

FACTORS INFLUENCING SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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Article history

Received date : 11-7-2025

Revised date : 12-7-2025

Accepted date : 7-9-2025

Published date : 25-9-2025

To cite this document:

Ibrahim, N., Abu Bakar, H., Wan Hussin, W. Z., Yahya, N. A. N., Muhammad, N. N. H., Mohammad Arif, N. A., Abdul Rashid, S., & Azman, N. I. A. (2025). Factors influencing speaking anxiety among university students in Malaysia. *International Journal of Accounting, Finance and Business (IJAFB)*, 10 (62), 207 - 221.

Abstract: *Speaking anxiety is an increasing issue among university students, especially when English is the primary language in university. This issue has significant consequences that may affect student's academic performance and educational experience. This study aims to describe the factors influencing speaking anxiety to provide crucial insight into overcoming the issues. This study involves 152 students from 4 bachelor's degree program from Faculty of Business and Management, University Teknologi Mara Kampus Machang. This sample is selected randomly using stratified sampling technique. The collected data through structured questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis. This study found three factors: fear negative evaluation, comfort in speaking English, and communication apprehension, which have a significant relationship with the students' speaking anxiety. This research contributes valuable insight into existing theories by providing*

empirical evidence on how these theories manifest in the context of speaking anxiety among students. Despite that, these findings can facilitate an overview of policymakers prioritizing mental health and emotional well-being in schools and universities, leading to more supportive academic environments. By addressing speaking anxiety, educators can improve student participation, engagement, and educational success, leading to better learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Speaking Anxiety, Negative Evaluation, Communication Apprehension, Comfort Speaking*

Introduction

Effective communication skills are essential in academics and serve as a cornerstone for successful students. However, speaking anxiety is a widespread challenge among university students globally, particularly when communicating in a second or foreign language such as English. In Malaysia, these skills are particularly crucial in universities, and most universities adopt English as a primary language for academic purposes. It becomes challenging for the students since they need to express their ideas in a language that is not their native tongue. Effective communication in English is critical while delivering the presentation and participating in any discussion and engagement with international students and lecturers. Even students in Malaysia have learned English since primary school, but many of the students show their inability and failure to speak in English. Therefore, this problem leads to speaking anxiety (Lee & Othman, 2018; Tan & Yusof, 2020).

Past research shows that there are various anxieties in academics, and one of them is foreign language anxiety (Putri et al., 2022; Razali et al., 2023). In the foreign language learning (especially English) process, speaking becomes one of the critical parts that could change the student's emotions, making them nervous, which can then lead to anxiety. Speaking anxiety is often referred to as public speaking anxiety, characterized by fear or apprehension associated with speaking in front of others. Past research discovered that speaking anxiety has physical, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms. For physical symptoms, the person usually has dry lips, increased heart rate, blushing, sweating, erratic breathing, and mixed emotions (Chamberlain & Meuret, 2017; Girondini, 2023). The cognitive symptoms include fear of embarrassment, negative thoughts, worrying about being judged and overthinking (Li, 2020; Li et al., 2023). Some people have behavioural symptoms such as speaking too quickly or softly, avoid to speak in public or difficulty in organizing the ideas (Hussain et al., 2021; Archbell & Coplan, 2022).

According to a study by An et al. (2022), over 65% of students in Malaysia experience moderate to severe levels of speaking anxiety. This statistic show that this issue is critical due to the high levels of speaking anxiety negatively impact students' academic performance and future career prospects. Speaking anxiety can prevent students to participate in class discussions and present their ideas effectively which lead to the decreasing academic performance. The impact of speaking anxiety extends beyond academic settings and can affect students' mental health.

Prior research has extensively explored speaking anxiety in general educational contexts primarily on the academic consequences (Putri et al., 2022; Razali et al., 2023). However, there is limited understanding of how speaking anxiety specifically impacts business students in Malaysia. Focusing this research on business students is vital due to the effective

communication skills are foundational to business success and future career. Speaking anxiety can give professional implication such as preparing students for job interview, deliver presentation, team collaboration and workplace communication. The employers always highlight that English communication as the most desired skills when recruiting graduates (Nesaratnam et al., 2020).

