p-ISSN 2252-7427, e-ISSN 2541-3635
https://ieflj.uniku.ac.id/pub

p-ISSN 2252-7427 e-ISSN 2541-3635
Indonesian EFL Journal
AISEE
The Association of Indonesia Scholars of English Education

EXAMINING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING ANXIETY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ORAL PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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APA Citation: Larasati, F., Hardiyanto, H., Sulistiyo, U., & Haryanto, E., (2026). Examining students' perceptions of speaking anxiety and its influence on oral performance in English language learners. *Indonesian EFL Journal, 12*(1), 55-74. https://doi.org/10.25134/yhrptd19

Received:24-09-2025 Accepted: 21-11-2025 Published: 30-01-2026

Abstract: This research aims to explore the perceptions of English Education students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang regarding speaking anxiety in oral communication classes. The anxiety reported by students is linked to challenges such as pronunciation difficulties, vocabulary recall, grammar concerns, and the fear of making mistakes, which may result in judgment from peers. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving 43 students from the English Education Program. Data was collected using a self-developed questionnaire designed to assess students' perceptions of speaking anxiety and its perceived impact on their performance. The findings indicate that students recognize the importance of English for future career prospects, but their perceived anxiety negatively affects their confidence and engagement during speaking activities. The study suggests that a supportive and inclusive learning environment may help reduce speaking anxiety. Practical recommendations include integrating both simulated and real-life speaking activities, as well as encouraging students through positive reinforcement to build confidence and actively participate in language use.

Keywords: *speaking performance, speaking anxiety, English foreign language learner.*

INTRODUCTION

Mastering English is essential due to its widespread role in global communication. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) because it is not commonly used in everyday interactions. EFL learners are considered proficient when they have mastered the four core communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking is viewed as one of the most vital skills, as emphasized by Jaya et al. (2020), who highlight its importance for effective communication. Moreover, Normawati et al. (2023) argue that language learning success is often measured by improvements in EFL learners' speaking abilities. Therefore, speaking proficiency is a primary focus in EFL education in Indonesia (Yuan, 2020; Saptiany & Prabowo, 2024; Shi et al., 2024; Indahsari, 2020).

It can be concluded that success in language learning is often gauged by progress in spoken language skills, with speaking being the primary focus. This priority is rooted in the belief that effective communication is a key measure of language mastery (Ulandari et al., 2025; Akram et al., 2022; Jin, 2023; Jaya et al., 2020). Consequently, developing speaking abilities is often prioritized in EFL education in Indonesia, as it is seen as crucial for real-world interaction, compared to reading, writing, and listening (Hamka et al., 2021; Rohmawati, 2021; Tristiana et al., 2024). Speaking enables learners to actively participate in conversations, articulate their ideas clearly, and respond appropriately skills that are essential for engaging in global communication (Rahmawati, 2022; Dunifa, 2023; Darmaliana et al., 2020; Saimon et al., 2023).

Speaking is often considered one of the most challenging aspects of language learning (Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021; Prabowo &

Saptiany, 2024; Jaya et al., 2025). Many students face significant difficulties, particularly when developing speaking skills in a foreign language. One common barrier to success is anxiety, which can impede effective communication (Syaifudin, 2024; Malini et al., 2022; James, 2021).

Language anxiety, a phenomenon widely explored in second language acquisition studies, often arises when speaking a second or foreign language (Andriani et al., 2024; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Ju Chen et al., 2022). This anxiety is described as a complex combination of self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors related to language learning in the classroom (Horwitz, 2020; Lin & Bollen, 2025; Plandano et al., 2023). It can manifest in feelings of nervousness, self-consciousness, and unease, particularly when speaking in the target language.

Research consistently shows a negative relationship between language anxiety and language performance. Higher anxiety levels are correlated with poorer speaking abilities, lower academic achievement, and reduced willingness to engage in communication (Hapsari & Wu, 2022; Peng & Wang, 2022; Ditania, 2022).

While some degree of anxiety can be normal and even motivating for students, excessive anxiety can significantly hinder their ability to communicate effectively, especially during speaking assessments. Numerous studies have confirmed that heightened anxiety negatively impacts performance (Chen et al., 2022; Yousefabadi et al., 2022; Oktari, 2024). However, much of the existing research relies on self-reported surveys to measure anxiety, which may not always provide an accurate reflection of students' true emotional experiences. This raises the question of whether the levels of perceived anxiety align with students' actual speaking performance.

This issue has been acknowledged by universities across Indonesia, where English is made a compulsory subject to prepare students for the demands of a globalized world. Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, the largest private university in Palembang, includes English as a mandatory subject. As noted by Larasati et al. (2022), the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, one of the six A-accredited programs, plays a pivotal role in equipping future educators with the necessary English skills to meet global challenges.

The English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang provides a critical context for exploring students' perceptions of speaking anxiety and its influence on speaking performance. As future English teachers, students in this program face the dual challenge of mastering English while preparing to teach it to others (Liu et al., 2020; García-Lázaro et al., 2022). This unique pressure may amplify their experiences of language anxiety, particularly in speaking classes. Understanding their perceptions of anxiety is essential, as it affects both their academic performance and future teaching effectiveness (Gurbuz & Cabaroglu, 2021; Melvina & Julia, 2021; Roos et al., 2021).

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable contributions to the existing body of research on language anxiety. These insights could be beneficial for educators and administrators in English language programs by identifying areas where teaching methods and student support services can be improved to address anxiety-related challenges. Additionally, this study will examine the relationship between students' perceived anxiety and their actual speaking performance, which may have important implications for the design and implementation of language assessments. By better aligning assessments with students' actual abilities, unnecessary stress can be minimized, leading to a more accurate representation of their skills and enhancing their learning experience (Syafiq et al., 2021; Dakhil et al., 2025; Crompton et al., 2024).

This study adds to existing research by focusing specifically on the relationship between perceived speaking anxiety and actual speaking performance, an area that has not been extensively explored. The findings are expected to provide valuable contributions to the body of research on language anxiety, offering insights that can inform teaching methods and student support services. By exploring students' perceptions, the study aims to better align language assessments with students' true abilities, minimizing stress and leading to a more accurate representation of their skills.

This study will focus on undergraduate students in the English Language Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang. This group was selected due to the increasing demand for higher English proficiency, particularly in education and the workforce. Investigating language anxiety in this context is crucial, as it can significantly affect both learning outcomes and students' future success.

The central research question guiding this study is: *"What are the perceptions of English Education students at Universitas*

Muhammadiyah Palembang regarding speaking anxiety in speaking classes?" The anticipated findings aim to deepen the understanding of language anxiety and provide practical recommendations for educators and administrators. These recommendations will focus on improving teaching methods, counseling, and support services.

Additionally, the study will explore students' attitudes toward their anxiety and its impact on their performance. It will also provide insights into how language assessments can be designed and administered to better reflect students' true abilities while minimizing stress.

