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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG PUBLIC
UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES**

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Abstract

Considering the essential role of the English Language today, its successful acquisition among English Language learners is made even more crucial. Numerous studies on second language learning have reportedly indicated speaking anxiety as a critical contributing factor to language acquisition, making assessments on language learners' speaking anxiety relevant and important. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the levels and factors of speaking anxiety among UiTM undergraduates. The study involved 177 Business Administration students and employed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as its instrument. The analysis revealed that all participants experienced moderate levels of speaking anxiety and the most significant factor for their speaking anxiety was attributed to test anxiety as compared to the other two factors: communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. The study suggests that language instructors be aware of their students' level of speaking anxiety in the classrooms and take measures to reduce their learners' test anxiety.

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1. Introduction

English Language is becoming more prevalent in the world today, prompting a need for adequate, if not excellent, command of the language for a variety of educational and career opportunities (Wijewantha, 2021). Thus, it is necessary for second or foreign language learners to experience successful English Language acquisition. Meanwhile, in the study of language acquisition, a lot of attention has been directed to language anxiety, apart from other influential variables. Many studies have reported that it is inevitable for learners of English as a second or foreign language to experience language anxiety that could influence their overall language learning (Nordin et al., 2020).

One of the familiar occurrences that can be observed in many foreign or second language classrooms is learners experiencing speaking anxiety (Fitriah & Muna, 2019). This is even more distressing for Malaysian undergraduates particularly as English Language is used extensively in Malaysian universities (Achanan et al., 2021), including Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Given its critical presence and significance in language classrooms, this study was done with the purpose of investigating the levels and factors of second language speaking anxiety among UiTM undergraduates to gain a better understanding of the issue of speaking anxiety in English Language classrooms. The following research questions are the focus of this study:

- i. What are the levels of English Language speaking anxiety among UiTM undergraduates?
- ii. What are the factors that contribute to the levels of English Language speaking anxiety among UiTM undergraduates?

1.1. English Language speaking anxiety

In Malaysia, the English Language has long been introduced as a second language and implemented in government schools and learning institutions. Malaysians typically begin formal education and exposure to the English language in preschool and continue through high school and/or higher education. Nonetheless, a number of studies, like Achanan et al. (2021), Dellah et al. (2019), as well as Miskam and Saidalbi (2019), have reported that many of these learners exhibited second language anxiety that is even more pronounced in speaking classrooms. Similar observations were also made in foreign or second language classrooms in other countries such as Indonesia (Fitriah & Muna, 2019; Tridinanti, 2018), Sri Lanka (Wijewantha, 2021) and Bangladesh (Mobarak, 2020), indicating how common yet significant such a situation is. Speaking anxiety can be described as feelings of fear and worry associated with language speaking (Tridinanti, 2018). The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used in most studies on second language anxiety.

FLCAS is an instrument to measure language anxiety among learners that was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). It comprises three components: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension refers to the uneasiness of communicating in a foreign or second language that is due to limited language knowledge and vocabulary, while test anxiety refers to the anxiousness exhibited when the language activities are viewed as assessment tools instead of platforms for improvement. Fear of negative evaluation, on the other hand, refers to concerns about one's own image in certain situations, such as when mistakes are made in the language classrooms.

Communication apprehension was recorded as the most significant factor that affected the participants' oral performance in Miskam and Saidalbi (2019). A different result was reported by Achanan et al. (2021) as well as Zabidin et al. (2020) where the participants' speaking anxiety was found to be attributed mostly to fear of negative evaluation.

1.2. Factors and impacts of speaking anxiety

Speaking anxiety in foreign or second language classrooms can come from various causes. In developing FLCAS, Horwitz et al. (1986) claimed that the three components of the instrument are contributing factors to language anxiety, including speaking anxiety. So, communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation could lead to speaking anxiety. In addition to these three factors, this type of anxiety could also be caused by a lack of motivation and self-confidence (Mobarak, 2020; Tridinanti, 2018), a lack of speaking opportunities and low language performance or knowledge (i.e. vocabulary) (Wijewantha, 2021). Wijewantha (2021) further explained that the participants' speaking anxiety was derived from inadequate vocabulary knowledge, fear of making mistakes, fear of testing, as well as the nature of the speaking activities. Impromptu and public speaking activities seemed to generate a higher level of speaking anxiety. Achanan et al. (2021) also mentioned two more causes of speaking anxiety: learners' individual personalities and the type of learning environment they are in.