Additionally, previous research has identified factors such as fear of negative evaluation, comfort in speaking English, and communication apprehension as contributors to speaking anxiety (Horwitz et al., 2010; Suryadi, 2022). However, there is a lack of studies investigating how these factors manifest specifically among business students in Malaysia, where English is often a second language and an essential skill for future career success. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address this research gap by investigating the factors influencing speaking anxiety among business students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kampus Machang. By exploring these factors, the study aims to identify the root causes of speaking anxiety and suggest potential interventions to help students overcome these challenges, ultimately enhancing their academic experience and personal development.

This study has several contributions. First, this study will contribute to the theoretical understanding of speaking anxiety by integrating multiple factors into a single framework and contextualizing it within business education. For the practical significant, the understanding the factors contributing to speaking anxiety is critical for educators and policymakers aiming to foster a more supportive and effective learning environment. Thus, it will be enhancing students' communication skills, academic success, and succeed in their future careers.

Literature Review

Speaking Anxiety

Anxiety related to speaking is the dread of what will happen during speaking. Students may experience extreme anxiety as a result of their circumstances, which may make it difficult for them to move and speak in front of others (Sholikhi, 2021). Speaking anxiety, particularly in the context of learning and using a foreign language, is a common phenomenon that affects many students (Nimat, 2013). It can significantly impact their ability to cause a decrease in motivation and overall language proficiency, communicate effectively, and participate in classroom activities (Altun, 2023). Generally, speaking anxiety happens when students are afraid of delivering or preparing a speech in front of others due to their lack of confidence in their English ability (Megawati & Apriani, 2023) and are shy and scared to make a mistake during the speech or presentation.

According to Horwitz et al. (2010), students who struggle with basic speaking skills would have even more significant challenges while speaking in a foreign language class, which leads to speaking anxiety. This anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviors, decreased class participation, and even lower educational achievement as students struggle with the fear of making mistakes or being judged negatively by others (Downing et al., 2020; Archbell & Coplan, 2022). The impact of speaking anxiety extends beyond the classroom, affecting students' self-esteem and their ability to form social connections. Speaking anxiety is a challenging issue in teaching and learning, with various internal and external factors impacting its level or intensity (Badrasawi et al., 2020; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). Even though there are many variables, such as the delivery

and the personal feelings the individual speaker is experiencing, dealing with being the focus of attention and self-consciousness in front of large groups, this study only focuses on fear of negative evaluation, comfort in speaking English, and communication apprehension.

Factors Contribute to Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by psychological, linguistic, and environmental factors. Previous research consistently identifies fear of negative evaluation (FNE), comfort in speaking English, and communication apprehension (CA) as key contributors. However, closer examination of the literature reveals conflicting findings, contextual nuances, and underexplored areas that warrant further investigation.

Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) is the uneasiness and distress individuals feel about being judged unfavorably by others during speaking activities (Suryadi, 2022; Busch et al., 2023). This fear is a core component of social anxiety and is particularly relevant in situations that involve public speaking or communication in front of others. When individuals experience fear of negative evaluation, they become overly concerned about how others perceive them. This concern can lead to heightened anxiety when speaking, as they worry about making mistakes, being misunderstood, or being seen as incompetent (Daud et al., 2019; Azhar et al., 2022). As a result, the fear of negative evaluation can cause individuals to feel more nervous, self-conscious, and hesitant when speaking, which amplifies their speaking anxiety. For instance, a meta-analysis revealed that self-reported FNE contribute up to 42% of the variance in social anxiety symptoms (Zhang et al., 2025).

Most studies agreed that high FNE is linked to avoidance behaviors, hesitation, and reduced speaking performance (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020; Fung et al., 2021). Past studies have shown that fear of negative evaluation is strongly correlated with speaking anxiety (Suryadi, 2022; Okyar, 2023; Putri et al., 2023). People who have a high fear of being judged are more likely to experience intense anxiety when required to speak in front of others (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020; Archbell & Coplan, 2022). This relationship suggests that addressing the fear of negative evaluation can be a crucial step in reducing speaking anxiety. Individuals high in fear of negative evaluation experience significant anxiety in anticipation of unfavorable evaluations (Wardhani, 2019; Azhar et al., 2022; Suyardi, 2022). It can manifest in various ways, such as worrying about being judged by teachers or classmates; they may clam up in class and be afraid to ask questions or participate (Fung et al., 2021). The anxiety can appear in themselves based on their reactions to teachers' feedback on speaking performance in or outside the class can make anxiety appear in themselves.