The term "speaking" has been defined in various ways by researchers in the field of language learning. According to Rahmawati (2022), speaking is the act of uttering words orally. Jaihow and Sinwongsuwat (2024) describes speaking as the process of creating and sharing meaning through both verbal and non-verbal symbols in diverse contexts. Lo et al. (2025) and Dincer & Dariyemez (2020) define speaking as an interactive process of meaning construction, involving the production, reception, and processing of information. Furthermore, Salaberry and Burch (2021), defines speaking as the use of language in ordinary voice; the uttering of words, knowing and being able to use a language, and expressing oneself through speech. In summary, speaking can be understood as a complex process that involves not only the oral articulation of words but also the ability to communicate and convey meaning through both verbal and non-verbal symbols, alongside an interactive exchange of information. It encompasses not only the production and reception of language but also the cognitive processes required for effective expression and meaningful interaction.

Speaking anxiety, as described by Pohan and Kusumawardany (2023), is a type of anxiety that arises when a person speaks in front of an audience. It can exhibit symptoms akin to a phobia, specifically Glass phobia, which is the fear of public speaking. This form of anxiety can be influenced by factors such as communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Symptoms include trembling, cold and clammy hands, shaky voice, rapid heartbeat, sweating, blushing, dizziness, shortness of breath, stomach discomfort, and the sensation of forgetting what one intended to say. Plandano et al. (2023) further note that speaking anxiety is characterized by various forms of stress that students experience when required to speak in front of an audience. Additionally, Akramy (2020) define speaking anxiety as a complex concept, contingent not only on one's feelings of self-efficacy but also on the perceived threats and appraisals inherent in specific situations. Thus, speaking anxiety, or speaking phobia, occurs when individuals experience heightened fear or discomfort while speaking to an audience, driven by factors such as fear of judgment, test-related stress, and communication shyness. The effects of this anxiety are both physical and psychological, manifesting as nervousness, shaking, stammering speech, dizziness, and memory lapses. Understanding the causes of such anxiety and their resolution is crucial for enabling individuals to overcome their speaking anxiety.

Several studies have identified key factors contributing to speaking anxiety. A major factor is the fear of making mistakes. According to Plandano et al. (2023), students often experience anxiety over the possibility of making mistakes while speaking, leading to a lack of confidence and hesitation in communication. Additionally, the fear of negative evaluation is a significant contributor, as students often worry about being judged or criticized by their peers or teachers, further exacerbating their anxiety. Sastia (2020) also highlight test anxiety as an important factor, where the pressure of exams and the fear of failure can significantly increase anxiety, especially during speaking assessments. Furthermore, a lack of confidence, stemming from personal factors such as low self-esteem or unfamiliarity with the topic, can also contribute to speaking anxiety. Pratiwi et al. (2020) found that students encounter various challenges when learning to speak English. These include linguistic difficulties, such as a limited vocabulary, struggles with grammar, and difficulties in correct pronunciation. Cognitive challenges, like the fear of failing in communication, making mistakes, or performing poorly in exams, also lower students' self-confidence. Additionally, the lack of available resources in their native language, Bahasa Indonesia, plays a role, as does the influence of the teacher and the competitive nature of the learning environment. In conclusion, it is clear that multiple factors contribute to students' anxiety when speaking English, including the fear of making mistakes, concerns about negative evaluation, test pressures, and a lack of self-confidence. These challenges, compounded by linguistic difficulties and a competitive learning environment, underline the complexity of language learning anxiety. Addressing these factors requires a comprehensive

approach that not only enhances students' linguistic skills but also builds their confidence and creates a supportive learning atmosphere.

Language anxiety, particularly speaking anxiety, is a significant challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Recent studies underscore the prevalence of this issue. A survey conducted involving 200 EFL students found that approximately 70% reported experiencing high levels of anxiety during speaking classes. This anxiety was often linked to fears of making mistakes, being judged by peers, and the pressure to perform well. These findings highlight the need for educators to understand the origins of language anxiety and implement strategies to alleviate its impact in the classroom. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2022) found that language anxiety can lead to a decrease in motivation and willingness to communicate. Students experiencing high levels of anxiety may avoid speaking opportunities, hindering their language development. For example, a qualitative study by Peng and Wang (2022) revealed that students with high anxiety levels often refrained from participating in group discussions or class presentations due to fear of judgment and criticism. This avoidance behavior not only limits their speaking practice but also reduces their overall engagement with the language. In conclusion, language anxiety, particularly related to speaking, is a major barrier for EFL learners. The fear of making mistakes and being judged can significantly hinder students' willingness to engage in speaking activities, thereby impeding their language development. Educators must recognize the impact of anxiety on students' learning and take proactive measures to create a supportive classroom environment that encourages participation and reduces the fear of judgment. By doing so, students can gain more confidence in their speaking abilities and become more engaged in their language learning journey.

METHOD

A research method refers to the approach used to carry out a study, determined by the specific nature of the research problem (Cohen et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2022; Tisdell et al., 2025). Researchers must be familiar with the essential steps of the research process, which are applicable across all research designs (Clark et al., 2021). In this study, a qualitative case study approach was employed to examine the connection between perceived speaking anxiety and speaking performance in English language learners (Widiastuti et al., 2022; Shi et al., 2024).

The participants of this study were final-semester university students, with a sample of 43 students from the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, all of whom had completed their English courses in the final semester. The sample was selected based on the relevance of the participants' academic stage to the research focus, as these students had direct experience with speaking classes and anxiety related to language performance. The study employed a questionnaire adapted from We (2020) as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire included 20 questions concerning anxiety in speaking classes, designed to capture the participants' perceptions, responses, and opinions. It contained both open-ended and close-ended questions, with five response options: strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree, to gauge the students' perceptions of their speaking anxiety.

The researcher then analyzed the data using thematic analysis for the open-ended responses, where key themes related to speaking anxiety were identified, categorized, and interpreted based on the participants' narratives. Likert scale responses from the close-ended questions were quantitatively analyzed, with each response category assigned a numerical value for statistical evaluation. These findings were then integrated to offer a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions, presenting the results in a detailed narrative format.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and voluntarily provided written consent prior to participation. All responses were anonymized to protect participants' privacy.

This methodological approach is particularly well-suited to gaining a deep understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences, providing a comprehensive portrayal of the phenomenon being studied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined students' perceptions of English language anxiety in speaking classes. The students responded to thirteen questions, and the study's findings are derived from the participants' answers to the questionnaire. The data is presented as follows.

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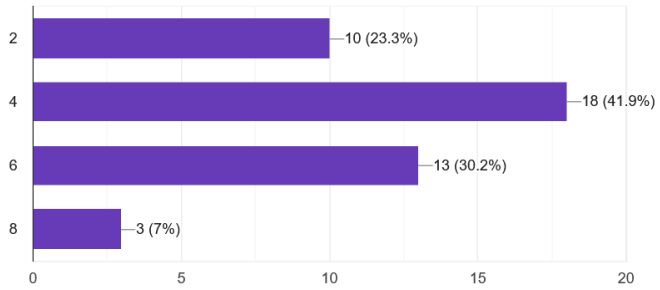


Figure 1. *The distribution of students who completed the questionnaire*

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of students who completed the questionnaire titled "Students' Perceptions of Language Anxiety in Speaking Classes." The total number of respondents was 43. The participants were drawn from various semesters within the English Education Study Program. Specifically, there were 12 students from the 2nd semester, 15 students from the 4th semester, and 16 students from the 8th semester. This breakdown highlights the diverse range of academic experiences among the participants, providing a comprehensive view of how language anxiety is perceived across different stages of their studies.

