

## Examining Speaking Anxiety of Indonesian Learners of English: A Case of University Students

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> speaking anxiety, Indonesian learners of English, EFL</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i2.1338">http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i2.1338</a></p> <p><b>How to cite:</b> Fauzi, I. &amp; Asi, N. (2023). Examining Speaking Anxiety of Indonesian Learners of English: A Case of University Students. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 7(2), 263-275</p>	<p>Anxiety or nervousness is one of the affective factors that affects anyone learning and practicing English as a foreign language, especially when speaking the language. Anxiety in English speaking is commonly related to apprehension, fear, and worry that the learners experience when using the language. Most researchers in Indonesia studied speaking anxiety in terms of psychological and linguistic factors, but not specifically to relate with variables such as gender and number of years for learning the target language. This study is in addition to examining the speaking anxiety level of Indonesian learners of English, and the dominant factor triggering the anxiety, and also to attest the difference of anxiety levels related to gender and the number of years in learning English. By using a quantitative method of case study research design, this study revealed that female learners are more anxious than males in speaking English which mean gender is affected by foreign language anxiety. Besides, the number of years in learning English also influences learners controlling their anxiety during speaking which means the longer they learn English the less anxious they speak the language. Then, test anxiety most dominantly contributes to the uneasiness factor for students in speaking English. The result of this study implies that teachers or lecturers of English must provide a space for female students to feel more secure in speaking class by avoiding negative evaluation so that they feel comfortable while learning and acquiring the language.</p>

### 1. Introduction

English is one of the languages that is widely used by people all over the world. In Indonesia, English is learned as a foreign language from kindergarten up to university level. In the term of learning English, students are required to master the basic skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among those four skills, speaking is an important skill that should be learned intensively by the students.

Speaking is an activity of communicating meaning using symbols of verbal and nonverbal to produce articulated sounds or words in which one's ideas, thoughts and feelings are expressed and conveyed (Chaney, 1998). In other words, speaking is one of language skills focusing on one's ability to produce the language and use it verbally to communicate with each other. The success of mastering English-speaking skill can be measured by the students' ability to communicate fluently and correctly with features of the language. However, some foreign language (FL) learners found themselves tough in mastering this language skill. They usually experienced various obstacles such as difficulties in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and problems in fluency (Fauzi, 2021). Therefore, speaking becomes a challenging task for FL learners.

When the learner has rare opportunities to practice the target language, it may be difficult for FL learners to improve their speaking skills (Fryer & Carpenter, 2006). The failure to be proficient in this skill target is noted in FL acquisition literature (Horwitz et al., 1986); (He & He, 2018); (Kitano, 2001), even with advanced learners (Woodrow, 2006); (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009). Speaking skill also means being able to produce, receive, and process information in order to express meaning whether formally or informally and keep social relationships (Brown, 2001). Learners' motivation to participate in oral communication is dependent on more than just their cognitive capacity to talk and actively listen. Emotional states are triggered by a wide range of motivational, attitude, self-confidence, risk-taking, and anxiety-related psychological variables (Krashen, 1988). This all means that such psychological variables cannot be hindered in using the language for communication, especially the learners' anxiety variable.

In the last 20 years, there has been a lot of interest in how important anxiety is in second and foreign language learning. Research related to the speaking anxiety of foreign language learners has been widely studied including variables that correlate with anxiety itself; such as gender, level of English proficiency, number of years in studying foreign languages, and other affective factors. Öztürk (2012) in the context of the Turkish EFL, for example, examines the level of anxiety and the determinant factor triggering anxiety in speaking English as a foreign language. The quantitative data of this study depicted that students' levels of English-speaking anxiety were categorized low. However, interview results showed that most students perceived their lack of speaking ability is due to their apprehension. Other things that make EFL speakers nervous, based on the study, are how they pronounce, being asked questions immediately, being afraid of making mistakes, and being judged negatively. Gender also seemed to play a big role in foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA). This is depicted by female students find it more nerve-wracking to speak a foreign language.

Tianjian (2010) explored the anxiety of Chinese EFL learners in speaking as well as finding the correlations between speaking anxiety and other dimensions such as negative affectivity, reluctance to communicate, language achievement, and speaking self-efficacy. More than half of the students, based on the research findings, experienced speaking anxiety by the levels of moderate to high. Moreover, there were no significant differences in this affective issue between genders, although there were substantial differences in skill levels. It was also revealed that personality traits have a significant role in the development of speaking anxiety, and that there is a reciprocal relationship between language proficiency and fear of speaking apprehension. In addition, Latif (2015); Karatas et al. (2016) found out the correlation of English learners' speaking anxiety levels and how long they studied that foreign language.

