Apprehension Items**

Shown in figure 2, the highest percentage of total scores in the Communication Apprehension (CA) was item number 5, “I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes”. The table demonstrated that 92.2% of the students agreed that being unprepared could incite panic whenever they were asked to speak English. This finding was

supported by the results from the semi-structured interviews. Some of the students stated that:

*“When I am relaxed in the classroom, then my teacher suddenly asks me a question, I do not know what I should say.”*

*Student 9*

*“I am nervous when I have to talk without good preparation. If my teacher asks me to answer a question, [I am] suddenly blank.”*

*Student 8*

The responses above indicated that being asked immediately and being unprepared were the reasons for students’ speaking anxiety. Thus, the students need to be well prepared to speak English. Otherwise, they might end up making mistakes and errors. A similar finding was found in a study by Marwan (2008). He claimed that lack of preparation often leads to speaking anxiety.

The second-highest percentage was item number 15, “I get nervous when I don’t understand every word my English teacher says”. 84.6% of students either (“agree or strongly agree”) with this statement. The following were

excerpts made by the students during the interview:

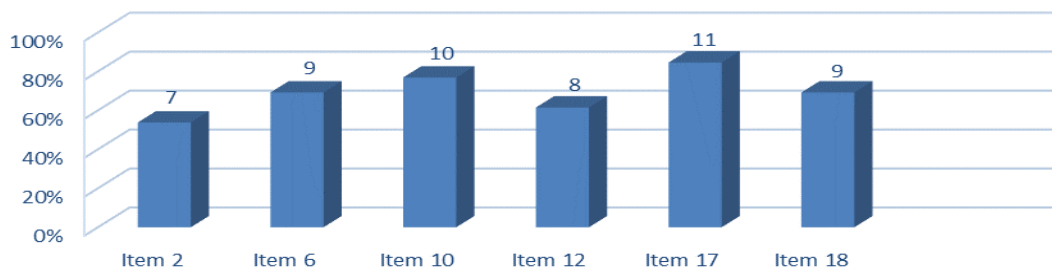
*“My teacher talks very fast. Therefore, I have difficulty understanding her.”*

*Student 11*

*“I do not understand what my teacher is talking about. Maybe, I am lack vocabulary.”*

*Student 7*

The above comments reflected that students’ speaking anxiety could also be influenced by their teachers. These students admitted that they had difficulty understanding their teacher due to their fast speech. Therefore, it is recommended for the teachers to slow down their speech so that these students could understand they better.



**Figure 3. Frequencies and Percentages of Fear of Negative Evaluation Items**

Figure 3 confirmed that the highest percentage of total scores in Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) was, “I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English” (Item 17). 84.6% of students agreed that other students’ negative evaluations such as being laughed at after performance caused anxiety when speaking English. The following quotations showed how this factor caused anxiety among the participants:

*“When I try to speak English, my friends are always laughing at me as if I am an object of fun in the classroom.”*

*Student 11*

*“If I make pronunciation mistakes, my friend or teacher is going to laugh at me”*

*Student 10*

The quotations provided above suggested that these students felt anxious because of their classmates’ negative evaluations. When they were trying to speak English, they worried if their peers and teachers would laugh at them. As a result, these anxious students often avoided speaking tasks and saw these as an anxiety-provoking factor instead of a chance to improve their speaking ability. This result is in line with a study conducted by Daud et al (2019). The result of his study revealed that students got anxious about

speaking because their peers or teachers' negatively reacted to their mistakes.

Item 10 "I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make" received the second-highest percentage in FNE. The result revealed that 76.9% of students were concerned about making mistakes in English classes. Below are the students' responses during the interview:

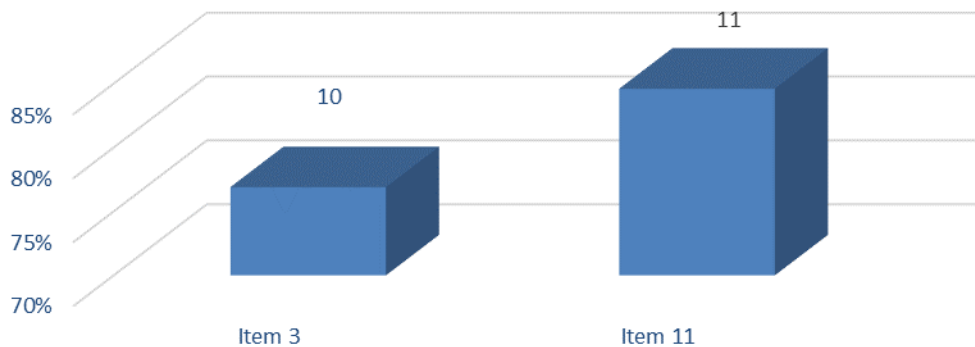
*"If I am making an answer, I am afraid of being corrected by the teacher. Being corrected makes me reluctant to speak."*

Student 9

*"If I make mistakes, my teacher usually corrects me. At this time, my anxiousness starts to emerge as I think I failed."*

Student 2

Being corrected is considered useful in language learning as it could improve students' language skills. However, not all students find it effective. The above comments proved that correction somehow makes them anxious and is reluctant to speak.



