

## **SPEAKING ANXIETY AND AND ENGLISH-SPEAKING ACHIEVEMENT: A STUDY AMONG SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to answer the research problem regarding the correlation between speaking anxiety and English-speaking achievement of grade XI high school students in Palembang, as well as the extent to which speaking anxiety contributes to that achievement. This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The sample consisted of 62 students selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected through a speaking anxiety questionnaire, and a speaking test was assessed using an oral proficiency rubric. The results showed that most students experienced a medium level of speaking anxiety, while their speaking achievement was in the enough-to-good category. Pearson's correlation analysis showed that there was no significant correlation between speaking anxiety and students' speaking achievement ( $r = 0.243$ ;  $p = 0.057$ ). The lack of correlation indicates that students' speaking achievement can be influenced by factors other than speaking anxiety.

**Keywords:** speaking anxiety, speaking achievement.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Many people in the world are interested in learning English because it is considered an international language. English, one of the world's major languages, has been recognized and acknowledged as an international language (Ritonga et al., 2020). In addition, according to Phan (2020), English improves communication among speakers of diverse native languages, making it crucial for diplomatic, intellectual, and commercial contacts. Because it is an international language, people who learn English are not only from the business or technology fields but also students at all levels of schools and universities.

At all levels in school and university, particularly in Indonesia, students learn four skills in English, one of which is speaking. Speaking is one of the important language skills used to speed up direct verbal communication (Fulcher, 2014). In line with this, Naa'im and Hashim (2019) mentioned that speaking is a way for someone to provide information or express feelings through language with other people. Therefore, it is very

important for students to master English-speaking skills and have good speaking achievement.

Speaking achievement for students refers to their ability to communicate effectively in English, which is frequently measured using a variety of educational techniques and interventions. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2018), it is critical to assess various aspects of students' speaking abilities, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Assessing speaking achievement can be assessed through assessing student performance in specific tasks such as role play, presentations, group discussion, retelling text/story, and interviews. Students' speaking achievement is a good indicator of their overall language ability and communication skills. It reflects their ability to clearly articulate their thoughts, engage in meaningful conversations, and confidently express their ideas.

Despite its significance, there are several factors that are closely related to speaking achievement, one of which is commonly referred to as speaking anxiety (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). According to Billones and Gempes (2024), speaking anxiety is a form of social anxiety that occurs when individuals fear negative evaluation or judgment from others during speaking situations. In line with this, Yuliana and Haryanti (2024) revealed that factors such as fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication concerns are the main causes of speaking anxiety among EFL students. Students who have speaking anxiety usually refuse and prefer to be silent if asked to speak in front of many people, especially using English, because they feel nervous and panic. They are often passive in class, rarely talk or interact during the learning process and are often afraid to demonstrate their abilities for fear of making mistakes, being mocked, or receiving negative feedback from teachers or peers.

The researcher also found several previous studies similar to this study. The first study, which examined the correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement among eighth-grade students, was conducted by (Putra et al., 2023). Their results showed that there was no significant correlation between speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance.

Then there was a study by Putri et al. (2023). This previous study was investigating the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance in tenth-grade students. This study found no significant correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement.

There were also several previous studies that focused on university-level students (Dana & Dyah Aminatun, 2022; Susanto et al., 2017; Plantika & Adnan, 2021; Tridinanti, 2018; Pratiwi & Mukhaiyar, 2020; Taufik et al., 2022; Melawati & Nirwanto, 2021). Among them, some research results showed a correlation (Dana & Dyah Aminatun, 2022; Susanto et al., 2017; Plantika & Adnan, 2021; Tridinanti, 2018; Pratiwi & Mukhaiyar, 2020). Conversely, the research results from Taufik et al. (2022 and Melawati and Nirwanto (2021). showed that there was no correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement.

Additionally, there was a study that examined participants in the International English Training (IET) program at Cambridge English College (CEC) Pare-Kediri, East Java. This study was conducted by Kamridah (2016). It found a significant negative correlation between speaking anxiety and public speaking performance.