The fear of negative evaluation significantly affected speaking anxiety among learners, leading to avoidance behaviors and impaired speaking performance. Addressing this fear through targeted interventions could help reduce speaking anxiety and improve learners' performance in speaking tasks. Despite the established link between FNE and speaking anxiety, there remains a gap in understanding the mechanisms through which FNE influences anxiety levels and the effectiveness of interventions targeting FNE. Further research is needed to explore these aspects and develop strategies to mitigate the impact of FNE on speaking anxiety.

Comfort in Speaking English

Comfort in speaking English is a significant factor influencing speaking anxiety. It is defined as the degree to which individuals feel confident and at ease when using English to communicate, often influenced by their linguistic competence, exposure to the language, and previous experiences in English-speaking environments (Doe, 2022). This idea includes psychological aspects like anxiety, self-perception regarding speaking English, and linguistic proficiency (Su, 2021; Okyar, 2023). Beyond linguistic ability, this concept also incorporates psychological dimensions such as self-perception and anxiety management, making it a multidimensional construct. For example, Dansieh (2021) noted that individuals who feel more comfortable with English tend to experience less fear of public speaking, suggesting that comfort functions as a protective factor against speaking anxiety.

Past research agrees that students are more comfortable using English tend to experience lower speaking anxiety levels (Long et al., 2019; Siregar, 2022; Indahyanti & Mursidin, 2023; Ch'ng et al., 2025). There are various reasons why an English speaker may experience feelings of nervousness, sweating, and anxiety while speaking in English, particularly when giving an English presentation in front of a class. Comfort helps reduce physical symptoms of anxiety (e.g., nervousness, sweating) and anticipatory stress before public speaking or class presentations (Ibrahim & Devesh, 2019). Interestingly, several studies highlight situational discrepancies: learners often feel relaxed when practicing alone but become tense and anxious in front of a larger audience due to performance pressure (Daud et al., 2019). This contrast underscores the interaction between language comfort and context-specific social dynamics.

Cultural and social experiences often influence comfort in speaking English. For example, individuals who frequently use English in social or academic settings may feel more at ease and less anxious when speaking the language (Kakita & Palukuri, 2020). In contrast, those with limited exposure to English or who have faced negative experiences may feel more nervous (Kakita & Palukuri, 2020). Lack of grammar knowledge, limited vocabulary, and difficulty in constructing sentences are primary causes of speaking anxiety. These deficiencies make students less comfortable and more anxious when speaking English (Siregar, 2022; Indahyanti & Mursidin, 2023; Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025).

Although prior research emphasizes the strong negative association between speaking comfort and anxiety, some inconsistencies remain. For instance, while comfort often improves with proficiency, highly proficient learners may still report anxiety in high-stakes or evaluative settings (Archbell & Coplan, 2022; Putri et al., 2023). This suggests that language comfort alone may not fully mitigate speaking anxiety, highlighting the role of external factors such as peer judgment, cultural expectations, and classroom dynamics. A critical gap in the literature lies in the limited exploration of how digital platforms, online learning environments, or intercultural communication contexts affect learners' comfort in English. More recent studies (e.g., Li & Zhang, 2022; Pham & Vo, 2023) call for a deeper examination of these evolving contexts, given the increasing prevalence of virtual classrooms and global communication. Addressing these gaps would advance understanding of how to design interventions that enhance learners' confidence and mitigate anxiety across diverse speaking situations.

Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension (CA) is associated with the fear of anticipated speech and communication anxiety can be reduced by mentally preparing for conversations (Honeycutt et al., 2009). This phenomenon is especially pertinent in educational environments, where it can substantially influence students' oral proficiency and general communication aptitude (Nakamura, 2022; Kho & Ting, 2023). Prior research indicates that speaking anxiety is influenced by communication apprehension, which manifests through novelty, formality, subordinate status, ignorance, inequality, attention, heredity, environment, fear of negative judgment, and low self-confidence. These dimensions make CA a complex and multidimensional construct with both psychological and situational determinants.

Most of them only use it in class as they need an environment that requires them to speak English daily (Daud et al., 2019). This apprehension is often linked to speaking anxiety, characterized by physical symptoms such as sweating and stuttering, stemming from a lack of confidence and fear of judgment (Hrithik et al., 2019). There exists a positive correlation between higher degrees of communication apprehension and increased self-critical self-talk, which in turn is linked to public speaking anxiety (Shi, 2015). Students commonly experience communication anxiety in speaking classes due to novelty, formality, and unequal status, hindering their communication ability (Hardiyanto, 2022; Megawati & Apriani, 2023). Moreover, communication apprehension contributes significantly to anxiety in foreign language learning, especially among minority students (Nasir et al., 2023). Studies indicate a correlation between communication apprehension and stable individual differences in brain activity, while physiological responses influence state anxiety during communication (Gonzalez & Beatty, 2020). Professional practice instruction has been shown to reduce public speaking anxiety in high school students after one semester (Wahl & Walker, 2022).

Effective communication and reducing anxiety in interpersonal interactions depend on recognizing and treating communication apprehension (Su, 2021; Okyar, 2023). Speech worry is greatly influenced by communication fear, which limits students' proficiency in speaking activities. Multiple variables, such as apprehension of unfavourable assessment, insufficient self-assurance, and contextual aspects, contribute to this anxiety. However, targeted training programs focusing on non-verbal communication and public speaking can reduce apprehension and improve speaking skills (Megawati & Apriani, 2023). Understanding and addressing these factors can help mitigate speaking anxiety and enhance communication competence.

Theoretical Framework

This study conceptualizes speaking anxiety as the dependent variable, contingent upon three independent variables: fear of negative evaluation, comfort in speaking English, and communication apprehension. A theoretical framework model has been constructed to demonstrate these connections. In this model, arrows indicate the specific direction in which the independent variables affect the dependent variable. Fear of negative evaluation is shown to have a direct influence on speaking anxiety since persons who fear criticism are more prone to experiencing elevated levels of anxiety (Suryadi, 2022; Okyar, 2023). The comfort level in speaking English is a determinant, whereby greater comfort levels result in decreased speaking anxiety (Long et al., 2019; Siregar, 2022). Research has demonstrated that communication apprehension, which encompasses a more extensive fear of communication, has a direct impact on speaking anxiety (Nakamura, 2022; Kho & Ting, 2023). This model visually encapsulates

the hypothesized relationships, providing a clear and structured overview of the factors contributing to speaking anxiety.

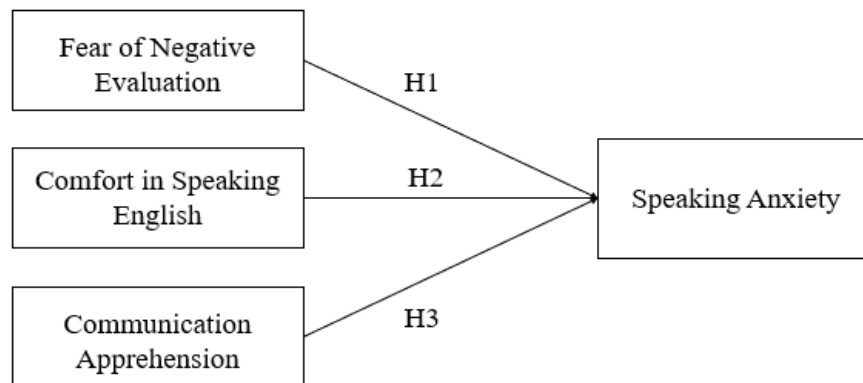


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Factors Influencing Speaking Anxiety

(Source: Authors' Work)

Based on the Figure 1 above, the following hypothesis are developed:

H1 - Fear of Negative Evaluation has a positive relationship with Speaking Anxiety.

