

## **Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety of Secondary EFL Learners Regard to Speaking Ability and Gender**

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**Abstract:** *This study aimed at investigating the influence of FL speaking anxiety and gender to speaking ability. To collect the data a questionnaire named Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was administered to students. In total, 68 students of Xaverius 1 Bandar Lampung Junior High School participated in this study, 35 male students and 33 female students ranging from 11 to 14 years of age. The data were analyzed using statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The results showed that there was no statistically significant influence of FL speaking anxiety to EFL secondary learner in speaking ability. There was a slight difference between FL speaking anxiety of male students (mean = 2.58) and female students (mean = 2.66) in which male students tend to have lower speaking anxiety than female students, and speaking ability of female students (80.76) is higher than male students' mean score (mean = 79.77), and the highest component that affected students' FL speaking anxiety was communication apprehension. There is a slight difference of FL speaking anxiety of male and female learners, but it is not significantly affect students' speaking ability.*

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

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### **I. Introduction**

The main goals of English teaching are to develop learners' communication abilities and their interest in learning English. In every English teaching learning process, four language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing are taught. Learners are expected to be able to speak English in class and out of the class in social situations since nothing can be achieved without effectively communicating with others. Speaking is the most challenging skill for EFL secondary learners to attain. In speaking skill, the learners will combine their speaking ability and their language element (pronunciation and grammar). It is significant to make students to be able and have good speaking ability for communication.

Speaking in a foreign language needs the development of a particular type of communication skill. Oral language, because of its circumstances of production, tends to differ from written language in its typical grammatical, lexical and discourse patterns. But in the classroom, teachers of English may experience the same situation in which the students are unwilling to speak. There are many factors causing this problem, students may feel lack of confidence to speak as the result of not knowing what to say as said by Young (1990) that "speaking in the foreign language is often cited by students as their most anxiety producing experience". Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) conceived that foreign language anxiety (FLA) as a situation specific anxiety, as foreign language anxiety which has a negative influence on language learning. They opined that even intelligent apt individuals in native language face challenges while communicating in foreign language. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) observed that students with any level of anxiety in foreign language face great difficulty in the demonstration of knowledge they possess.

According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), anxiety can be interpreted from three categories: trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. A distinction can be made between the three categories that provide an important insight to our understanding of foreign or second language anxiety.

- a. Trait anxiety is a personality trait refers to the stable predisposition to become anxious in any situations (Spielberger, 1983).
- b. State anxiety is apprehension experienced at a particular moment in time. State anxiety is the transient, moment to moment experience of anxiety as an emotional reaction to the current situation (Cattell & Scheier, 1963). For example, a person may not ordinarily be anxious but becomes so when asked to make a public address.
- c. Situational anxiety is anxiety experienced in a well defined situation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Situation specific anxiety can be considered to be the probability of becoming anxious in a particular type of situation, such as during tests (labeled as "test anxiety"), when solving mathematics problems ("math anxiety"), or when speaking a second language ("language anxiety").

Many researchers found that anxiety stands as a main block in succeeding foreign language, especially when it comes to speaking in the foreign language (Minghe and Yuan, 2013). In line with Minghe and Yuan, Bunrueng (2008) investigated levels of anxiety and factors affecting anxiety. The findings concerned seven aspects: (1) English for Communication subject; (2) speaking anxiety; (3) listening anxiety; (4) reading anxiety; (5) writing anxiety; (6) teaching-learning activity anxiety, and (7) teaching media and evaluation anxiety. The speaking anxiety was rated at a high level, whereas the others were rated medium. Specifically, it was found that students felt most anxious to speak English in an English class without preparation, did not brave to volunteer to answer questions, felt troubled when asked by the teacher, worried about the use of grammar, were embarrassed when they made mistakes, lost confidence in speaking, and were shy when speaking English with friends.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) stated that the causes of foreign language anxiety have been broadly separated into three main components: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is the anxiety experienced when speaking to or listening to other individuals. Test anxiety is a form of performance anxiety associated with the fear of doing badly, or indeed failing altogether. Fear of negative evaluation is the anxiety associated with the learner's perception of how other onlookers (instructors, classmates or others) may negatively view their language ability.

Beside speaking anxiety, gender also has been considered as a significant factor in SLA. Male and female are biologically different in terms of their mental abilities and their learning styles. These differences arise from the development of brain and also from higher order cortical functions (Keefe, 1982). Regarding lateralization, males are more left brain dominant than females (Banich, 1997). Research shows that gender differences affect students' needs, academic interests, and achievements. SLA theorists believe that female have superiority in their L2 process (Ehrlich, 2001).