In Indonesia, several studies have looked into students' anxiety in the classroom of speaking English. To mention some, researches from Sirait (2015), Mukminin & Arif (2015), Indrianty (2016), Irawan & Warni (2018), Tian & Mahmud's (2018), (Ariyanti, 2017), and Abrar et al. (2018) depicted that many students experience anxiety when participating in the classroom speaking activities. This anxiety is a natural consequence of the pressure associated with participating in such an activity. Meanwhile, the results also found that the pressure to speak in public has created uncontrollable anxiety as characterized by limb movements and the inability to speak clearly. Also, students experience anxiety when speaking English in the classroom because they don't know enough words, aren't ready, are afraid of making mistakes, and unwilling their classmates to laugh at them.

Of all studies in Indonesia related to the anxiety of speaking English aforementioned mostly looked into the anxiety in terms of psychological and linguistic factors, but not specific to relate with variables such as gender and number of years for learning the target language with the anxiety itself. For this reason, this study examines the anxiety variance experienced by intermediate learners of English in terms of those both variables other than learners' psychological factor or linguistic factors such as limited mastery of vocabulary and proficiency level of learners in the speaking skill. Hence, this study concerns with three research questions; (1) how is the speaking anxiety level of Indonesian learners of English? (2) Are there any significant differences in speaking anxiety among Indonesian learners of English related to gender and the number of years in learning English? (3) What factor does dominantly trigger the speaking anxiety among Indonesian learners of English?

## **2. Literature Review**

Three distinct varieties of anxiety have been discovered from a viewpoint of psychology: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situational anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991); (Teimouri et al., 2019). Anxiety about a specific upcoming event, whether a test, public speech, or classroom discussion, is known as "situation-specific anxiety." Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is an example of situation-specific anxiety because it is related to a foreign language learning and does not overlap with other anxiety forms (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991); (Horwitz, 2017); (Woodrow, 2006). In this sense, since the foreign language learning is a process that is heavily influenced by psychological elements, anxiety can be related with language learning, giving rise to the term foreign language anxiety.

Horwitz et al. (1986) divided language learning anxiety into three components, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. To be more specific, Horwitz et al. (1986, p.127) stated that communication apprehension is a type of inhibition in communication characterized by fear of or anxiety about speaking to people. In this case, students' reluctance to engage in verbal communication with one another is reflected in characteristics of their personalities such as shyness, silence, and seldom participation in class talks. In the context of a foreign language, students who have difficulty in communicating usually feel uncomfortable speaking in the target language. Because of their inadequate skill competence in the target language, students may have anxiety regarding their ability to communicate. Therefore, students suffer from communication anxiety because they believe they will struggle to comprehend the points of view of their peers during listening activities and to convey their ideas clearly during speaking activities.

Anxiety caused by concern over performing well on a test is known as "test anxiety." Test anxiety, as defined by Horwitz et al. (1986, p.127), is a sort of performance anxiety caused by a dread of making a mistake on a test. The learners of a foreign language may have had negative test experiences in the past, causing them to worry about failing the upcoming test. Sometimes this problem makes them have a false belief about learning a foreign language. They assume that the learning process is also part of the testing that makes them perfect while speaking or they will fail.

Then, the third type of anxiety, according to Horwitz et al. (1986, p.127), is fear of negative evaluation which is characterized as uneasiness about the evaluation of others, avoidance of circumstances in which one is evaluated, and the assumption that others would assess anyone negatively. For example, when students have to speak in front of the class, they suddenly become silent and anxious. It could happen because they are worried that someone will criticize them. It is not only about how the teacher evaluates the students and yet also about how the other students react to their teacher's evaluation. They worried that the teacher and other students would evaluate them negatively.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A quantitative research method was used in this study to work with the data analysis. This research used a case study design which provided a quantitative description of opinions from the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By doing this design, it can help researchers answer three research questions to be examined in this study.