The first item of the questionnaire was "How long have you been learning English and how do you feel about your experience of learning English?". A total of 43 students participated in the questionnaire, providing a wide range of responses regarding their experiences with learning English. Their answers reflect diverse perspectives on how long they have been studying the language and how they feel about their journey so far. The duration of English learning among students varies significantly. 65% of the students (27 students) have been learning English since elementary school (over 10-15 years), while others (25% of students or 11 students) started in junior or senior high school (approximately 3-5 years) and a small percentage around 10% or 5 students have only recently begun learning English in the last few years. (1-3 years). Therefore, out of the 43 students who responded to the questionnaire, approximately 70% (about 30 students) expressed positive feelings about their English learning journey. They mentioned enjoying the process, improving skills like watching movies without subtitles, and feeling excited about mastering the language. Many students also highlighted improvements in speaking and pronunciation, especially when they had engaging and supportive teachers. However, around 20% of the students (about 9 students) faced challenges, particularly with understanding complex vocabulary and keeping up motivation due to inconsistent teaching methods. They found it harder to follow lessons conducted entirely in English and felt that there was a lack of support for beginners. A smaller group, about 10% (roughly 4 students), reported significant difficulties and frustrations. These students struggled due to a lack of foundational knowledge or ineffective teaching methods, leading to feelings of confusion and anxiety during lessons. Overall, while most students found learning English to be a positive and rewarding experience, some encountered challenges depending on their teachers and learning environment. Despite the difficulties, the majority expressed a desire to continue improving their English skills.

The second item of the questionnaire was "2. How important is English language proficiency to you? Explain the importance of English in your opinion!". Based on the questionnaire results, 80% of the 43 FKIP UMP students who participated believe that English language proficiency is crucial. They expressed that English, being a global language, is essential for international communication. This belief is reflected in their responses, where 34 students (79%) mentioned that English proficiency is necessary for interacting with people from different countries and for pursuing future career opportunities. For instance, 20 students (47%) emphasized that learning English would help them achieve their dreams of studying abroad or working in international settings. Additionally, 10 students (23%) highlighted that English is indispensable in today's technology-driven world, making it easier to access global information and resources. Another 9 students (21%) mentioned that mastering English would allow them to connect with a broader range of people and cultures. In summary, the questionnaire responses clearly show that a significant majority of students recognize the importance of English. They view it as a critical tool for success in various aspects of life, including education, career development, and communication in an increasingly interconnected world.

Then, the third item of the questionnaire was "What disturbs you the most about learning and speaking English? Explain why?". In this part of the questionnaire, students were asked to identify the biggest challenges or obstacles they face when learning and speaking English. The options provided for this item included linguistic difficulties, such as insufficient vocabulary, poor command of grammar rules, and pronunciation issues; cognitive challenges, including fear of failure in communication or exams, making mistakes, and low self-esteem; lack of information in their first language (Bahasa Indonesia); the role of the teacher; and competitiveness. The students were asked to select the option that they found most disturbing and explain their reasons. The following figure 2 presents the detailed responses gathered from this item.

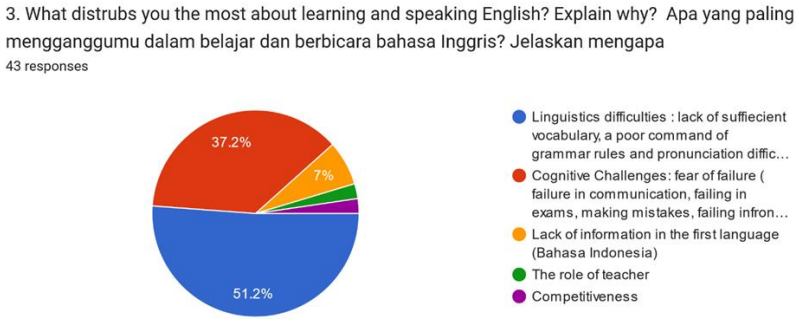


Figure 2. *The result of questionnaire item number 2 "What disturbs you the most about learning and speaking English? Explain why?"*

Based on Figure 2, it is evident that linguistic difficulties are the most significant challenge faced by students in learning and speaking English. Specifically, 51.2% of the students, which equates to 22 individuals, identified issues such as limited vocabulary, poor understanding of grammar rules, and difficulties with pronunciation as their primary concerns. Furthermore, 16 students, making up 37.2% of the participants, reported cognitive challenges. These challenges include fear of communication failure, anxiety about making mistakes, and low self-confidence, all of which significantly impact their ability to speak English effectively. In addition, three students, accounting for 7% of the respondents, mentioned the lack of resources available in their first language (Bahasa Indonesia) as a barrier to their learning process. Meanwhile, the role of the teacher was cited by one student (2.3%), indicating that teacher-related factors may also play a role, albeit a smaller one. Lastly, another student (2.3%) highlighted competitiveness as the most pressing issue, suggesting that the competitive environment may contribute to the difficulties they face in learning and speaking English. In conclusion, it is clear that a combination of linguistic difficulties and cognitive challenges form the primary barriers for students in mastering English speaking skills. Addressing these issues, alongside improving resource availability and classroom dynamics, may help to create a more supportive learning environment for these students. Moreover, when they were asked to give the reason, it could be seen from their answers that some students shared that their fear of being judged or made fun of when they make mistakes in English negatively impacts their confidence. For example, one student mentioned that people in Indonesia often criticize mistakes, which initially hurt their self-esteem. However, this student is now focusing on self-improvement. Another student said they feel less confident in competitive situations because of their limited vocabulary and the need to carefully think about their grammar before speaking. Some students started learning English later in life, which made it difficult to catch up. One student noted that they didn't start studying English until high school, making it hard to grasp basic grammar and vocabulary quickly. Others mentioned that having a weak vocabulary, poor grammar, and pronunciation issues lowers their confidence when speaking English. Some students shared their real-life experiences, such as speaking with native English speakers. One student said that even though native speakers responded positively, nervousness and vocabulary problems sometimes made it hard to communicate clearly. Others mentioned that they understand English well but don't speak much due to a lack of practice and fear of making mistakes. Fear of being seen as foolish or being laughed at by classmates also came up often. Many students worried about their grammar and sentence

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structure while speaking, which made them nervous. The fear of being misunderstood or making mistakes in front of others added to this anxiety. Additionally, students found grammar rules hard to understand, which made it difficult for them to express themselves confidently. Some also mentioned that nervousness during conversations often made them forget what they wanted to say or feel unsure about their grammar. In short, the main challenges students face in learning and speaking English include a lack of vocabulary, struggles with grammar and pronunciation, fear of judgment or making mistakes, and low self-confidence. These issues create significant barriers to using English effectively.