Although the correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement has been extensively studied, research specifically focusing on 11th grade students in high schools is still limited. On the other hand, current curriculum demands encourage the improvement of students' speaking skills, so it is important to understand the factors

that may influence their achievement. Therefore, this study aims to determine the correlation between speaking anxiety and English-speaking achievement among 11th-grade students in Palembang, as well as the extent to which this anxiety contributes to their achievement.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative correlational method because the primary objective was to examine the statistical relationship between two measurable variables: students' speaking anxiety and their English-speaking achievement. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), correlational studies are used to determine the relationship between two or more variables and to investigate the influence of cause and effect. The study was conducted at two senior high schools in Palembang: MAN 3 Palembang and SMA Negeri 9 Palembang. The population of the study was eleventh-grade students enrolled in the 2023/2024 academic year. A total of 62 students were selected using convenience sampling, with 31 students from each school. The number of participants was based on the typical class size in each school and the accessibility of students willing to take part in the study. Fraenkel et al. (2023) mentioned that a convenience sample consists of people who are available for study. Selection was based on student availability and willingness to participate.

The instruments used in this research consisted of two main parts. The first was a speaking anxiety questionnaire, adapted from the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) developed by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). This instrument included 17 items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questionnaire measured students' anxiety related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. To ensure the construct validity of this questionnaire, Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and the Bartlett test of sphericity. In this analysis, it was found that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.78, which is acceptable because it is greater than 0.60. Meanwhile, the results of the Bartlett test for sphericity showed  $p = 0.00$ , which is significant. From these two analysis results, it can be concluded that the 17 items in this questionnaire are acceptable. To assess the suitability of this questionnaire for the research sample, the researcher conducted a tryout on a grade equivalent to the research sample. The results of the tryout data were analyzed for reliability using Cronbach's alpha. Fraenkel et al. (2023) stated that an instrument for research purposes should have a reliability of at least 0.70 or preferably higher.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Item
0,866	17

The table above showed that the questionnaire's reliability was 0.86. This means that the questionnaire can be considered reliable because the result is greater than 0.70.

The second instrument was an English-speaking test used to measure students' speaking achievement. The speaking test was conducted based on the booklet made by the researcher. The speaking test booklet was made based on the learning materials used in the teaching and learning process. Each student was given a certain topic from the booklet and asked to speak about the topic for approximately 1-2 minutes. To determine the validity of the speaking test, content validity was used with the help of

two validators. Fraenkel et al. (2023) stated that content validity ensures that the content and format of the instrument are appropriate for the variables and sample to be measured. The validators were English lecturers from UIN Raden Fatah Palembang with a TOEFL score of at least 550. Based on the results of the analysis of the two validators, they stated that the speaking test instrument was suitable for use because it was in accordance with the curriculum and had met the standard criteria that determine the validity of the speaking test instrument. The speaking test was scored using two raters. Therefore, researchers conducted an inter-rater reliability test to examine their consistency using Pearson Product Moment. The results of the inter-rater reliability test showed a score of 0.985, from which it can be concluded that the level of agreement between the two raters in this study was almost perfect.

Data were collected in two main sessions. In the first session, students completed the speaking anxiety questionnaire in the classroom setting under the supervision of the researcher and their English teacher. In the second session, the speaking test was administered individually. Students were asked to perform a short monologue or dialogue based on booklet topics. Students' speaking achievement was evaluated using the Oral Proficiency Category Rubric adapted from Brown and Abeywickrama (2018), which incorporates a number of test criteria such as grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation.

After all data were collected, they were systematically tabulated and analyzed using SPSS version 27. The data analysis process consisted of three main stages. First, descriptive statistics were conducted to calculate the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation, which helped identify the overall levels of students' speaking anxiety and their speaking achievement. Second, prerequisite tests were carried out, including the normality test (using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test) to check whether the data were normally distributed, and the linearity test to ensure that the relationship between the two variables was linear—both of which are essential assumptions for parametric correlation analysis. Third, the Pearson Product-Moment correlation test was employed to examine the strength and significance of the relationship between students' speaking anxiety and their English-speaking achievement. The significance level (p-value) was set at 0.05 to determine whether the correlation was statistically significant.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire results, most students have a medium level of anxiety when speaking. Meanwhile, the speaking achievement results show that students' English-speaking skills are in the “enough” to “good” category.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and distribution of speaking anxiety and speaking achievement