#### **3.2 Participants**

The participants involved in this study were purposively taken from students of the English Study Program of the University of Palangka Raya. They are second-year students in the study program who have passed the course of Basic English-Speaking and are still taking the course of Intermediate English-Speaking at time this research taken. In addition, the participants were assumed to have a classification of the ability to speak English at the intermediate level. They were 37 students (26 females and 11 males) fulfilling the data with the ages ranging from 19 to 21 years old. Those students have been learning English for three categories of learning duration: (1) eight years and more, (2) five to seven years, and (3) less than five years. The learning duration is one of the variables to be examined in this research other than gender varying the scores of speaking anxiety.

#### **3.3 Instrument for Collecting Data**

The instrument of this study was a questionnaire adapted from foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The questionnaire is made up of 33 items and two parts. The first part of the questionnaire asks about the participants' names and how often they use English. The second part, which has 33 Likert-scale questions, focuses on how anxious the students are about speaking in a foreign language. This part has three sections of questions. Section one is communication apprehension with 10 questions, section two is the test anxiety with 16 questions, and section three is fear of negative evaluation with 7 questions. To categorize learners' anxiety levels, this study used Oetting's scale in Mayangta (2013) categorizing five ranges of speaking anxiety scores, i.e., very anxious (124-165), anxious (108-123), mildly anxious (87-107), relaxed (66-86), and very relaxed (33-65).

### 3.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the data, two statistical models were used based on the research questions tested. First, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the level of anxiety experienced by Indonesian learners of English according to gender and the number of years in studying English. Then, this study also used a multiple regression analysis to determine which factor was the most influential in causing speaking anxiety among Indonesian learners of English. All of these analyses were processed with SPSS-26, the statistical computation of computer program.

## 4. Findings

Findings of this study are elaborated based on research topics focused on. Those are (1) the speaking anxiety level of Indonesian learners of English; (2) the difference of anxiety level based on gender and number of years in learning English; and (3) the contributing factors of anxiety among Indonesian learners in speaking English.

### 4.1 Learners' Anxiety Levels

First, the Table 1 below is the anxiety levels of Indonesian learners in speaking English.

Table 1. Students' anxiety scores and levels in speaking English

No.	Learners' codes	Learners' anxiety scores	Anxiety levels
1.	S1	100	Mildly Anxious
2.	S2	109	Anxious
3.	S3	96	Mildly Anxious
4.	S4	114	Anxious
5.	S5	73	Relaxed
6.	S6	73	Relaxed
7.	S7	112	Anxious
8.	S8	45	Very Relaxed
9.	S9	101	Mildly Anxious
10.	S10	95	Mildly Anxious
11.	S11	110	Anxious
12.	S12	122	Anxious
13.	S13	112	Anxious
14.	S14	91	Mildly Anxious
15.	S15	77	Relaxed
16.	S16	86	Relaxed
17.	S17	95	Mildly Anxious
18.	S18	113	Anxious
19.	S19	95	Mildly Anxious
20.	S20	95	Mildly Anxious
21.	S21	85	Relaxed
22.	S22	110	Anxious

23.	S23	86	Relaxed
24.	S24	104	Mildly Anxious
25.	S25	111	Anxious
26.	S26	104	Mildly Anxious
27.	S27	82	Relaxed
28.	S28	120	Anxious
29.	S29	103	Mildly Anxious
30.	S30	97	Mildly Anxious
31.	S31	107	Mildly Anxious
32.	S32	114	Anxious
33.	S33	102	Mildly Anxious
34.	S34	104	Mildly Anxious
35.	S35	116	Anxious
36.	S36	92	Mildly Anxious
37.	S37	86	Relaxed

More specific about the anxiety levels, Figure 1 shows to which levels are more classified based on their percentages. From the data, the learners are mostly anxious in speaking English. This is specified by 32% learners feel 'anxious' and 43% 'mildly anxious.' Those numbers of percentage are high since they reach two-third number of samples. Meanwhile, learners who feel more relaxed in speaking English are one-third number of samples which only sum to 25%.