Following this, the fourth item on the questionnaire distributed to the students was “Do you think that learning to speak English is more intimidating than learning other subjects such as mathematics, history, economics, etc.?”. The students were asked whether they found learning to speak English more intimidating than learning other subjects, such as mathematics, history, or economics. From students’ answers it could be seen that one student said, "No, because I love English. I chose it because I find learning English enjoyable.". Another student shared, "No, I enjoy learning English more than subjects like math.". A different perspective was, "I don’t think so. I actually enjoy speaking lessons because they help me see my progress in English." Some students felt that learning English wasn't as hard as it seems: "No, because learning English isn’t as difficult as people make it out to be.". A student commented that learning English is fun when approached with a calm mindset: "No, learning English is very enjoyable if we approach it calmly.". Another student found math more challenging: "Not really. For me, learning math is more intimidating because if I fail, I feel dumb. But with English, it's different since it's a second language that we weren’t taught from a young age.". One student mentioned a shift in their perception: "At first, I thought it was intimidating, but after trying, I realized it's not that scary. I just need to keep trying, even if I progress slower than others.". Meanwhile, some students found speaking English challenging because of grammar and pronunciation concerns: "Yes, it's quite intimidating because learning English involves talking with people, and they might judge you when you make mistakes.". This data shows that the majority of the students do not consider English to be more intimidating compared to other academic subjects, and instead view it as a subject that can be engaging and manageable with practice and a positive mindset. Overall, most students did not find learning English more intimidating than other subjects. While a few expressed concerns related to grammar and pronunciation, many enjoyed the process and found English to be an interesting and engaging subject to learn.

The next item on the questionnaire asked students to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “Studying English is important to me, because I would feel ashamed if I got bad grades in English.”. Respondents were given five response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree, and Disagree. Out of the 43 students who participated, the distribution of responses is presented in figure 3.

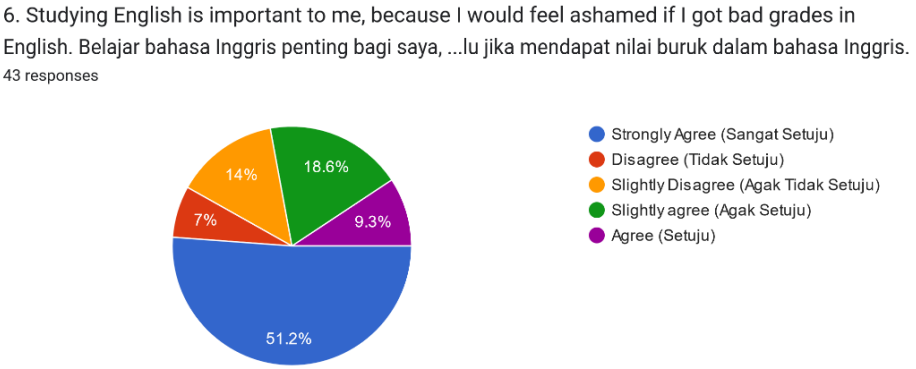


Figure 3. *The result of questionnaire item number 4 “Studying English is important to me, because I would feel ashamed if I got bad grades in English*

The findings from the questionnaire regarding the statement, "Studying English is important to me, because I would feel ashamed if I got bad grades in English," provide a detailed view of student opinions. Out of the 43 students who responded, 22 students, or 51.2%, strongly agreed with the statement, indicating that they believe studying English is crucial to avoid feeling

ashamed of poor grades. Meanwhile, 8 students, which is 18.6% of the respondents, slightly agreed with the statement, suggesting a somewhat positive view on the importance of English due to concerns about their grades. In contrast, 6 students, representing 14%, slightly disagreed, meaning they do not strongly feel that English study is tied to feelings of shame over grades. Additionally, 4 students, or 9.3%, agreed with the statement, while 3 students, or 7%, disagreed, showing that a smaller proportion do not see a strong connection between their English studies and feelings of shame related to academic performance. These responses illustrate the diverse perspectives students have on the significance of English studies in relation to their academic self-esteem.

To proceed with the findings from the next questionnaire item, the question asked was: "Studying English is important to me because if I don't have knowledge of English, I'll be considered a weak learner." Students were further asked to explain in what circumstances or category they might consider themselves weak in learning English. The responses from the 43 students who participated in the questionnaire are as follows:

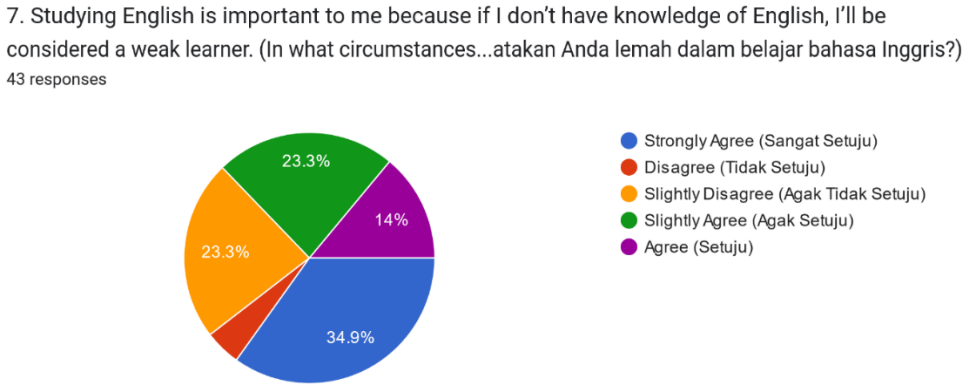


Figure 4. *The result of questionnaire item 7 ""Studying English is important to me because if I don't have knowledge of English, I'll be considered a weak learner."*

The findings from the questionnaire item "Studying English is important to me because if I don't have knowledge of English, I'll be considered a weak learner" reveal varied responses among the 43 FKIP UMP students. 15 students (34.9%) strongly agreed with the statement, indicating that a significant portion of the students believe that lacking English knowledge could lead to being perceived as a weak learner. 10 students (23.3%) agreed with this view, further supporting the idea that English proficiency is important in avoiding the label of a weak learner. On the other hand, 10 students (23.3%) slightly disagreed, suggesting that these students hold a more neutral perspective, where they do not fully equate English knowledge with being a strong or weak learner. 6 students (14%) slightly agreed, implying that while they see some connection between English knowledge and being considered a strong learner, they may not view it as crucial. Lastly, 2 students (4.7%) disagreed with the statement, showing that a small minority does not believe that a lack of English knowledge affects their perception as a learner. Overall, the majority of students recognize the importance of English proficiency in their academic self-assessment, although there is some variation in the degree to which they believe it impacts their status as learners.