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Speaking Anxiety	62	28	75	51.90	10.411
Speaking Achievement	62	44	78	58.58	8.324
<b>Distribution</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>V. Percent</b>	<b>Cum. Percent</b>	

<b>Speaking Anxiety</b>				
Low Anxiety	26	41.9	41.9	41.9
Medium Anxiety	34	54.8	54.8	96.8
High Anxiety	2	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	
<b>Speaking Achievement</b>				
Enough	38	61.3	61.3	61.3
Good	24	38.7	38.7	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

To determine the relationship between students' speaking anxiety and their speaking achievement, a Pearson Product Moment correlation test was conducted using SPSS. The result showed a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.243$  with a significance value of  $p = 0.057$ . Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, the correlation was not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was no significant relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement among the students in this study.

Table 5. Correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement

		Speaking Anxiety	Speaking Achievement
Speaking Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.243
	Sig. (2tailed)		.057
	N	62	62
Speaking Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.243	1
	Sig. (2tailed)	0.57	
	N	62	62

The results of this study indicate that although most students experience moderate levels of speaking anxiety, this does not significantly affect their achievement in speaking English. These findings are in line with research by (Putra et al. 2023; Taufik et al. 2022; Putri et al. 2023; Melawati and Nirwanto 2021), who found that speaking anxiety has no significant correlation with the speaking achievement.

Anxiety is not the only factor that can affect speaking achievement. Therefore, there may be other factors that have a greater influence on speaking achievement. Kartini and Syahira (2023) mentioned that some problems in mastering speaking skills can happen because of psychological factors like not being confident and not having enough motivation. Gürler (2015) supports this by stating that self-confidence is crucial in developing fluency and accuracy in speaking, both in one's native language and in a foreign language.

Additionally, lack of motivation has been identified as another factor influencing students' reluctance to speak. Kiruthiga and Christopher (2022) argue that motivation is essential in enhancing learners' engagement and effort in language learning. Without strong internal motivation, students may remain passive despite having sufficient competence. In line with this, Hanim (2018) mentioned that motivation plays an important role here in maintaining students' enthusiasm and self-confidence.

From a linguistic perspective, limited vocabulary and poor grammar were also reported as barriers by several students. According to Putri et al. (2020), students with limited vocabulary tend to struggle with comprehension and expression. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2017) noted that difficulties in grammar usage can reduce the clarity and coherence of spoken responses. Pronunciation issues also surfaced as a challenge, particularly among students who rarely use English outside the classroom. Prashant (2018) emphasized that poor pronunciation can lead to communication breakdowns, further increasing students' hesitation and fear of being misunderstood. Furthermore, Darojah and Aminin (2023) found that speaking performance is more strongly correlated with self-confidence than anxiety. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are several other factors that may also play a role in determining students' speaking achievement.

The findings in this study imply that efforts to improve students' speaking achievement should not focus solely on reducing speaking anxiety. Although many students experienced moderate levels of anxiety, this did not significantly impact their speaking performance, as shown by the absence of a statistically significant correlation between the two variables. This suggests that other factors may have a more substantial influence on students' speaking outcomes. For instance, students with higher self-confidence and strong motivation may be able to perform well despite feeling anxious. Additionally, linguistic competence—including mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation—plays a critical role in enabling students to express themselves clearly and confidently. Therefore, teachers should not only address students' emotional factors but also strengthen their language skills and encourage active participation through engaging and supportive learning environments.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement of eleventh-grade students in two senior high schools in Palembang. The results show that most students have a medium level of speaking anxiety, and their speaking achievement is in the enough-to-good category. However, no significant correlation was found between speaking anxiety and students' speaking achievement. These findings suggest that other factors, such as self-confidence, learning motivation, and language proficiency, are likely to have a greater influence on students' success in speaking. Implications: Teachers need to pay attention to these aspects in the learning process, not just focus on reducing anxiety. This study has limitations, namely the limited sample size. Therefore, further research is recommended to use a broader sample and consider other supporting variables.

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