H2 - Comfort in Speaking English has a negative relationship with Speaking Anxiety.

H3 - Communication Apprehension has a positive relationship with Speaking Anxiety.

In summary, the three hypotheses are derived from the theoretical framework, which posits that Fear of Negative Evaluation and Communication Apprehension have positive relationships with Speaking Anxiety, while Comfort in Speaking English has a negative relationship with Speaking Anxiety. These hypotheses will be tested to determine the extent to which these factors influence speaking anxiety among business students in Malaysia.

Methodology

This study employed quantitative research using surveys through standardised assessments in getting measurable data on speaking anxiety in Malaysia. The aims of this research are to identify the strength of the relationship and the effect of the factors on the English-speaking anxiety among university students in Malaysia. In achieving these aims, this research used a survey method using a structured questionnaire in collecting the data.

Participants

The target population for this research is comprised 534 undergraduate students from Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kampus Machang. A sample of 152 students from 4 bachelor's degree program were selected using stratified sampling techniques to ensure adequate representation across programmes and semester. This sample size was considered adequate based on both statistical and practical considerations. For a population 534 students, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table suggest a minimum of 224 for generalisation at a 95% confidence level and a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error. However, this study focused on relationships between variables using correlation and regression analyses, where smaller samples are acceptable when instruments are reliable and effect sizes are strong. Prior similar studies on speaking anxiety among Malaysian undergraduates such as Raja Yacob and Mohamad (2023) surveyed 81 students in an online learning context, and Ch'ng et al. (2025)

involved students on public speaking anxiety, producing statistically significant results. Therefore, the chosen sample size of 152 not only exceeds this requirement but also ensures a more robust representation of the target population.

Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used as measurement tool in collecting data. The questionnaire was distributed to the selected students in UiTM Kampus Machang, Kelantan. Section A asks about the respondent's demographic profile, including their matrix number, age, marital status, gender, and degree program in the Faculty of Business and Management, semester, and cumulative grade point average (CGPA). Section B examines speaking anxiety while Section C focuses on communication anxiety, comfort speaking English, and fear of a negative evaluation.

Item in Section B are adapted from Ozturk and Gurbuz (2014), which was developed to measure speaking anxiety in academic contexts. Items in Section C were adapted from Yaikoh and Usaha (2012), which focus on key psychological and linguistic factors influencing speaking performance. These instruments were chosen because they closely match the focus of this study, capturing the core constructs of speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, comfort in speaking English, and communication apprehension. Both instruments have been widely applied in higher education settings, particularly in Asian and English as Second Language (ESL) contexts. These instruments have consistently demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values typically above 0.80. Their clear and straightforward wording also made them suitable for adaptation into a bilingual English–Malay format, ensuring that the items were easily understood by UiTM Machang students while preserving their original meaning.

The questionnaire employed multiple-choice and Likert scale items, with respondents instructed to select only one answer for each question. Both English and Malay versions were made available to ensure clarity and accessibility for all participants.

Validity Assurance

The questionnaire's validity was confirmed through expert review and pilot testing. Three senior lecturers in English communication, educational psychology, and research methodology evaluated the items for clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness, leading to minor wording adjustments. A pilot test with 30 UiTM Machang business students (not in the main sample) was then conducted to check comprehension and flow in both English and Malay versions. Feedback prompted slight refinements, and all items achieved acceptable item–total correlations (> 0.30), indicating suitability for the main study.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis was begun with descriptive analysis such as frequency and percentage analysis in analysing the respondents' demographic profile. At the same time the reliability test has been conducted to assess and ensure the consistency of the measurement for the main variables such as communication anxiety, comfort speaking English, and fear of a negative evaluation on the speaking anxiety. Then, it is follows with Pearson's correlation coefficient to explore relationships between variables. Regression analysis was the used to investigated

further the effect of the communication anxiety, comfort speaking English, and fear of a negative evaluation on the speaking anxiety among UiTM Machang students.