To present the findings from the next questionnaire item, the question asked was: "Studying English is important to me because I don't like to be considered a poorly educated person." Students were asked to select one of the five provided options, which ranged from Strongly Agree to Disagree. The responses from the 43 students who participated in the questionnaire are as follows:

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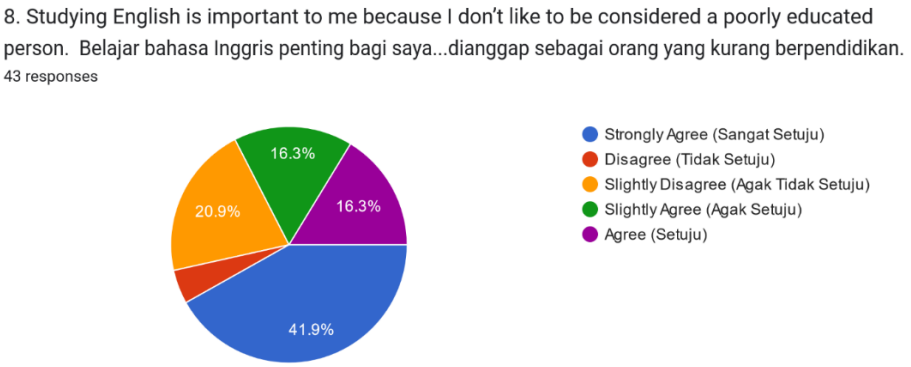


Figure 5. *The Result of Questionnaire Item 8 "Studying English is important to me because I don't like to be considered a poorly educated person."*

It is known from Figure 5 that 41.9% of students (18 students) strongly agreed with the statement, indicating that a significant portion of the respondents consider studying English as essential to avoid being perceived as poorly educated. 20.9% of students (9 students) slightly disagreed, suggesting that these students may not prioritize English learning for this particular reason. 16.3% of students (7 students) agreed with the statement, supporting the view that studying English is important for their educational image. Another 16.3% of students (7 students) slightly agreed, showing a moderate concern for this aspect of their education. Lastly, 4.7% of students (2 students) disagreed, reflecting a minimal concern about being judged as poorly educated based on their English proficiency. These findings reveal a diverse range of perspectives among the students, with a notable majority either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the importance of English study for maintaining a well-educated image.

Continuing with the next questionnaire item, the students were asked to respond to the statement, "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class." This item aimed to assess their level of comfort and confidence in participating in English class. The students were given five response options to choose from: Strongly Agree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, and Agree. The following section will present the distribution of their responses and analyze the results.

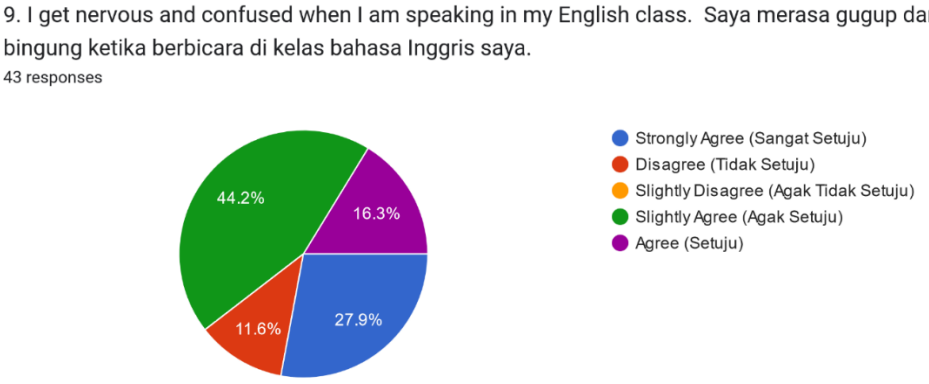


Figure 6. *The result of questionnaire item 10 "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class."*

Based on Figure 6, it can be seen that as 44.2% of the students, or 19 out of 43, slightly agreed with the statement, indicating that nearly half of the respondents feel a mild level of nervousness and confusion during English class. Additionally, 27.9% of the students, equating to 12 individuals, strongly agreed, showing a significant level of discomfort when speaking in English. Furthermore, 16.3% of the students, or 7 individuals, agreed with the statement, further reinforcing the idea that a substantial portion of the class feels nervous and confused in these situations. On the other hand, 11.6% of the students, which corresponds to 5 students,

disagreed, suggesting that a smaller group of students are generally comfortable speaking in English class. It can be concluded that the majority of students experience varying levels of nervousness and confusion when speaking in English, with only a small proportion feeling confident and at ease.

In order to continue the analysis, the students were asked to choose whether they feel Strongly Agree, Agree, Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree, and Disagree to the *statement "I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English".* The distribution of students' answers is presented in figure 7.

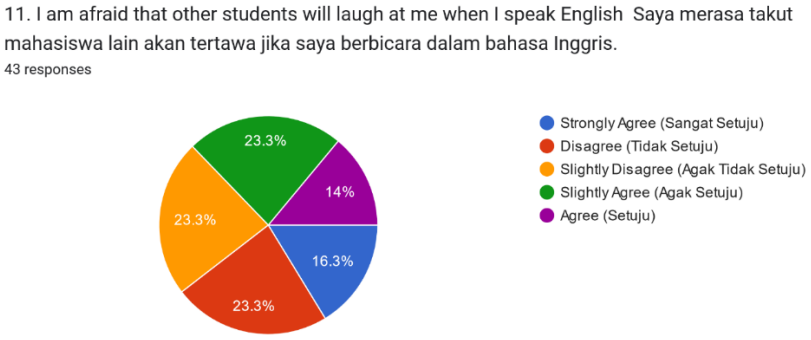


Figure 7. *The result of questionnaire item 11 "I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English"*

The findings in figure 7 indicates a diverse range of opinions. There are 23.3% (10 students) slightly agreed with the statement, expressing some level of concern about being laughed at while speaking English. Similarly, 23.3% (10 students) slightly disagreed, indicating that they do not feel strongly about this fear. After that, as 16.3% (7 students) strongly agreed, showing a significant concern about being laughed at when speaking English. Then, 14% (6 students) agreed, sharing a similar concern but to a lesser degree. Lastly, 23.3% (10 students) disagreed with the statement, indicating that they do not fear being laughed at when they speak English. These results reflect a balanced distribution of opinions among the students, with nearly equal proportions of students agreeing, disagreeing, or feeling neutral about the fear of being laughed at when speaking English. This highlights the varying levels of confidence and anxiety among students regarding their English-speaking abilities.

To further explore the students' attitudes towards speaking English, the next questionnaire item, "I would feel uneasy speaking English with a native speaker," delves into their comfort levels when interacting with native English speakers. The responses from the 43 students provide valuable insights into their confidence and anxiety levels when engaging in conversations with native speakers.

