EXPLORING LECTURER AWARENESS FOR ADDRESSING SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG ENGLISH MAJORS

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Abstract*: This study explores lecturers' awareness of speaking anxiety among English majors, examining how this awareness impacts teaching strategies. Through qualitative analysis of eight lecturers at UnIPSAS, the study identifies key symptoms and underlying causes of anxiety, revealing lecturers' proactive yet informal approaches. The study identifies specific symptoms of anxiety, such as silence, stammering, and avoidance of eye contact, aligning with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) framework of language anxiety. Key factors contributing to anxiety include students' lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, and limited proficiency. Results indicate that while lecturers employ strategies like code-switching and supportive practices, there is limited formal support for students experiencing anxiety. These findings underscore the need for structured resources to help lecturers address speaking anxiety, fostering a more conducive learning environment.*

Keywords: *language anxiety, lecturer's awareness, speaking, speaking anxiety*

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Introduction

Anxiety is one of the problems that prevent ESL learners from being able to speak fluently in English. Three categories of anxiety are recognized by psychologists as being pertinent to language learning: situation-specific anxiety, which arises in specific circumstances like public speaking or class presentations; trait anxiety, which is a stable personality trait; and state anxiety, which is a response to a particular event, such as an exam. When students are expected to use a second language, particularly for speaking assignments, each of these issues may come up (Hashemi, 2011).

The most popular reason for a significant portion of second language learners are not able to become fluent speakers of their target language is anxiety, even though they are interested and motivated to learn the target language (Afzal et al., 2023). According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), many learners experienced anxiety when they were learning another language. They also developed an instrument called the 'Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale' (FLCAS) which could be used to pin down the type and level of anxiety among foreign or second language learners. Many learners choose to keep quiet and do not speak in the target language as much as they should even if they are in a classroom environment, they are more comfortable receiving input which is listening in classes rather than producing output. Because of that, in the long run, they will find it challenging to speak fluently in the target language even after years of learning the language (Afzal et al., 2023).

Raising instructors' understanding of language anxiety may enable them to employ helpful teaching techniques in the classroom, which may lessen students' worry and promote increased language use. Fostering a secure, effective learning environment where kids feel comfortable enough to engage fully requires this insight. Thus, this research is trying to answer whether lecturers are aware of the speaking anxiety among English major students.

Past Research

Several studies of language stress and anxiety among English language learners study address the stress, nervousness, or anxiety of English learners while learning to speak the English language. This can affect the motivation and the ability to learn the English language and cause the study objective to fail. The article also gives a better explanation on what is language anxiety which is the broader construct of anxiety as a basic human emotion that may come on from numerous situations. Such as, if a shy student is asked to give a short talk in front of the whole class, he or she may feel anxious.

Additionally, research highlights gender as a factor in language anxiety, with female students often experiencing higher levels of speaking anxiety than their male counterparts (Afzal & Hashim, 2023). The studies by Afzal A & Hashim A (2023) indicated that the level of speaking anxiety among Malaysian undergraduate students was moderate according to the 'Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale' (FLCAS). Gender also played a significant role in influencing the level of speaking anxiety with female students experiencing the higher level of anxiety compared to the male students. Research consistently shows that female students experience higher levels of speaking anxiety than male students, indicating that gender plays a significant role in language anxiety (Afzal et al., 2023). This insight provide educators with a more individualized approach to support the students.

Speaking Anxiety

When people are obliged to speak in a language other than their native tongue, language anxiety is a typical psychological issue that affects them. Speaking can be defined as an oral skill of communication to convey ideas and messages. The role of anxiety as one of the most aggravating factors that could affect one's speaking performance has been investigated by many researchers. Anxiety can be described as the subjective experience of tension, uncertainty, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Zahidah Zahra Mohd Zamri & Hashim, 2023).

Therefore, language anxiety is more than just nervousness about making mistakes or feeling uncomfortable, it can seriously hamper language learning and fluency, making it difficult for someone to communicate successfully. Researchers found that speaking in a second language is the most anxiety for the students and half is the use of speaking skills as a confidence-building experience some college students admitted that actually, they had gotten the ideas in their mind, however, they felt difficult to express them orally (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020).

Gender also plays a significant role in speaking anxiety. Initial analysis indicated that female students had a higher level of speaking anxiety compared to male students. Further analysis using a t-test showed that the difference between the two genders was significant. In other words, gender does affect the level of speaking anxiety among the students (Afzal et al., 2023). Understanding language anxiety is crucial because a sizable section of the world's population suffers from it. The capacity to communicate effectively in various languages is becoming more and more appreciated as globalization and multiculturalism continue to alter the modern world.

Cause of Language Anxiety

For educators, students, and researchers alike, figuring out the underlying causes of language anxiety is critical because it sheds light on the reasons why people might feel more stressed, afraid, or uncomfortable when using a language other than their mother tongue. According to research found that there are three general sources of anxiety which are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Prillienia, n.d.). Communication apprehension is when students have personality traits like shyness and quietness. Shy students often restrict their career goals to fields with limited spoken communication. Next, test anxiety is when examination and evaluation scenarios cause students to feel anxious and stressed out. It severely affects their performance, emotional and behavioural well-being, and attitudes toward school. After that, fear of negative evaluation avoiding situations that call for review and having the incorrect impression that they would always be rated negatively are all symptoms of dread of receiving a bad evaluation.

Other than that, one of the major causes of language anxiety is when the student feels unconfident about their English language. Researchers found that the main cause of speaking anxiety among the students was their doubts about their language competence. In other words, they experience high speaking anxiety because they feel that their competence in the language is not good or not up to the standard (Afzal et al., 2023).