**Figure 4. Frequencies and Percentages of Test Anxiety Items**

According to figure 4, the highest percentage score in Test Anxiety (TA) was obtained from item 11 "I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English classes" with 11 students (84.6%) either "agree or strongly agree" to this statement. The following comments represent participants' responses during the interviews:

*"Waiting for my turn to perform sometimes makes me nervous. Usually [I have] cold sweat and pounding heart"*

Student 13

*"When my teacher asks me to come forward, my heart starts to pound as I am afraid if I forget the dialogues during the test"*

Student 10

The above comments reflected that students got anxious when having a speaking test. Some symptoms included cold sweat and pounding heart as stated by interviewee 13. The phenomenon happened because of their worries about forgetting the given dialogues or being the center of attention. Moreover, the percentage of students who agree with item 3 "I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English classes" was quite high as well with 10 students (76.9%) in total. For example, one of the participants mentioned:

*"Yes, I feel anxious. My hands tremble when my name is called."*

Student 3

It cannot be denied that anxiety can also affect students' physical responses. Some symptoms that often happen include dry mouth,

shaky voice, sweaty palms, pounding heart etc. The result from this interview, for example, showed that one participant started to tremble when her name was being called while waiting for her turn in the speaking test.

## DISCUSSION

This research project was designed to find out the students' speaking anxiety levels as well as the sources contributing to it. To achieve these aims, a set of modified version FLCAS questionnaires consisting of 18 items were distributed to 13 third-year students at SMPN 2 Bayat Kabupaten Kepulauan Anambas academic year 2021-2022. In addition to this, the researcher also conducted a semi-structured interview with intention of strengthening the results of the FLCAS questionnaire related to the sources of their speaking anxiety.

After data analysis, it was found that these students generally experienced different levels of anxiety. The results from the questionnaire revealed that four students (30.77%) had a high level of anxiety, nine students (69.23%) had a moderate level of anxiety and none (0%) of the students was classified into a low level of anxiety. Thus, it can be concluded that most students were at a moderate level of anxiety.

As for the sources of students' speaking anxiety, "lack of preparation", "afraid of being laughed at" and "afraid of being called on in English classes" were the main sources of their

speaking anxiety. The following figure is an overview of the major causes of students' speaking anxiety in accordance with the results from the FLCAS questionnaires:

In the Communication Apprehension (CA), the highest percentage of the total score was obtained from item 5 "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes" with 12 students (92.2%) either "agree or strongly agree" to this statement. This result was supported by students' responses during the semi-structured interview. Interviewee 8, for example, mentioned that: *"I am nervous when I have to talk without advanced preparation. If my teacher asks me to answer a question, [I am] suddenly blank."*

In the Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), 84.6% of students agreed that item 17 "I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English" was the most anxiety-provoking factor in FNE. This result is in line with participants' comments during the interview, as clearly mentioned by interviewee 11: *"When I try to speak English, my friends are always laughing at me as if I am an object of fun in the classroom."*

Meanwhile, 84.6% of students also agreed that item 11 "I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English classes" was considered as the major cause that influenced their speaking anxiety in Test Anxiety (TA), as stated by interviewee 13: *"Waiting for my turn to perform sometimes makes me nervous. Usually [I have] cold sweat and pounding heart."*

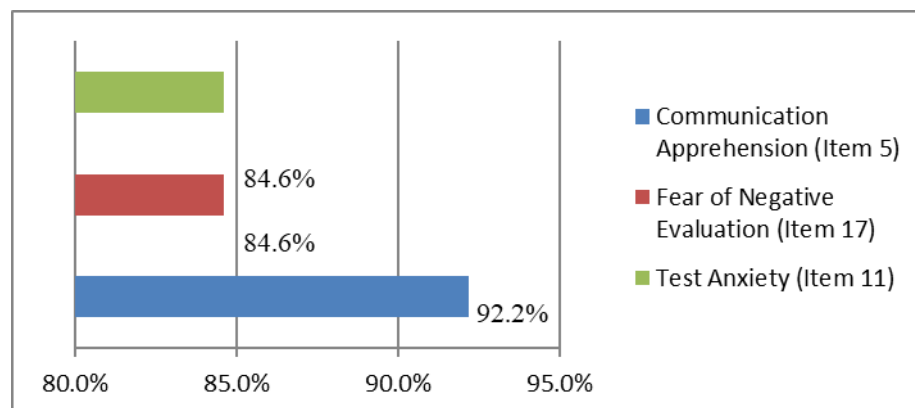


Figure 5. The Major Causes of Students' Speaking Anxiety

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The current study was carried out to explore the speaking anxiety of the third-year students at SMPN 2 Bayat Kabupaten Kepulauan Anambas. The research project was designed to find out the students' anxiety levels and their major causes. To fulfil the research objectives, these students were asked to complete a set of a modified version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al (1986).

The results from the questionnaire revealed that the vast majority of the students experienced a moderate level of anxiety with 69.23% of the students gaining scores 54-72. It was also found that 30.77% scored more than 72 indicating a high level of anxiety and 0% of the students were at a low level of anxiety. Furthermore, the results from the questionnaire suggested that students felt anxious while speaking English due to: "lack of preparation, "afraid of being laughed at" and "afraid of being called on in English classes".

Based on the results of the study, some suggestions were made in hope of reducing students' speaking anxiety while speaking English. The suggestions include:

1. Given that many students experienced anxiety when having to speak without preparation, teachers could handle this situation by informing students about upcoming lessons so that they can prepare themselves more effectively. Other possible strategies that could be very helpful to reduce students' speaking anxiety include facilitating group discussion, avoiding excessive negative error correction, and giving students positive feedback or rewards to boost their self-confidence.
2. The research findings revealed that most students felt anxious about speaking because they were afraid of being laughed at by their classmates. To help anxious students to overcome their anxiety, other students are not supposed to mock or ridicule their classmates. Instead, they should cooperate and help with strategies to cope with the speaking anxiety they experience.

3. Since this research is limited to investigating the levels and major causes of students' speaking anxiety, another research project in future could examine levels and sources of foreign language anxiety in other language skills areas such as listening, reading and writing. In addition, it could be useful to evaluate the success of different strategies for coping with and reducing students' anxiety levels.

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