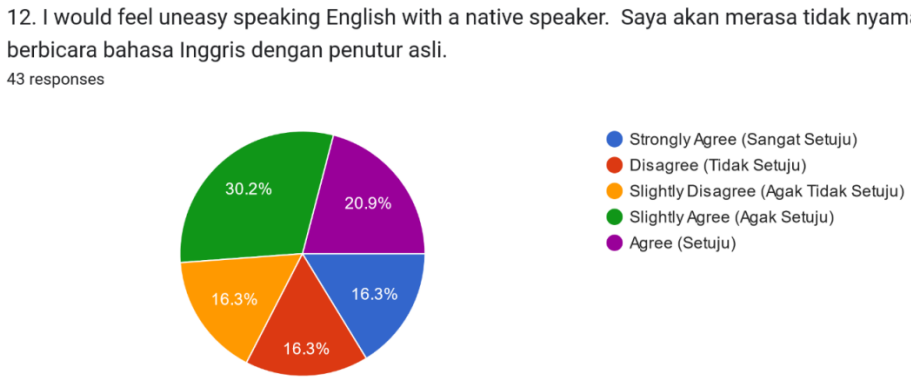


Figure 8. *The result of questionnaire item 12 "I would feel uneasy speaking English with a native speaker." and Item 13. How uneasy would you feel speaking English with a native speaker?*

Figure 8 shows that the 30.2% (13 students) slightly agreed with the feeling of unease, often mentioning nervousness and the fear of making errors, particularly in pronunciation and grammar, when speaking with native speakers. This nervousness often leads to a lack of confidence and hesitation in communication, 20.9% (9 students) agreed with the statement, showing moderate discomfort, but also acknowledging that speaking with native speakers could be a valuable

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learning opportunity despite the tension. 16.3% (7 students) strongly agreed, indicating that they would feel very uneasy, with several students describing physical symptoms of anxiety, such as their heart racing or stuttering, when faced with the prospect of speaking English to a native speaker. On the other hand, 16.3% (7 students) disagreed, reporting minimal unease and a sense of ease or excitement about the opportunity to speak with native speakers, as they do not fear judgment and see it as a beneficial practice for enhancing their language skills. Conversely, 16.3% (7 students) slightly disagreed, noting that while they do feel some discomfort, they also recognize the potential for improving their English skills through such interactions. These findings suggest a wide range of comfort levels among students when it comes to speaking English with native speakers, with a considerable number of students experiencing significant anxiety, while others feel more confident or view it as a positive challenge. This highlights the need for support in building students' confidence and reducing their fears in practical language use situations.

To continue examining the students' perceptions of English Language anxiety in speaking skill the next questionnaire item was "If I met an English native speaker, I would feel nervous," it focuses on the emotional response students anticipate when encountering a native speaker. The responses to this item will provide further insights into the levels of anxiety and nervousness that students experience in real-life situations involving English communication. The following figure presents the findings from this particular item in the questionnaire.

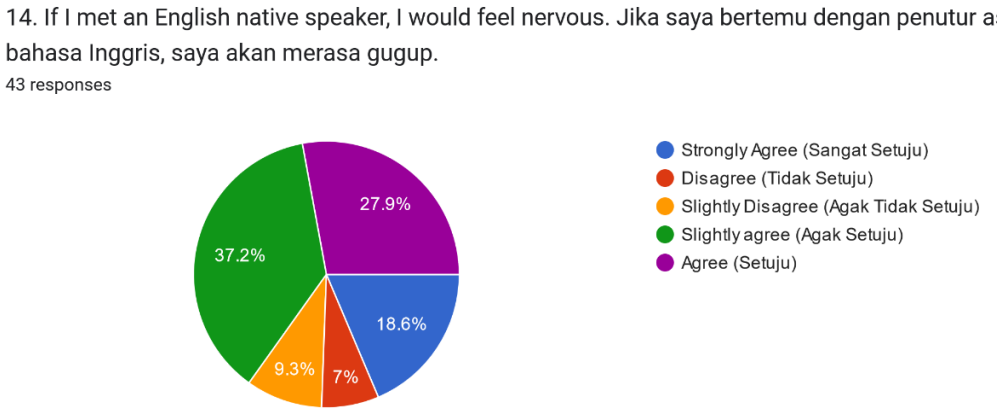


Figure 9. *The result of questionnaire item 14." If I met an English native speaker, I would feel nervous"*

The findings from figure 9 provide clear insights into the students' levels of anxiety when encountering native speakers. It could be seen that there are 37.2% (16 students) slightly agreed with the statement, indicating a moderate level of nervousness when meeting a native English speaker. These students acknowledge feeling uneasy, but not overwhelmingly so. Then, as 27.9% (12 students) agreed with the statement, showing a significant level of nervousness, suggesting that the prospect of meeting a native speaker triggers a noticeable emotional response. Lower to that, as 18.6% (8 students) strongly agreed, reflecting a strong sense of nervousness, indicating that for these students, meeting a native speaker is an especially anxiety-inducing situation. On the other hand, 9.3% (4 students) slightly disagreed with the statement, suggesting they feel only mild nervousness or perhaps none at all when meeting a native speaker. Lastly, 7% (3 students) disagreed with the statement, indicating that they do not feel nervous in such situations and are likely more confident in their English-speaking abilities. These findings suggest that a significant proportion of students' experience varying levels of nervousness when faced with the possibility of meeting a native English speaker. This reflects the broader trends of anxiety and confidence among students in their ability to communicate effectively in English, particularly with native speakers.

To further explore the students' speaking anxiety levels in real-world English communication scenarios, the next questionnaire items, number 15 "I would get tense if a foreigner asked me for directions in English," and number 16. How tense would you get if a foreigner asked you for directions in English? investigated how students feel when faced with spontaneous, practical interactions in English. The responses to this item provide deeper insights into the students' readiness and comfort in using English in

everyday situations. The figure 10 presents the findings from this specific questionnaire item.

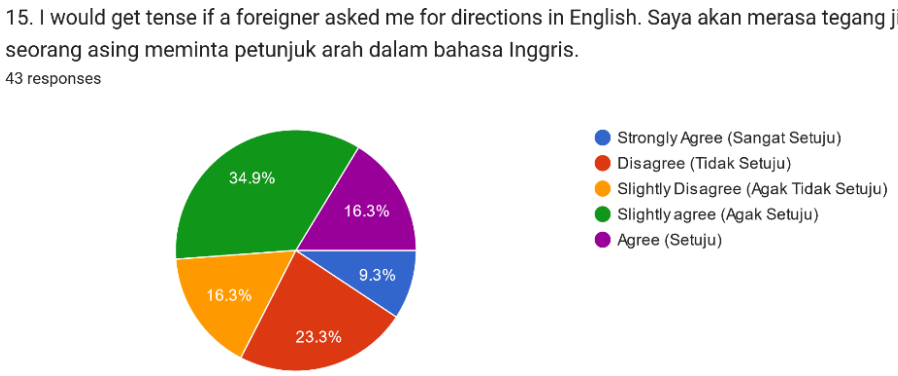


Figure 10. *The result of questionnaire item 15. "I would get tense if a foreigner asked me for directions in English"*