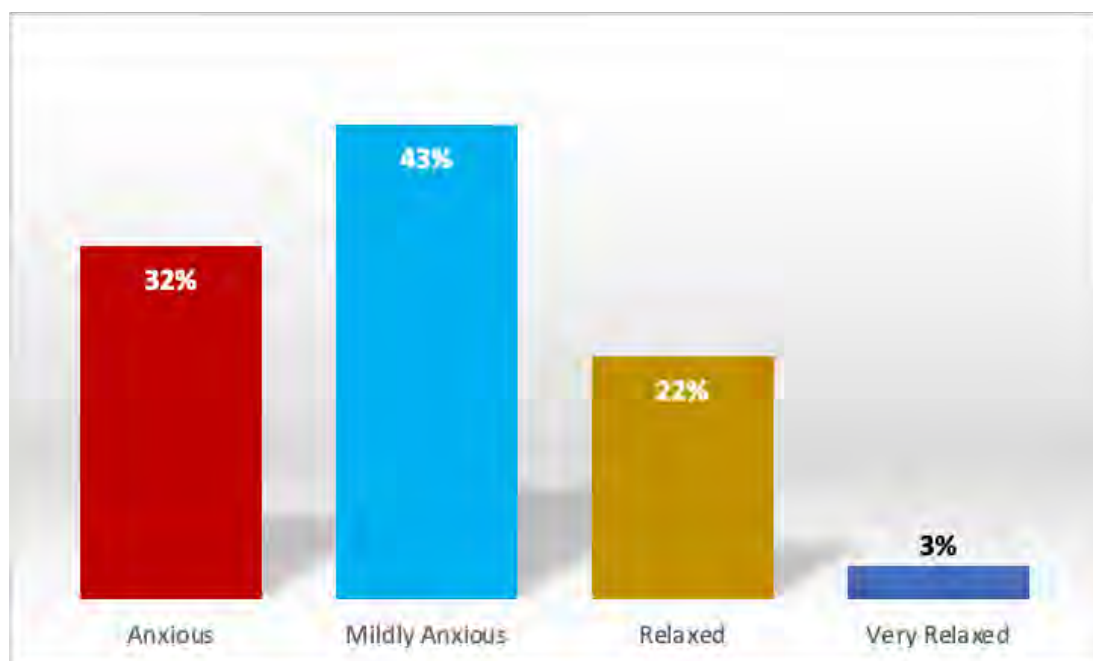


Figure 1. The description of students' anxiety levels in percentages

#### 4.2 The levels of foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) and gender

Table 2 below depicts the description of data related to learners' speaking anxiety scores grouped based on gender.

Table 2. Description of speaking anxiety scores related to gender

Gender	N	Scores of anxiety level in speaking English				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Male	11	89.36	20.031	6.040	45	114
Female	26	102.23	11.958	2.345	73	122
Total	37	98.41	15.694	2.580	45	122

Then, data presented in Table 2 are analyzed to examine whether there is any difference of anxiety levels between male and female as depicted on Table 3 below.

Table 3. Analysis of learners' speaking anxiety variance based on gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1279.758	1	1279.758	5.904	.020
Within Groups	7587.161	35	216.776		
Total	8866.919	36			

Table 3 shows that students' anxiety level in speaking English differs significantly based on gender ( $F= 5.904$ ; and  $p<0.05$ ). This is to prove that female learners ( $M=102.23$ ) are more anxious than male learners ( $M=89.36$ ) in speaking English. Though the mean of both anxiety levels laid on the same range which is mildly anxious but they differ significantly which means gender still affected to the foreign language anxiety. To be more specific, Table 4 below then depicts that female was significantly more anxious than male in speaking English referring to the types of anxiety as characterized by Horwitz et al. (1986).

Table 4. Analysis of learners' speaking anxiety types variance based on gender

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Communication Apprehension	Between Groups	1.215	1	1.215	4.460	.042
	Within Groups	9.537	35	.272		
	Total	10.752	36			
Test Anxiety	Between Groups	.680	1	.680	4.089	.051
	Within Groups	5.817	35	.166		
	Total	6.497	36			
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Between Groups	2.884	1	2.884	8.008	.008
	Within Groups	12.606	35	.360		
	Total	15.490	36			

Data shown in Table 4 define that female were more anxious than male in two anxiety types of speaking English: communication apprehension ( $p<0.05$ ) and fear of negative evaluation ( $p<0.05$ ). However, female was slightly more relaxed than male in the situation where a speaking test is taken ( $p>0.05$ ).