All research findings from previous researches that have been explained above lead the researcher to investigate more about the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety regards learners' speaking ability and gender. Since there are different roles of gender in language learning, more investigations are needed to know the difference between both male and female related to their anxiety and their speaking ability in the classroom. Due to the explanation above, the researcher formulated the research questions as follows:

1. Is there any significant influence of FL speaking anxiety to secondary learners' speaking ability in the classroom?
2. Is there any difference between male and female students related to their FL speaking anxiety and their speaking ability?
3. What is the highest component that influence EFL learners' FL speaking anxiety?

## **II. Methodology**

### *2.1 Design*

This research used quantitative research which focused in *ex post facto* design. This design tends to collect the data that already exist in the sample and use statistical formula to analyze the data. To find out the correlation between anxiety and speaking ability, Pearson correlation was used for data analysis. While, to compare between male and female related to their anxiety and speaking ability, comparison analysis by using Independent group t-test was done.

### *2.2 Sampling Technique*

The sampling technique in this research was random sampling in which a total number of 68 male and female secondary learners were participated in this study (35 male and 33 female) in grade VII, VIII, and IX of Xaverius 1 Bandar Lampung Junior High School.

### *2.3 Instrument*

#### *2.3.1 Questionnaire*

To identify the level of FL speaking anxiety, the students were offered the questionnaire adopted with some revision of *The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)*, developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The questionnaire consist of 13 questions with three components (communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation). To get the reliability of questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha in SPSS program was used. Meanwhile, for the validity of the questionnaire, alpha of each variable were analyzed in SPSS as well. The questionnaire is considered as reliable if  $\alpha > 0.600$ .

**Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Analysis for the Reliability of the questionnaire**

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.872	.875	13

From the reliability analysis result, it shows that coefficient alpha of the questionnaire is 0.872 ( $\alpha > 0.600$ ), it means that all items in the questionnaire are reliable to apply. Each validity of the item in the questionnaire was analyzed by comparing between *r value* with *r table* ( $r \text{ table} = 0,201$ ). All of the items in the questionnaire were valid since  $r \text{ value} > r \text{ table}$ .

### III. Result and Discussion

It has been stated in the methodology that there were 3 analysis done in the study to answer three research questions. Here are the result analysis:

3.1 *Is there any significant influence of FL speaking anxiety to secondary learners' speaking ability in the classroom?*

To answer this research question, the data from questionnaire and test were analyzed by using linear regression in SPSS. Since the first objective of the study is to find out the influence of students' FL speaking anxiety and the other variable, so linear regression analysis was done to each of those two variables.

**Table 3.1.1 Model Summary for influence of speaking anxiety to speaking ability**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.024 <sup>a</sup>	.001	-.015	4.793

a. Predictors: (Constant), Speaking Anxiety

b. Dependent Variable: Speaking Score

In table 3.1.1 above is the model summary for the influence of FL speaking anxiety to speaking ability. R square is 0.001, it means that foreign language speaking anxiety gives influence about 0.1% to learners' speaking ability. From the result we can see that foreign language speaking anxiety doesn't give any significant influence to secondary students in speaking ability. The R square showed that the lower speaking anxiety of the students doesn't guarantee their speaking ability will be better. There are many factor that possible influence the students' speaking ability, they are motivation, age, and many others factors. The low speaking anxiety can be happen because secondary students with age around 11-14 years old have low speaking anxiety as stated by Onwuegbuzie, (1999) who found that there was a positive and statistically significant correlation between anxiety and age. The result of this investigation stated that the older the student is, the higher his/her anxiety level was likely to be.

**Table 3.1.2 Coefficient<sup>a</sup> for the influence of speaking anxiety to speaking ability**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	79.851	2.168		36.823	.000
	Speaking Anxiety	.153	.798	.024	.191	.849

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Score

Based on the table 3.1.2 above, significance of FL speaking anxiety value is 0.849 ( $\text{sig} = 0.849$ ). Since  $\text{sig} > 0.05$ , it means that FL speaking anxiety gives no influence to speaking ability. As it further analyzed, with  $t \text{ value} = 0.191$  (in  $\alpha 0.05$ ), it can be assumed that speaking anxiety absolutely gives no influence to speaking ability in EFL learners. Based on the result above, it can be assumed that speaking anxiety or learners' unpleasant feeling has nothing to do with learners' speaking ability. Speaking anxiety does not give any influence to learners' speaking ability in English. In line with the finding that even unstable or a total lack of

relationships were identified between anxiety and Speech Skills (Hamayan, Genesee & Tucker, 1976; Swain & Burnaby, 1976). Swain and Burnaby, surveying a group of English children attending a full immersion of French, found a negative correlation between anxiety and one measure of the children’s proficiency of French, but found no connections with any other proficiency measures.