The responses from 43 FKIP UMP students to the statement "I would get tense if a foreigner asked me for directions in English" show a variety of reactions. About 34.9% (15 students) slightly agreed, indicating they would feel somewhat uneasy, but not overly stressed in such a situation. Another 23.3% (10 students) agreed, meaning they would feel more noticeable tension if asked for directions in English by a foreigner. On the other hand, 16.3% (7 students) slightly disagreed, suggesting they would remain fairly calm or only feel a little tense. Additionally, 16.3% (7 students) strongly agreed, indicating they would experience a high level of anxiety in this scenario. Lastly, 9.3% (4 students) disagreed, showing they are comfortable and would not feel tense at all in this situation. These findings highlight that while many students do feel some level of tension when interacting with foreigners in English, a significant number are either only slightly uneasy or completely at ease, reflecting the diverse confidence levels among students in real-life English communication. In response to the question in item 16 "How tense would you get if a foreigner asked you for directions in English?", the students of FKIP UMP provided a wide range of answers that give deeper insight into their feelings and reasons behind those feelings. A significant portion of students expressed high levels of tension, with many rating their tension as 8 or 9 out of 10. These students often cited fears of making mistakes, feeling that their English skills are not strong enough, or worrying that their directions would not be understood. One student mentioned feeling "very tense, nervous," while another rated their tension as a 10, expressing concerns about "failing to convey words correctly." Some students reported moderate tension, with ratings around 4 or 5 out of 10. These students acknowledged feeling nervous but believed they could handle the situation. One student mentioned, "I would feel a bit tense if a foreigner asked me for directions in English because I might worry about making mistakes, but I'd still try my best to help." A few students felt minimal or no tension, indicating that they are comfortable with making mistakes and view them as part of the learning process. For instance, one student stated, "No, I don't get scared of making a mistake because we learn from mistakes," while another rated their tension as 2 out of 10, emphasizing that they do not fear being considered foolish because mistakes are natural in learning. Several students were unsure about their tension levels, as they had not yet experienced such a situation. These students mentioned that they could not accurately assess how tense they would feel because they had no prior experience with being asked for directions in English by a foreigner. These responses provide a comprehensive view of the students' emotional states when faced with the prospect of giving directions in English, highlighting a spectrum of confidence levels and the underlying reasons for their feelings.

The next was Questionnaire item number 17. How afraid are you of sounding stupid in English because of the mistakes you make? The findings reveal a range of levels of fear and confidence among the students. A significant number of students expressed a high level of fear. 10 students (23.3%) rated their fear as 8 or 10 out of 10, one student answered "The fear is significant because I am always hesitant to express myself. My voice tends to tremble whenever I speak in English", "I feel very anxious because there is a widespread expectation that students studying English education should be experts in the

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language." indicating that they are very afraid of sounding foolish due to their mistakes in English. These students often worry about being judged by others, especially because they are English education students, where there is an expectation to perform well in the language. Some students felt a moderate level of fear, with 35% to 50% fear levels, indicating they are somewhat concerned about making mistakes, but they also understand that errors are part of the learning process. These students expressed that while they feel nervous about being perceived as lacking ability, they also recognize that making mistakes is a normal part of learning a new language. Other students reported a lower level of fear, with ratings like 2 or 4 out of 10. These students are less worried about making mistakes, often seeing them as opportunities to learn and improve. One student mentioned, "I'm not too afraid because we can learn from mistakes and experiences," reflecting a more positive and growth-oriented attitude. A few students were not afraid at all, emphasizing their openness to criticism and understanding that mistakes are a natural part of learning. For instance, the students said, "No, I don't get scared of making a mistake because we learn from mistakes,"; "When mistakes are made, it's common for negative thoughts to arise, which can increase our nervousness. However, it's important to avoid focusing on these negative perceptions. Making mistakes isn't always a bad thing; in fact, it can be a crucial step in improving and practicing English more effectively. Therefore, the fear of sounding foolish shouldn't matter as long as others continue to respect you despite your mistakes." In summary, the findings from Questionnaire item number 17 reveal a wide range of fear and confidence levels among the students regarding making mistakes in English. A significant portion of students experience a high level of fear, driven by concerns about being judged, especially given the expectations placed on English education students. Others exhibit moderate fear, acknowledging the anxiety but also recognizing that mistakes are a natural part of learning. Some students display a lower level of fear, viewing mistakes as opportunities for growth and improvement. A small group of students are not afraid at all, showing an open attitude towards making mistakes and emphasizing the importance of focusing on learning rather than fear of judgment. Overall, the responses reflect diverse attitudes toward the fear of making mistakes, with some students struggling with anxiety and others embracing errors as part of the language learning journey.

The next item of the questionnaire was questionnaire item 18. How worried are you that other speakers of English would find your English strange?". The distribution of students' answers is presented in figure 11.

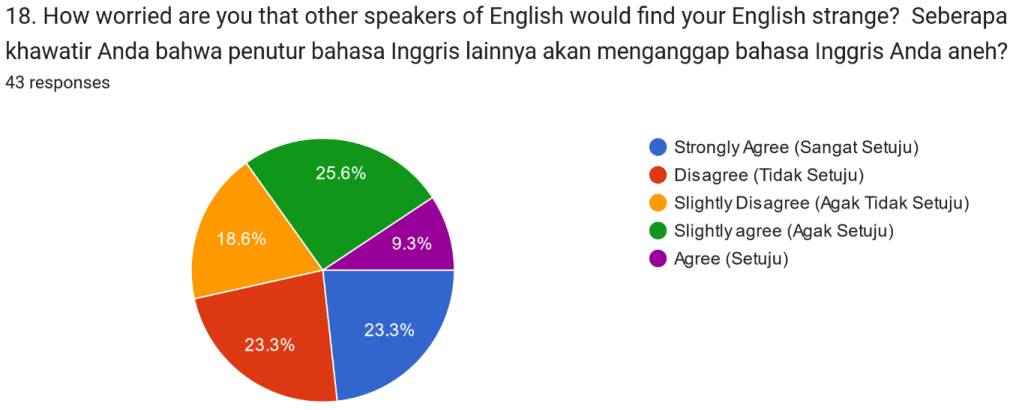


Figure 11. *The result of questionnaire item 18. How worried are you that other speakers of English would find your English strange?*

Out of the 43 FKIP UMP students who responded to the questionnaire, the responses to Item 18, which asked, "How worried are you that other speakers of English would find your English strange?", revealed a range of concerns. Specifically, 25.6% (11 students) indicated that they were "Slightly Agree" with this concern, suggesting a mild level of anxiety. Meanwhile, an equal proportion of 23.3% (10 students each) were on both ends of the spectrum, with one group "Strongly Agree" and the other "Disagree" with the statement. Additionally, 18.6% (8 students) "Slightly Disagree," reflecting a minimal level of concern. Lastly, a smaller portion, 9.3% (4 students), "Agree" with the concern about others finding their English

strange. These results highlight varying degrees of anxiety among the students regarding how their English might be perceived by others, with a significant number expressing some level of worry.

The next open-ended questionnaire was Questionnaire item number 19. In your opinion, what kind of learning situation for speaking would improve your English-speaking skill?. Based on the responses from the 43 FKIP UMP students to Item 19, which asked, "In your opinion, what kind of learning situation for speaking would improve your English-speaking skills?", a variety of preferences and suggestions emerged. A significant portion of students, 14% (6 students), emphasized the importance of a supportive and non-judgmental class environment where mistakes are corrected constructively, which they believe would greatly enhance their speaking skills. Similarly, 11.6% (5 students) highlighted the value of role-playing exercises, where students practice speaking in realistic scenarios, as a method to improve their language proficiency. Another 11.6% (5 students) mentioned that speaking in front of others, either through presentations or speeches, would be beneficial. Meanwhile, 9.3% (4 students) suggested that a calm and quiet classroom atmosphere would help them focus better on speaking tasks. Additionally, 7% (3 students) stated that regular practice and discussions in English would be essential for improving their skills, while another 7% (3 students) recommended creating a fun and engaging class environment, such as through storytelling or casual conversations, to encourage more natural use of the language. Several students also mentioned the importance of integrating English into daily life, with 7% (3 students) believing that consistent use of English in everyday situations would lead to significant improvements. Other suggestions included collaborative learning with peers (4.6%, 2 students), watching American movies and listening to music in English (4.6%, 2 students), and directly conversing with native speakers or through digital platforms like YouTube (4.6%, 2 students). These responses reflect the diverse preferences and learning styles among the students, with a common emphasis on practical application, supportive environments, and engaging, real-life contexts to enhance their English-speaking skills.