### 4.3 Learners' speaking anxiety and number of years in learning English

In this data analysis, the scores of speaking anxieties are grouped based on number of years that learners learn English. There are three groups classified in the data drawing; (1) eight years and more, (2) five to seven years, and (3) less than five years. The description of data is depicted in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Description of speaking anxiety scores based on number of years in learning English

Years of learning English	N	Scores of anxiety level in speaking English				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
8 years and more	5	70.00	14.457	6.465	45	82
5 to 7 years	29	101.14	9.349	1.736	85	114
less than 5 years	3	119.33	3.055	1.764	116	122
Total	37	98.41	15.694	2.580	45	122

Data presented in Table 5 are analyzed to find out whether there is a difference of learners' speaking anxiety related to number of years in learning English. The result is depicted in the table below.

Table 6. Analysis of speaking anxiety variance based on number of years in learning English

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5564.804	2	2782.402	28.649	.000
Within Groups	3302.115	34	97.121		
Total	8866.919	36			

Table 6 depicts that learners' anxiety level in speaking English differs significantly based on number of years in learning that language ( $F = 28.649$ ; and  $p < 0.01$ ). This is to prove that learners who have learnt English more than eight years ( $M = 70.00$ ) are more relaxed or less anxious compared to learners who have learnt English five to seven years ( $M = 101.14$ ) and ones who learnt English less than five years ( $M = 119.33$ ). By this result, it implies that the longer anyone learns English the less anxious he or she speaks the language; or it might be also said the shorter he or she learns English the more anxious he or she feels while speaking that foreign language.

### 4.4 The dominant factors of speaking anxiety

There are three factors of anxiety contributing anxious performance of students in speaking English as questioned on the questionnaire. Those are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. In this data analysis, the learners' anxiety scores on each factor are analyzed by using multiple regression analysis to find the most influential factor among those three. The result of data analysis is depicted in table below.

Table 7. Multiple regression analysis of dominant factor contributing speaking anxiety

Types of Anxiety	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta ( $\beta$ )		
Communication Apprehension	10.146	.312	.353	32.485	.000



Test Anxiety	15.881	.431	.430	36.861	.000
Fear of Negative Evaluation	6.806	.229	.284	29.721	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Anxiety Levels

Table 7 shows that the three factors of anxiety namely communication apprehension, test Anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation have significant contribution to learners' anxiety levels in speaking English where each has  $p < 0.01$ . Then, the way to find out which one is the most dominant to contribute students' anxiety is simply looking into the highest value of *Beta* in standardized coefficients. From the table, the type of "Test Anxiety" is the highest among two others ( $Beta = 0.430$ ) which means that test anxiety is a factor that dominantly cause students to be anxious in speaking English.

## 5. Discussion

There are many researchers studying the anxiety of speaking foreign languages, especially anxiety of English. This study has shown several results of analysis related to three aims of this study. First, this study aims to determine whether or not Indonesian male and female EFL learners experience different levels of foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA). Second, to determine the significant difference of FLSA among EFL learners related to number of years in learning English. Third, to find out the dominant factor of FLSA triggering EFL learners in speaking English.

In terms of the first research question, the students are mostly anxious in speaking English. This is specified by 75% of learners or two-third of the respondents are highly anxious to speak English in front of the class. From this data, the mean score of anxiety from male learners ( $M = 89.36$ ) is bit lower than female ( $M = 102.23$ ) which means male learners are less anxious than female. For seeking whether gender has a relationship with the anxiety level in speaking English, the data show that the anxiety between male and female students ( $p = 0.02$ ) differs significantly which means that gender also affects the language anxiety. This result is relevant to Çağatay's (2015); and Mahmoodzadeh's (2012) studies that language anxiety level and gender has a significant relationship in which female students are more apprehensive than male in speaking English as a foreign language. However, this is contradicted with Latif (2015) and Na (2007) which found that there were no significant differences between male and female students albeit men scored slightly higher on average than females.

To be more specific, another finding related to gender shows that among three anxiety factors projected by Horwitz et al. (1986), female students were more anxious than male in speaking English in terms of communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation; but not in the test anxiety. In communication apprehension, for instance, the indicators triggering anxiety such as shyness, uncomfortable feeling to speak, and less self-confidence mostly happen to be experienced by Indonesian female students in speaking the target language. Therefore, this finding is to confirm Tian & Mahmud's (2018) research data that the anxiety is caused not merely by learner's language proficiency, but the familiarity of learners to speak with his or her audience is also able to control psychological factors of nervousness such as shyness and self-confidence. Again, in this study female students are also marked a bit more anxious from the fear of negative evaluation than male. This is due to mostly unpleasant experience that they got through in the past. Female students seem to be more

distress than male with their negative evaluation from their lecturers or colleagues in the past. Such anxious situation is in line with Abrar et al. (2022) in which most EFL learners are very apprehensive of having negative comment or evaluation though their study did not specify the data from gender perspective. From this result, this study does not immediately draw the conclusion that female learners are more at risk of experiencing anxiety in English speaking compared to male learners, as some other studies claim otherwise. In essence, this study wants to emphasize that gender can affect the level of anxiety in certain cases, as in this study where the case is for English learners in intermediate level.