3.2 *Is there any difference between male and female student related to their LFL speaking anxiety and their speaking ability?*

In answering the second research question, comparing data using Independent Group t-test was used. As it can be seen in table 3.2.1, there was a slight difference between speaking anxiety of male students (mean = 2.58) and female students (mean = 2.66) in which male students tend to have lower speaking anxiety than female students, and speaking ability of female students (80.76) is higher than male students’ mean score (mean = 79.77). Standard error means of students’ speaking anxiety in speaking ability are all considered to be very low, it means that the samples can accurately represent the population. While, there are slight differences of mean between male and female.

**Table 3.2.1 Group Statistic Comparison**

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Speaking Anxiety	Male	35	<b>2.58</b>	.751	<b>.131</b>
	Female	33	<b>2.66</b>	.725	<b>.123</b>
Speaking Score	Male	35	<b>79.77</b>	4.602	<b>.778</b>
	Female	33	<b>80.76</b>	4.937	<b>.859</b>

From that result we can see that even male students have lower speaking anxiety, but the speaking score of female students are higher, it shows that the speaking anxiety doesn’t take big part of students’ EFL learner in speaking ability. The findings indicated that the students generally had low level of FL speaking anxiety, although students with a higher speaking ability had a higher level of anxiety compared with students with a lower speaking anxiety. No statistically meaningful difference was observed with regard to students’ gender and speaking anxiety levels.

From the result it is clear that female students had higher level of anxiety than male students, in line with Ezzi (2012) found that the relationship between FL anxiety and gender among male and female students regard to their educational level, age and residence and found that female had a higher level of anxiety than male. Although female had higher speaking anxiety, female group also had higher speaking ability than male group. According to Coates (1986) girls acquire language better than boys. Girls tend to learn English better than boys. The girls gave some explanations for their tendency to learn English. They said that they learn English to acquire knowledge, improve their communicative ability, and to improve their social status. On the other hand, just a small number of boys acknowledged that English is important for them. The analysis revealed that girls are more motivated than boys in learning English as a foreign language.

**Table 3.2.2 Independent Samples t-test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
Speaking Anxiety	Equal variances assumed	.075	.785	.454	66	.651	.081	.179	-.276	.439
	Equal variances not assumed			.454	65.411	.651	.081	.179	-.277	.439
Speaking Score	Equal variances assumed	.225	.637	-.852	66	.397	-.986	1.157	-3.296	1.324
	Equal variances not assumed			-.851	64.908	.398	-.986	1.159	-3.301	1.329

Focused on the column of Sig. (2-tailed) in table 3.2.2, it can be seen that all values in that column are higher than 0.05 (sig > 0.05). It can be assumed that there is no significant difference between male and female

students related to their speaking anxiety and learners' speaking ability. In *t-value* column, it can be seen that *t-value* of speaking anxiety and speaking ability are higher than 0.05 ( $t > 0.05$ ), it means that both FL speaking anxiety in speaking ability in male and female students have no significant difference. While *t-value* of speaking score is in minus, it means that there is difference between speaking anxiety of male and female learners but the difference is not significant.

### 3.3 What is the main causes affect EFL learners' speaking anxiety?

**Table 3.2.3 Three components of foreign language anxiety**

Components	Number of student
Communication apprehension	30
Test-anxiety	13
Students' fear of negative evaluation	25

From the data above, can be concluded that the first component had the highest factor affected students foreign language speaking anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) argued that there are three related performance anxieties: the first one was called communication apprehension; the second was students' fear of negative evaluation; while the third was test-anxiety. Similarly, the current research found out that EFL learners suffered from communication apprehension from which they preferred remaining silent in class, they also had the fear from the negative evaluation either from their teachers or their peers. Communication apprehension was demonstrative of fear of criticism for speaking, nervousness about being called or waiting for the turn to speak, and bodily response towards speaking English.

## IV. Conclusion and Suggestion

From the findings derived from the data, it can be concluded that foreign language speaking anxiety doesn't give any significant influence to secondary students in speaking ability. Regarding gender difference in terms of foreign language anxiety, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female students with their foreign language speaking anxiety and their speaking ability. Although female had higher speaking anxiety, they had higher speaking ability level than male students. Regarding the component that mostly influence students speaking anxiety was communication apprehension. It is fear of criticism for speaking, nervousness about being called or waiting for the turn to speak, and bodily response towards speaking English. By finding this fact, the teacher can increase student confidence in speaking ability by decreasing the factors that affected students speaking anxiety.

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No	Statements adopted with minor adaptation in wordings	Opinion				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.					
2	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on.					
3	Certain parts of my body feel very tense while speaking English.					
4	I feel anxious while waiting to speak English.					
5	I have trouble to coordinate my movements while speaking English.					
6	I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English.					
7	I get so nervous when the language teacher asks me to speak English which I have prepared in advance.					
8	It embarrasses me to volunteer to go out first to speak English					
9	Even if I am very well-prepared I feel anxious about speaking English.					
10	I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance.					
11	In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.					
12	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English					
13	I dislike using my voice and body expressively while speaking English.					

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