Then, the last item of the questionnaire was Questionnaire item number 20. What are your hopes regarding your anxiety in speaking English in the future?. A notable portion, 23.3% (10 students), expressed a desire to overcome their nervousness and gain confidence when speaking English, particularly in front of others. This group emphasized the importance of feeling more comfortable and reducing anxiety to improve their speaking skills. Another 20.9% (9 students) hope to enhance their fluency and pronunciation, aiming to speak English more naturally without overthinking grammar or vocabulary. Additionally, 16.3% (7 students) mentioned their wish to gradually eliminate their fear of making mistakes, seeking to build confidence through continuous practice and positive reinforcement from peers and teachers. Moreover, 13.9% (6 students) focused on the importance of building a supportive learning environment where mistakes are normalized and constructive feedback is provided. They believe this approach would help reduce their anxiety and encourage them to practice more openly. Finally, 9.3% (4 students) expressed hopes to improve their overall English proficiency, including grammar and vocabulary, to feel more prepared and confident in various speaking situations. These responses highlight the students' awareness of their challenges and their proactive attitudes toward overcoming anxiety in English speaking through improved skills and supportive environments.

This study explored students' perceptions of English language anxiety in speaking classes, revealing several key factors that contribute to anxiety and how these impact their speaking performance. The results showed that while most students had been learning English for many years, starting as early as elementary school, there were variations in their learning experiences. Students who had consistent and early exposure to English generally reported positive feelings about their learning experiences, particularly regarding improvements in speaking and pronunciation. However, those who started learning English later or had inconsistent teaching experiences faced challenges such as difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, and maintaining motivation, which contributed to increased anxiety during speaking activities.

These findings align with previous research by Kashinathan and Abdul Aziz (2021), who highlighted that linguistic difficulties and the fear of judgment are significant barriers to effective communication in a second language. However, this study goes further by illustrating how these barriers are compounded by individual learning trajectories and inconsistent instruction, which

may leave students feeling inadequately prepared. As a result, they often experience heightened anxiety in speaking situations, particularly when they are expected to perform in front of others.

Another prominent finding was that most students recognized the importance of English proficiency for their future careers and viewed it as a critical tool for international communication. This belief reinforces the conclusions of Sastia (2020), who found that students who perceive English as essential for their professional futures are more likely to have higher motivation to overcome language barriers. Nevertheless, despite recognizing its importance, the study also revealed that many students experienced significant anxiety due to the fear of making mistakes and being judged by others. These concerns were particularly strong when speaking in front of native English speakers or in competitive settings, where students felt more vulnerable to negative evaluation.

This fear of judgment, as observed by Chen et al. (2020), often leads to avoidance behaviors, limiting opportunities for practice and further inhibiting language development. Interestingly, the study also found that students who had opportunities to practice speaking in low-pressure environments reported feeling more confident. This finding supports Akramy (2020), who argued that a supportive learning environment can significantly reduce anxiety and improve language performance.

In line with previous studies, this study underscores the importance of fostering a supportive and non-judgmental classroom atmosphere. Students emphasized the need for teachers to create an environment where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process, rather than as failures. This shift in mindset can alleviate anxiety and encourage greater student engagement in speaking activities. Moreover, the study highlighted that practical speaking opportunities are essential in reducing anxiety. Students who were given regular chances to speak in low-pressure settings, such as informal conversations or peer interactions, felt more comfortable and confident.

Saptiany and Prabowo (2024) also advocate for incorporating real-world speaking opportunities into lessons, as these help students gain experience and build confidence. This study reinforces the need for educators to provide more such opportunities, which can bridge the gap between theoretical language knowledge and practical language use. By creating more avenues for real-world practice, students can gradually overcome their anxieties and improve their speaking proficiency.

In conclusion, the study found that students' perceived speaking anxiety is influenced by a combination of linguistic challenges, cognitive factors like low self-esteem, and the fear of judgment. These factors collectively hinder students' willingness to engage in speaking activities, ultimately affecting their language development. To address these challenges, educators must foster a supportive and encouraging environment, offer regular practice opportunities, and provide constructive feedback. Such approaches can help students overcome anxiety, gain confidence in their speaking abilities, and enhance their overall language proficiency. Future research should continue to examine the interplay between individual factors, learning experiences, and anxiety, with a particular focus on how these elements can be addressed in the classroom setting to improve language learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that one of the significant obstacles students face in learning English is speaking anxiety. Students often experience nervousness due to challenges with pronunciation, confusion between vocabulary and grammar, and a pervasive fear of making mistakes or being ridiculed. Despite these difficulties, the majority of students recognize the importance of mastering English, especially in the context of global communication and career opportunities. This finding underscores the need for a learning environment that alleviates the fear of judgment, where students feel safe and supported in speaking classes.

If speaking anxiety is rooted in past negative experiences, as indicated by the students in this study, it is crucial for educators to cultivate a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere where errors are seen as opportunities for learning rather than failures. Techniques such as role-playing and other real-life speaking exercises are highly effective in improving fluency and building students' comfort levels. Additionally, providing constructive feedback and offering consistent encouragement can help reduce anxiety and foster an environment where students feel confident in their speaking abilities. This approach not only helps students overcome their fears but also enhances their overall language proficiency.

For future research, it would be valuable to explore the long-term effects of a supportive learning environment on speaking anxiety and language acquisition. Additionally, investigating the impact of different teaching methods, such as technology-assisted language learning or peer-based language practice, could provide further insights into how to effectively mitigate speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms. Understanding the role of cultural factors in shaping students' perceptions of speaking anxiety could also contribute to more tailored and effective teaching strategies.

Moreover, future studies could refine their methodological approaches by integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, longitudinal studies that track students' anxiety levels and speaking performance over time would provide valuable data on the long-term impact of anxiety-reducing interventions. Additionally, experimental designs that compare different teaching methods or classroom environments could help identify which strategies are most effective in reducing speaking anxiety.

Limitations of the study include the relatively small sample size, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample was also drawn from one university, which may not fully represent the diverse experiences of students from other educational contexts. Furthermore, while the study focused on perceived anxiety, it did not directly measure students' speaking performance in objective terms, which may limit the ability to make definitive claims about the relationship between anxiety and speaking abilities. Future research should aim to include a larger, more diverse sample and incorporate more objective measures of speaking performance to provide a clearer understanding of the factors influencing speaking anxiety.

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