Speaking anxiety can have some impacts on the language acquisition process. Fitriah and Muna (2019) stated that speaking anxiety could affect learners' self-confidence and stress level as they are learning the language. In addition, Miskam and Saidalbi (2019) also reported observable physical effects of speaking anxiety among learners such as profuse sweating, obvious panicking, and an inability to speak. To add to these, speaking anxiety also influences the learners' willingness to participate in language classroom activities (Dellah et al., 2019). In most of the studies on speaking anxiety, it is emphasised that speaking anxiety could conclusively influence overall language achievement in the end. Hence, it is imperative for language instructors to assess or at least be aware of their learners' speaking anxiety.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Sampling

This study used a quantitative approach to explore pre-diploma students' speaking anxiety in their English class. Based on data obtained from the System Information Management Students (SIMS), the total number of pre-diploma students from the Faculty of Business and Management at UiTM Melaka, was 323 students from 10 classes. In order to have a high confidence level and a minimum sample error, 177 students (109 female and 68 male) were selected based on the sample size recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Purposive sampling method has been utilised to ensure that all respondents were undergoing the same English courses for that semester. The respondents in this study had all obtained satisfactory English grades in their previous English paper of Malaysian Certificate of Education, a national examination taken by all fifth-form secondary school students. 23 students earned A, 47 students

acquired B, 49 students scored C, 45 students obtained D, and 13 students gained E. These participants were all Malay students in the age range of 18 to 20 years old.

2.2. Instrument and analysis

In this study, FLCAS questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale adopted from Horwitz et al. (1986) has been utilised to measure the speaking anxiety level of the pre-diploma students. The questionnaire consists of 33 items that were constructed to probe students' language anxiety pertaining to communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The scale consists of 33 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." According to Horwitz et al. (1986), this scale has been shown to have an internal reliability of 0.93 with all items and test-retest reliability of $r=0.83$, $p=0.001$. In this study, the questionnaire was presented in two languages, English and Malay. This is important to ensure the respondents were able to fully comprehend the items. Using SPSS, a descriptive analysis was run to answer the research questions of this study.

3. Findings

3.1. Results

A set of questionnaires was distributed to investigate speaking anxiety levels in second language classrooms among pre-diploma students at UiTM Melaka. The analysis of the survey divulged the following findings.

The first research question of the study is: 'What are the levels of speaking anxiety among UiTM undergraduates in their second language classrooms?'. Table 1 unveils the level of speaking anxiety among students at UiTM. Based on the analysis using descriptive analysis, the finding indicates that of all of them, 100% (177) experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety in their English class.

Table 1. The level of speaking anxiety of pre-diploma students in UiTM

Level	Frequency (n=177)	Percentage (%)
Low (0-1.67)	0	0
Moderate (1.68-3.33)	177	100
High (3.34-5)	0	0
Total	177	100.0

The second research question is: 'What are the factors that contribute to the levels of speaking anxiety among UiTM undergraduates in their second language classrooms?'. Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for the three dimensions of FLCAS. In terms of communication apprehension, the mean score is 3.0714 while the mean score for fear of negative evaluation is 3.0478. On the other hand, the mean score for test anxiety is 3.2857 while the mean score for overall speaking anxiety is 3.1061. The finding reveals that learners experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety in English class with test anxiety as the dimension with the highest mean score. Hence, further analysis was

conducted to determine the mean and standard deviation scores of speaking anxiety items for each dimension in detail.

Table 2. Dimensions of speaking anxiety

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication Apprehension	3.0714	.45215
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.0478	.34097
Test Anxiety	3.2857	.66537
Overall Speaking Anxiety	3.1061	.38156

Mean score indicator: 0.00-1.67 (Low), 1.68-3.33 (Moderate), 3.34-5.00 (High)

Table 3 exhibits the students' responses on every item related to communication apprehension. Some of the highest mean scores recorded indicated that participants believed that they felt very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students, that they started to panic when they had to speak without preparation in language class, and that they were not quite sure of themselves when they had to speak English in class.

