The Students' Anxiety Level in Speaking English in front of the class at Eleventh Grade of SMK Negeri 1 Meranti Kabupaten Asahan

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the levels of speaking anxiety among 11th-grade students at SMK Negeri 1 Meranti Kabupaten Asahan. Using a mixed-method approach, the study employs the modified Horwitz Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to quantify anxiety levels and qualitative analysis to explore the specific types of anxiety and their triggers. This research used probability sampling to select 105 samples from a population of 142 students from 11th grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Meranti for the 2023 – 2024 academic year The findings revealed that (1)) the majority of students had very low anxiety levels (50.50%), moderately low anxiety (19.00%), moderate anxiety (17.10%), moderately high anxiety (9.50%), and high anxiety (3.90%) levels. The study concluded that speaking anxiety is a complex issue shaped by a combination of these internal and external variables.

Keywords: Students' Anxiety, Anxiety Level, Speaking English

1. Introduction

Anxiety is characterised as an unmanageable condition that may give rise to numerous complications in the context of language acquisition. Anxiety has been identified as a significant detriment to the acquisition of a second language, particularly with regard to motivation and self-assurance (Hadi & Junor, 2022). If a person is unable to communicate and fails to demonstrate that they have a sufficient level of English comprehension, they are frequently setting themselves up for failure due to that anxiety (Nugroho et al., 2021).

Speaking itself is one of four language skills. Among the four skills, speaking is considered to be the most crucial for students due to its function as a means of communication (Sinambela et al., 2023). Speaking refers to the capacity to articulate sounds or words in order to communicate thoughts, concepts, and emotions. The primary objective of speaking is to convey information or ideas effectively. Speaking, in particular, is an essential skill for students to develop because it is related to daily activities (Saragih et al., 2023).

Additionally, students are encouraged to practise speaking English in class and throughout their daily lives, as it is a crucial skill for them to develop. Students' capacity to speak English will be significantly enhanced as they become accustomed to speaking, which is why learning to speak will help them develop habits and fluency.

Despite this, many students still believe that speaking English is extremely tough. Students' self-confidence suffers from a lack of grammar and language skills. Students are hesitant to speak English due to fear of being ridiculed by their peers for mistakes and lack of vocabulary. According to (Manik & Tarigan, 2023) Vocabulary is one of the crucial aspects in English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Many pupils struggle to speak English in class due to anxiousness.

Many students struggle with speaking anxiety and lack knowledge on how to overcome it. Speaking in public can be challenging, especially without proper preparation. Many people have discomfort when speaking English in social situations. The speaker's feelings of social nervousness and shyness are natural. Overcoming speaking anxiety might help individuals feel more at ease during English speaking sessions.

This statement is supported by the study conducted by (Tiara & Asnawi, 2023) which was found that there were three elements contributing to student anxiety in learning English. The first component is Communication Apprehension, which refers to students' difficulty in speaking English due to their limited grasp of the language. . (2) Test Anxiety refers to the condition in which students experience anxiety when faced with the task of taking an English test. (3) Fear of Negative Evaluation refers to the fear that students have of being ridiculed by their teacher and peers if they make mistakes (Horwitz, 1991).

Additionally, each student has unique learning styles, personalities, and experiences that contribute to their level of speaking anxiety. Cultural attitudes towards language learning, communication, and performance can also impact students' speaking anxiety, with societal pressures to perform well in English-speaking contexts or fear of judgment from peers and authority figures exacerbating anxiety levels. Overall, addressing students' speaking anxiety in learning English requires on going efforts to develop tailored interventions, promote positive learning environments, and provide ample opportunities for practice and support.

Many researches have extensively explored students' anxiety in speaking English in front of the class, focusing on identifying its levels and types as well as the factors caused the anxiety as conducted by (Humaera & Pramustiara, 2022), (Tiara & Asnawi, 2023). However, despite these efforts, there remains a notable gap in effectively improving students' English proficiency while simultaneously minimizing anxiety levels to the fullest extent.

Based on observations, many students exhibit anxiety when speaking English in front of the class, despite being encouraged to mix Indonesian with English to alleviate their fears This indicates a deeper issue with students' confidence and comfort levels when it comes to verbal communication in English. This anxiety may stem from various factors, such as fear of making mistakes, feeling self-conscious about pronunciation, or lacking confidence in their language abilities. Regardless of the attempts to mitigate their anxiety by allowing the use of Indonesian, students still appear nervous and hesitant to speak English fluently in class. This highlights the importance of addressing students' anxiety and providing them with supportive environments and strategies to build their confidence and overcome their fear of speaking English publicly.