Findings and Discussion

Reliability test was conducted to check the internal consistency of the measurement for each variable and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Result of Reliability Test

Variables	No. of item	Cronbach's Alpha
Speaking Anxiety	4	0.921
Fear of Negative Evaluation	6	0.954
Comfort in Speaking English	4	0.969
Communication Apprehension	4	0.943

Based on Burgos-Benavides et al. (2023), Cronbach Alpha values of more than 0.6, considered acceptable. The Cronbach's Alpha value for dependent variable which is speaking anxiety is 0.921, fear of negative evaluation 0.954, comfort in speaking English 0.969, and communication apprehension is 0.943. All the results were considered to have adequate reliability and to be acceptable for this study because they were all over 0.6.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Respondent

Characteristic	Descriptive	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	30	19.7
	Female	122	80.3
Status	Single	150	98.7
	Married	2	1.3
Program	Bachelor in Office Systems Management (BA232)	83	54.6
	Bachelor in Business Technology Management (BA262)	33	21.7
	Bachelor of Business in Marketing (BA270)	15	9.9
	Bachelor of Business in Finance (BA272)	21	13.8
Semester	2	33	21.7
	3	5	3.3
	4	50	32.9
	5	28	18.4
	6	36	23.7
CGPA	First Class (3.50 - 4.00)	63	41.4
	Second Class Upper (3.00 - 3.49)	85	55.9
	Second Class Lower (2.20 - 2.99)	4	2.6
TOTAL		152	100

Table 2 presents the frequencies and percentages of the respondents' demographic characteristics as measured in Section A of the questionnaires which gathered the respondents' demographic details, which included their CGPA, course, semester, gender and status. The total respondents are 152 out of 534. Majority of the respondents are female. Amongst of 152 responders, 122 were female (80.3%) and only 30 (19.7%) were male with only 2 (1.3%) students out of 152 respondents are married and majority of them are single, which is 150 (98.7%). Most of these respondents came from bachelor's in office systems management 83 students (54.6%), 33 (21.7%) students are from bachelor's in business technology management, while 21 (13.8%) of them are from Bachelor of Business in Finance and only 15 (9.9%) of them are from Bachelor of Business in Marketing contributing. This study only focuses on students from semester 2 onward since it's needing the information on the CGPA. Most of the respondents are in semester 2 with 33 students (21.7%) then 5 of students (3.3%) from semester 3, 50 (32.9%) students are from semester 4, then 28 (18.4%) of the students from semester 5, and 36 (23.7%) students are from semester 6. Furthermore, for CGPA profile, the respondents who from Second Class Upper (3.00 – 3.49) contribute higher percent with 55.9% consists of 85 students, followed by respondents from First Class (3.50 – 4.00) with 41.4% consists of 63 students, and only with 2.6% consists of 4 students with Second Class Lower (2.20 – 2.99).

Table 3: Result for Correlation Analysis

Relationship	<i>r</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Result
Fear of negative evaluation and Speaking anxiety	0.930	<0.001	Very Strong and positive relationship
Comfort in speaking English and Speaking anxiety	-0.662	<0.001	Strong and negative relationship
Communication apprehension and Speaking Anxiety	0.892	<0.001	Very Strong and positive relationship

Correlation is significant at 1% (p-value < 0.01)

Correlation analysis revealed the relationship between speaking anxiety with fear of evaluation, comfort in speaking English and communication apprehension as shown in Table 3. The result of Pearson correlation indicated there is a very strong positive relationship between fear of negative evaluation and speaking anxiety (*r*-value = 0.930) which mean that an increase in fear of negative evaluation contributed to an increase in speaking anxiety. However, the relationship between comfort in speaking English and speaking anxiety is moderate negative (*r*-value = -0.662). This result explains that an increase in comfort in speaking English contributed to a decrease in speaking anxiety. In addition, the result also shows that there is a strong relationship between communication apprehension and speaking anxiety (*r*-value = 0.892) which explained that an increase in communication apprehension contributed to an increase in speaking anxiety. Table 3 also shows that the relationship between all these variables with speaking anxiety are significant with the *p*-value for all the variables are <0.001 is less than the level of significance 1%.