Table 3. Communication apprehension dimension

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	3.73	.926
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	3.69	1.142
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	3.11	.968
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	3.08	1.079
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	2.99	1.163
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	2.95	1.231
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	2.94	1.093
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	2.87	.983
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	2.84	1.027
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	2.81	1.106
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	2.78	1.144

Table 4 indicates the students' speaking anxiety on items pertaining to fear of negative evaluation. Some of the highest mean scores are related to their worry about the consequences of failing in English class as well as not being bothered if they have to attend more English classes.

Table 4. Fear of negative evaluation dimension

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	4.32	.955
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	4.05	1.054
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	3.51	1.077

22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	3.50	1.061
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	3.45	1.138
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	3.38	1.152
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	3.36	1.164
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	3.21	1.176
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	3.02	1.069
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	2.96	1.057
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	2.66	1.027
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	2.44	1.191
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	2.16	.978
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	2.05	.973
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.	1.66	.879

Table 5 displays the students' responses to each item associated with the test anxiety dimension in their English class. Some of the highest mean scores recorded for students' speaking anxiety in this dimension were due to their feeling and thinking that the other students spoke better English and were better at English than them.

Table 5. Test anxiety dimension

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	3.92	1.014
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	3.85	1.145
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	3.52	1.093
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	3.40	1.311
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	3.08	1.152
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	2.99	1.143
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	2.24	1.098

3.2. Discussion

To answer Research Question 1: 'What are the levels of English Language speaking anxiety among UiTM undergraduates?', the results revealed that all of the participants in this study experienced a moderate level of English Language speaking anxiety. This is a stark difference compared to Achanan et al. (2021), Miskam and Saidalbi (2019), Nordin et al. (2020), and Zabidin et al. (2020). These studies also involved Malaysian undergraduates but reported a high level of speaking anxiety among the majority of the participants. The finding also differs from other speaking anxiety studies, such as Fitriah and Muna (2019) and Wijewantha (2021), which also claimed that most participants exhibited a high level of speaking anxiety. One possible explanation for this is that the factors that lead to speaking anxiety discussed in this paper were less apparent in the participants' English Language classrooms. As these

factors became less prominent in their language classrooms, the participants' speaking anxiety subsequently became less noticeable.

With regards to Research Question 2: 'What are the factors that contribute to the levels of English Language speaking anxiety among UiTM undergraduates?', the analysis indicated that the participants' speaking anxiety was largely attributed to test anxiety. This is in contradiction to the findings from Achanan et al. (2021), Dellah et al. (2019), Nordin et al. (2020), and Zabidin et al. (2020). In these studies, fear of negative evaluation contributed the most to the participants' speaking anxiety. They felt apprehensive about the possibility of getting negative comments and views, not only from their language instructors but also from their peers. In addition, this finding also contradicts Miskam and Saidalbi (2019) who found communication apprehension to be the most significant factor in speaking anxiety among their participants. They indicated that they mostly felt inadequate as they had limited knowledge and proficiency of the language. In this current study, however, test anxiety was the most significant, followed by communication apprehension and lastly, fear of negative evaluation, as the contributing factors in speaking anxiety among the participants. In other words, the participants of this study were most anxious when it came to their speaking assessments.

4. Conclusion

The global and essential the English language use in many aspects of life today requires successful language acquisition among its learners. For Malaysians, learning English as a second language from an early age does not completely impede the existence of speaking anxiety in language classrooms. Since speaking anxiety could inevitably influence language learning, it is vital for language instructors to assess and examine speaking anxiety to better tackle the issue in their classrooms. Findings from this study revealed that all UiTM undergraduates involved experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety. In addition, the speaking anxiety they experienced was primarily derived from test anxiety as compared to the other two factors, which is in contradiction with the speaking anxiety studies reviewed. Therefore, some implications of the study include reminders for language instructors to keep in mind the significance of speaking anxiety in their language classrooms and be aware of their learners' speaking anxiety levels as the levels may vary from one learner to another and from one group to another. In addition, they should take suitable measures in preparing their learners for speaking assessments and provide adequate scaffolding leading up to those assessments. They are also advised to promote a positive and encouraging learning environment to reduce speaking anxiety among their learners.

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