It is also noticeable that female students tend to experience more pronounced anxiety compared to their male counterparts when speaking English in class. This gender disparity in anxiety levels is influenced by various factors, including societal expectations, cultural norms, and personal experiences. Female students may feel more pressure to perform well and fear judgment or scrutiny from their peers and teachers (Afrianti & Afna, 2020). Additionally, they may internalize stereotypes about gender and language proficiency, leading to heightened anxiety levels when speaking English. Addressing this gender disparity in anxiety is crucial to

create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students feel empowered to participate actively in English-speaking activities.

Seeing the above facts, it is identified the issues in verbal communication, learning difficulties, and disinterest in speaking English may contribute to increase anxiety among students at SMK Negeri 1 Meranti. Addressing these challenges is crucial for creating a more supportive and effective learning environment.

Another problem that is also found is that most of the students also have trouble learning new words, which makes it hard for them to understand what they are learning. Additionally, the students are not interested in speaking English at that time. It is clear from how they behave in class. Most of the students do not pay attention to the teacher during the learning process.

Based on the background of the study above the writer is interested to conduct the study entitled "Investigating Students'Anxiety in Speaking English: A Case Study in SMK Negeri 1 Meranti Kabupaten Asahan"

The problem of the study is What are the students' anxiety level at Elevent Grade of SMK Negeri 1 Meranti when speaking English in front of the class?

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The design includes surveys, interviews.

The populatiom of this study are 11th grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Meranti for the 2023 – 2024 academic year.

According to (Sugiyono., 2010) Population is geographic generalization there are : object/subject has quality and certain of characteristic that set by researcher to learning then make the conclusion.

This research will use probability sampling to select a sample from a population of 142 students from 11th grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Meranti for the 2023 – 2024 academic year. Specifically, the technique employed was proportionate stratified random sampling. This method divides the population into homogeneous layers (strata) and then selects a random sample from each layer (Creswell, 2012). The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% error rate.

In order this research will use proportionate stratified sampling, it should calculate the strata from 11th grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Meranti (XI TKBR, XI TSM1, XI TSM2, XI TKJ1 and XI TKJ2) . The calculation is as followed.

Table 2.1 The Calculation of Proportionate Stratified Sampling

No	Class	Calculation of Proportionate Stratified	Number of Samples

1	XI TBKR	25/142 x 105	18
2	XI TSM 1	28/142 x 105	21
3	XI TMS 2	31/142 x 105	23
4	XI TKJ 1	30/142 x 105	22
5	XI TKJ 2	28/142 x 105	21
	Total		**105**

Next, the population will be splited into two groups according to specified criteria: students who will be reported high levels of anxiety and students who will be reported low levels of anxiety. To further assist in answering the research questions, ten students will be selected from each of these groups to participate in the interviews.

2.2 Instruments

2.2.1 Questionnaire

The first instrument that used is a questionnaire to determine the level of student anxiety. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), created by (Horwitz, 2001b) will be used in this study. There will be 33 items in this survey have five possible answers.

The questionnaires will be assessed by Likert scale rating. This scale rating has five options. They are: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree (Each option also has score based on the Likert Scale Rating below:

Table 2.2.1
Likert Scale for Reading Interest and Reading Purpose Questionnaires

No.	Category	Score
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	5
2	Agree (S)	4
3	Undecided (N)	3
4	Disagree (D)	2
5	Strongly Disagree (SD)	1

(Sugiyono, 2012)

2.2.2 Interview

Interviews will be used as the following tool. Iterviews are a great way to get people to talk about their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in their own words, which is useful for gathering data (Ary et al., 2010). There are three kinds of interviews as there are Structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews.

In this study the researcher will employ a semi-structured interview since it will allow her to ask both pre-determined questions and open-ended inquiries to flesh out the subject. A conversation between two people in which they ask each other questions and then listen to each other's answers in order to build meaning about a certain subject is called an interview (Sugiyono, 2012)

According to the previous explanation, the researcher will be able to directly communicate with respondents through interviews. Interviews are a great way to get to know the people

you're studying, but they are also useful for gathering data when you're doing a pilot study to find out what needs additional investigation.

When interviewing people, researchers utilize Indonesian as their language of choice. Due to the fact that the interviewees are students and not native English speakers, and in an effort to keep things simple, The following is the specification of the interview questions.

Table 2.2.2 The Specification of Interview Question

Aspect	Indicators	Number of Question
Kinds of Anxiety	State anxiety	1 & 2
	Trait anxiety	3 & 8
	Specific – situation anxiety	4, 7, 10
Factors causing anxiety	External factors	1, 2, 3

2.3 Technique of Collecting Data

A survey called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) will be given to the sample. For the purpose of identifying and categorizing students' anxiety levels, the questionnaires include inquiries regarding students' anxiety experiences. Every student is required to respond to all FLCAS questions using one of five answer scales that will be supplied through Google Form.