Table 4: Regression Analysis for Speaking Anxiety

	Beta	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Result
Fear of Negative Evaluation	.680	.072	9.409	<0.001	Significant
Comfort in Speaking English	-.012	.038	-.310	0.757	Not Significant
Communication Apprehension	.265	.071	3.773	<0.001	Significant

**Significance at 1% (*p*-value < 0.01)

The results of the correlational analyses discussed previously show numerous bivariate relationships, which could not indicate the influence of one variable on another. A multiple regression model was employed with R^2 value is 0.877. It was discovered that 87.7% total variation in speaking anxiety is able to be explained by all the independent variables. The results of the coefficients of the three independent variables; fear of negative evaluation, comfort in speaking English and communication apprehension from the regression models as well as their levels of significance are summarized in Table 4. As can be seen, only two coefficients were statistically significant at significance level 1% which are fear of negative evaluation $\hat{\beta} = .680$, t -value = 9.409, p -value = <0.001) and communication apprehension ($\hat{\beta} = 0.265$, t -value = 3.773, p -value = <0.001) since the p -value is less than the significance value, 1%. Among these variables, fear of negative evaluation was the most powerful predictor of speaking anxiety followed by communication apprehension, while comfort in speaking English variable is not significantly affect the speaking anxiety ($\hat{\beta} = -0.012$, t -value = - 0.310, p -value = 0.757). Hence, based on this Regression analysis result reveals that fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension shows a significant influence on speaking anxiety Meanwhile, comfort in speaking English shows no significant influence with speaking anxiety.

Conclusion and Discussion

The focus of this study is on speaking anxiety among university students specifically at UiTM Kelantan which investigates the implications of speaking anxiety within the Malaysian higher education context. The study seeks to investigate the factors that contribute to speaking anxiety, particularly among students whose first language is not English. Through surveys and interviews, the research seeks to uncover the diverse manifestations of speaking anxiety, ranging from physical symptoms to avoidance behaviours, and understand how this anxiety impacts students' educational experiences, academic performance, and overall well-being. The study revealed that fear of negative evaluation, comfort in speaking English, and communication apprehension are all have significant relationship with speaking anxiety which there is a significant positive relationship between fear of negative evaluation and speaking anxiety. Students who are afraid of receiving negative feedback are more likely to experience speaking anxiety. These findings align with Nadiah et al. (2019) suggesting that higher fear of negative evaluation can increase speaking anxiety. In addition, it also found a significant positive relationship between communication apprehension and speaking anxiety. Students with a higher level of communication apprehension are more likely to experience speaking anxiety. There is strong positive relationship between communication apprehension with speaking anxiety and the regression analysis also shows that communication apprehension is also significantly influence the speaking anxiety. Ernesto et al., 2019 also suggested that higher

communication apprehension correlates with increased speaking anxiety. Based on correlation analysis, there is also a significant negative relationship between comfort in speaking English and speaking anxiety. Students who are more comfortable speaking English have lower levels of speaking anxiety however, the regression analysis found that there is not enough evidence to prove the communication apprehension influence the speaking anxiety. These findings align with previous research by Lai et al. (2023). These findings suggest that addressing fear of negative evaluation and enhancing comfort and confidence in speaking English can significantly reduce speaking anxiety among university students. Implementing supportive interventions, such as cognitive-behavioural techniques, language immersion programs, and stress management strategies, can help students overcome their speaking anxiety and improve their overall academic performance and well-being.

Future Research

The study provides the valuable understanding on the factors influencing speaking anxiety among business students in Malaysia. Thus, the future research could expand the sample to other disciplines such as medicine, engineering or social humanities to determine whether the factors different across the field. Second, future studies could investigate the role of cultural factors, such as collectivism, fear of losing face, or societal expectations, in shaping students' attitudes toward public speaking and their fear of negative evaluation. Lastly, the future research could investigate the role of technology, such as virtual reality (VR) or online communication platforms, in reducing speaking anxiety. The understanding on this issue could provide innovative solution for speaking anxiety due to the increasing use of technology in education and the workplace. By addressing these gaps, future research can build on the findings of this study and provide a more comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety and its implications for students' academic and professional success.

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