Related to the second research question, the result reveals that learners' anxiety level in speaking English based on number of years in learning differs significantly ( $F= 28.649$ ; and  $p<0.01$ ). This is to prove that the longer respondents learn English the less anxious they speak that foreign language; or it might be also said the shorter they learn English the more anxious they feel while speaking. This finding gave support to previous research; for example, Hismanoglu (2013) found that learners' anxiety about using a foreign language decreased with increasing experience and proficiency, and Latif (2015) found a significant correlation between learners' anxiety of using the English language and the length of time they had spent studying the language. In contrast, other researches have revealed that students' language anxieties do not consistently decrease as they gain proficiency in a foreign language (Elaldi, 2016); (Aydemir, 2011), and even no positive correlation between language anxiety and speaking achievement (Lestari et al., 2019). By this result, again this study wants to reconfirm that the variable of length duration of learning English is not certainly in line with the learners' anxiety level, but it is highly dependent on the case of the study; such as respondent's proficiency level of English.

The third research question is seeking for the dominant factor of contributing anxieties in speaking English. As stated by Horwitz et al. (1986) that three major factors causing learners' anxieties in speaking foreign language; those are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Of these three factors, this study gives a result that test anxiety is the most dominant triggering students to be anxious in speaking English ( $r= 0.430$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) which means that learners are anxious to speak because they have unpleasant experience about speaking test where this condition makes them fear to be tested again. This is similar to Tanveer (2008) and (Ariyanti, 2017), who reported that test anxiety has a negative impact on the ability and confidence of students to speak the target language. The psychological condition like fear of failure, according to Horwitz (2008), can severely hamper learners' performance. As asserted by Hanifa (2018) and Fauzi et al. (2022) that some students get uneasy feeling, nervousness, and even excessive fear arisen when they know that they will be tested, especially in performing talks. This assertion supports Alsowat (2016) that a significant number of students reportedly experience anxiety during the test of foreign language. As found from the result of this study, the other two anxiety components such as communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation regardless of gender may also contribute learners' anxiety in speaking English, but both anxieties are less dominant than the test anxiety that trigger worries and fears of learners while speaking the language they learned.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, the anxiety in speaking English is inevitable for learners even though they have already been at the intermediate level of learning. In addition, it is known that typical Indonesian learners of English have a fairly high level of apprehension when speaking the language. This is due to the fact that English is only used when they learn that language in the classroom, rather than using it in general situation. Furthermore, when learners are given a test to speak for instance, their anxiety levels are relatively high based on the result revealed by this study because learners feel nervous, afraid of being wrong, and less confident.

Then, what to be implied from the result of this study is that English speaking anxiety is indeed affected by the psychological and linguistics factors of learners but these factors can be different to the characteristics of language learners such as gender and number of years in learning English. As this study revealed, females are more likely to experience feelings of anxiety and worry, whereas males have greater self-control and the ability to disassociate themselves from unpleasant emotions. Considering this, teachers or lecturers of English must provide a space for female students to feel more secured in speaking class by avoiding negative evaluation in order that they feel comfortable during the process of learning and acquiring the language. In addition, learners who have higher number of years in learning English regardless of gender show the tendency to be reluctant to apprehension in English speaking. This means the longer they spend time for learning English, the more familiar and the more comfortable they feel in practicing to speak the target language. Such comfortable atmosphere in the language classroom may alleviate learners' anxiety since they speak the language as if out of formal classroom setting. Therefore, teachers or lecturers of English may regard this for their consideration to improve students' speaking skill of English specially to alleviate the speaking anxiety.

Nonetheless, this case study is admittedly still not comprehensive to expose other factors beyond those discussed from the findings that cause English learners to feel nervous or anxious while speaking. The future studies still need a more in-depth or even more specific analysis, especially how to alleviate the anxiety levels of English language learners in speaking English.

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