Interviews will also be used to gather data after students are categorized as having low or high anxiety levels. Two groups will be formed for the interview based on the students' anxiety levels. There were two groups of students: one with high levels of anxiety (> 40) and another with low levels of anxiety (<400).

The interview will be conducted in order to facilitate open discussion and prevent any potential miscommunication, the researcher will begin with a broad, formulation-based leading question and then have the students speak freely while being interviewed in Indonesian. The interview takes form later on when themes emerge from the students' responses.

In order to gather information for this study in order to answer the problems of the study to find out the level of the anxiety, the researcher will follow these steps:
1. The researcher will carefully select participants for the questionnaires from different groups within the Eleventh Grade of SMK Negeri 1 Meranti, ensuring representation from varying levels of anxiety. In this case the researcher will choose randomly from the Eleventh Grade, which consist of 105 students as sample of the study
2. After distributing the questionnaire the researcher will ensure that all 105 students from classes XI have received the questionnaire. This will involve distributing the questionnaire to each student and providing clear instructions for its completion.

The questionnaire will likely utilize a Likert scale, where students rate their level of anxiety on a scale from, for example, 1 to 5. The researcher will choose to utilize a Likert scale in the questionnaire for several reasons. Firstly, Likert scales are widely used in psychological and educational research for measuring attitudes, perceptions, and feelings, making them a well-established and validated tool for assessing subjective experiences like anxiety. Secondly, Likert scales provide a structured format that allows for quantification of responses, enabling

the researcher to systematically analyze and interpret the data. Likert scales also offer a range of response options, such as the 1 to 5 scale mentioned, which allows for nuanced measurement of anxiety levels, capturing variations in intensity from mild to severe. Moreover, including descriptors at each point on the scale helps ensure that participants understand the meaning of each response option, enhancing the clarity and validity of their responses.

2.4 Data Analysis Technique

In this study there will be two pieces of data need processing. The first data is set of information in the form of quantitative data which come from the result of the FLCAS questionnaire.

To answer the research problem (the level of the students' anxiety) the researcher will do the following steps:

1)   The data gained from the questionnaires will be analyzed by using Horwitz calculating rubric as follows.

Table 3.5 FLCAS Evaluation

Scale	Positive Question	Negative Question
Strongly Agree (SS)	1	5
Agree (S)	2	4
Undecided (N)	3	3
Disagree (D)	4	2
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	1

From the table above, it can be explained if Students who respond to questions with a positive context with "Strongly Agree" receive a score of 1, "Agree" receives a score of 2, "Neutral" receives a score of 3, "Disagree" receives a score of 4, and "Strongly Disagree" receives a score of 5.

Then, in the opposite direction, students will receive the following scores for responses to questions with negative connotations: "Strongly Agree" recieves a score of 5; "Agree" contributes to a score of 4; "Neutral" contributes to a score of 3; "Disagree" contributes to a score of 2; and "Strongly Disagree" contributes to a score of 1.

2)   The next step that the responses of all students will be compiled into numerical values to identify the anxiety-level by usin anxiety-level scale by (Alrabai, 2014).

3)   The Students will be subsequently separated into two groups: those with high anxiety levels and those with low anxiety levels.

Table 3.6 Anxiety Level Scale

Scale	Level of Anxiety
33 - 82	Very low anxiety
83 - 89	Moderately low anxiety
90 - 98	Moderate anxiety
99 - 108	Moderately high anxiety
109 - 165	High anxiety

4)   Each student's total numerical value will be compared to the ranges specified in the anxiety-level scale to determine their anxiety level.

5)   Based on the determined anxiety levels, students will be separated into two groups. Those with high anxiety levels and those with low anxiety levels.

6)   The cutoff points for separating the groups will be determined by the ranges specified

in the anxiety-level scale.

3. Results and Discussion

This study included 105 11th-grade students from SMK Negeri 1 Meranti Kabupaten Asahan, as previously explained. The researcher used an altered Horwitz Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire to assess students' speaking anxiety levels. The results are displayed in the following table:

**Table 6.1 Recapitulation of FLCAS Results Score and Category**

Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Category
33 - 82	53	50.50%	Very low anxiety
83 - 89	20	19.00%	Moderately low anxiety
90 - 98	18	17.10%	Moderate anxiety
99 - 108	10	9.50%	Moderately high anxiety
109 - 165	4	3.90%	High Anxiety
Total	105	100,00%	

The table 6.1 above illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their anxiety levels, categorized into five distinct ranges: very low anxiety, moderately low anxiety, moderate anxiety, moderately high anxiety, and high anxiety. Out of 105 respondents, 53 individuals, which constitute 50.50% of the sample, fall into the category of very low anxiety with scores ranging from 33 to 82 This indicates that half of the respondents experience minimal anxiety, suggesting a generally low level of anxiety within this group.

The next category, moderately low anxiety, includes 20 respondents, representing 19.00% of the total. These individuals have scores between 83 and 89. Following this, 18 respondents, or 17.10%, exhibit moderate anxiety with scores ranging from 90 to 98. These two categories combined show that a significant portion of the sample, amounting to 36.10%, experience varying degrees of anxiety but are not in the extreme ranges.

In the higher anxiety categories, 10 respondents, accounting for 9.50%, fall into the moderately high anxiety group with scores between 99 and 108. Lastly, the high anxiety category, with scores ranging from 109 to 165, includes 4 respondents, making up 3.90% of the total. This suggests that a small minority of the sample experiences high levels of anxiety. The overall distribution shows that while a majority of the respondents have very low to moderate anxiety, there is still a notable proportion experiencing higher levels of anxiety that may require further attention or intervention.

In addition to the table above, the study's findings are also illustrated in a graphical format as shown in Figure 6.1, which depicts the distribution of students' speaking anxiety levels according to the same scale. The graph provides a visual representation of the percentage of students in each anxiety category, from very low to high, offering a clearer view of the anxiety distribution among the respondents.
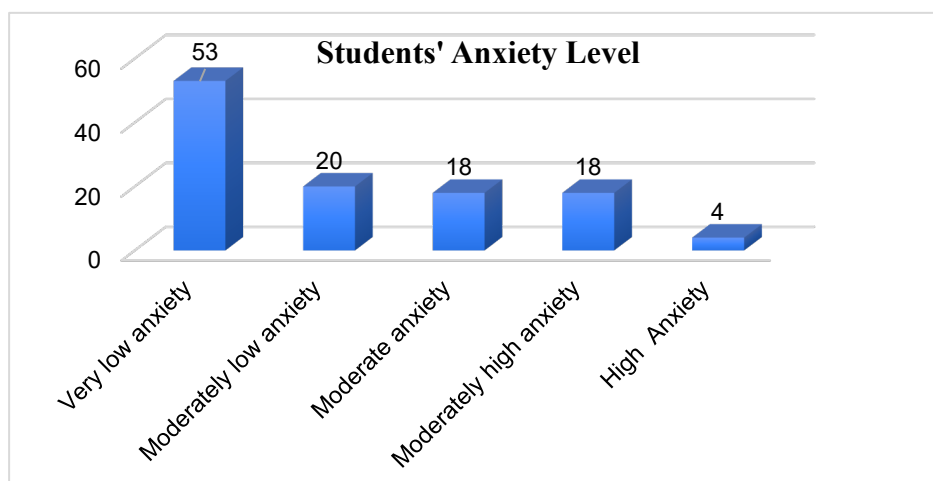
From the graph, it is evident that a substantial portion of the students, 50.50%, experience very low anxiety, with scores ranging from 33 to 82. This indicates that half of the respondents feel minimal anxiety when speaking. Additionally, 19.00% of the students fall into the moderately low anxiety category with scores between 83 and 89, while 17.10% of the students experience moderate anxiety, scoring between 90 and 98.

The graph also shows that 9.50% of the students have moderately high anxiety, with scores ranging from 99 to 108, and a small fraction, 3.90%, fall into the high anxiety category with scores between 109 and 165. This visual representation underscores the findings that while a majority of students have low to moderate levels of anxiety, there is a significant minority that experiences higher levels of anxiety, which may warrant further attention or intervention.

This explanation answers the research problem question which asked about What the students' anxiety levels are at the Eleventh Grade of SMK Negeri 1 Meranti when speaking English in front of the class.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and findings from this study, several key conclusions can be drawn that address the research questions concerning the levels speaking anxiety among 11th-grade students at SMK Negeri 1 Meranti Kabupaten Asahan.

The study found that a majority of students majority of students had very low anxiety levels (50.50%), moderately low anxiety (19.00%), moderate anxiety (17.10%), moderately high anxiety (9.50%), and high anxiety (3.90%) levels. This distribution implies that anxiety is still a major barrier for some students, even if many may have learned coping strategies or

benefited from a supportive learning environment. In order to address this anxiety, a customized strategy that takes into account the unique requirements and anxiety levels of each student is needed. By doing this, teachers can assist students in overcoming their anxieties and improve their language learning process.

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