The causes of language anxiety are multifaceted and often interrelated, stemming from a combination of personal, social, and educational factors. Difficulties in the language and social and cultural environments are also one of the causes of language anxiety among ESL learners. The study found that language anxiety may be caused by insufficient command of the target language It may be experienced due to linguistic difficulties L2/FL learners face in learning and

using the target language. Furthermore, it may be experienced due to extrinsic motivators, such as different social and cultural environments, particularly the environments where L1 and L2/FL learning takes place (Hashemi, 2011). Therefore, further research into these aspects may help language instructors reduce anxiety in the classroom and create a less stressful environment, which will ultimately help students perform better in the target language.

The Awareness of Language Anxiety

Acknowledging the existence of language anxiety is the first step towards creating a supportive and inclusive language learning environment. We may more effectively empathize with persons who feel this anxiety and seek to lessen its consequences if we are aware of the warning signals and symptoms. According to Nadia, H., & Hilalina, N. (2020), to tackle those issues, lecturers should be more aware of students' anxiety to help students gain self-confidence to speak in English class. Furthermore, other study revealed that communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of a poor grade, lack of vocabulary, underestimating one's ability, lack of preparation, fear of making mistakes, and embarrassment in front of peers were the main causes of students' speaking anxiety in an academic English class. This emphasizes the critical role that teachers play in fostering a supportive learning environment to reduce anxiety (Damayanti, M., & Listyani, L., 2020).

In addition, by comprehending language anxiety, we have put educational measures into place that assist learners in overcoming their apprehensions, thereby promoting more efficient language learning and cross-cultural communication. the study suggests that lecturers and teachers need to be aware of the phenomena of speaking anxiety, even if the students major in English in their studies. If they are not aware, this could result in their teaching methods being hindered by reluctant learners who are anxious (Zahidah Zahra Mohd Zamri & Hashim, 2023). Even while learning a new language can be an exciting and gratifying experience, many students experience anxiety and uneasiness when speaking a language that is not their mother tongue, so teachers must play a crucial part in preventing the phenomenon of language anxiety. The study found that teachers' attitudes towards and beliefs about language learning and teaching, their reaction to the learners' errors, and the way they create stressful environments in the class have been reported to be significantly related to second/foreign language anxiety (Tanveer, 2007). Therefore, to counter the problems of this study, teachers must be aware of the language anxiety among ESL students.

Furthermore, teachers also need to be able to adapt to the new environment and try new things in the classroom to motivate and make the students more confident in classes. According to research, Based on verbal data related to learning reading behaviors: 50% of research subjects change to learning materials to improve their reading skills after treatment; 60% of subjects use new media, including online applications such as Cake, Instagram, Facebook, Wattpad, Webtoon, Mengabat.com, Mangadex, Google, Twitter, Google Scholar, Social Media, Musixmatch, Twitter, YouTube (Atmowardoyo & Sakkir, 2021). By understanding and harnessing the power of practice-based approaches, we can equip English learners with the tools and experiences they need to thrive in diverse, English-speaking environments, both academically and professionally.

Methodology

Qualitative analysis was applied to this study. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This method is chosen because it can better understand the

research objectives, which are to find out how far lecturers in this institution are aware that speaking anxiety exists among English major students.

In this study, the convenience sampling was chosen. The limit target of the sample of the subgroup will be 8 participants. The focus of the sample is only on the lecturers in the English faculty at Sultan Ahmad Shah Pahang Islamic University (UnIPSAS). Convenience sampling involves choosing individuals who are readily available or easily accessible, so it is vastly popular among researchers because not all researcher has the time, budget, and resources to do research. Even though convenience sampling is fast and convenient, it also can lead to a biased result in the study.

The study started with the making of the open-ended questionnaire based on the research questions 'Are lecturers aware of the speaking anxiety among English major students?' and 'Do lecturers apply practice-based activities in ESL classrooms for English major students?' The questionnaire consisted of seven questions related to the research question. The questionnaire was adapted from previous tests: Horwitz, et at. (1986), Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) where understanding on the existence, symptoms, causes, and effects of speaking anxiety as well as methods and tools to deal with it is the goal. Therefore, it can be broken down into several ideas which are awareness and prevalence, observable behaviours or signs, student feedback and concerns, contributing factors, effects on learning, strategies for intervention, and available resources. After that, the questionnaire was conducted using Google Forms with lecturers in the English faculty at Sultan Ahmad Shah Pahang Islamic University (UnIPSAS). The interview was recorded and ensured that the participant's responses were kept confidential and that their identity was protected if required. After that, the interview will be transcribed, and analyze the interview data, looking for patterns, themes, or insights relevant to your research objectives.

The contents that were presented in Table 1 are the research question, method, instrument, and statistical analysis used to gain necessary data. The purpose of the table is to summarize the understanding of the research and make certain that the research did not astray for the objective. Both of the research questions use the questionnaire method to collect data from the participants using an open-ended questionnaire as the instrument. Both of the research questions also will be using thematic analysis.

Table 1: Summary of Research Question

Research Questions.	Method/ technique	instrument	Statistical Analysis
RQ1: are lectures aware of the speaking anxiety among English major students?	interviews	Open-ended questionnaire	Thematic analysis

Discussion
This section discusses the findings from the open-ended questionnaire conducted with ESL lecturers regarding their awareness of speaking anxiety among English major students and to examine the types of practice-based activities used by lecturers and their perceived effectiveness in developing English language skills, particularly in reducing language anxiety among students. Key patterns in the data were found using thematic analysis, and these are presented in light of the study questions. An in-depth analysis and interpretation are offered after the themes are supported with quotes from the data.

Are Lecturers Aware Of The Speaking Anxiety Among English Major Students?

Awareness of Speaking Anxiety among Lecturers

The first research question asked, "Are lecturers aware of the speaking anxiety among English major students?" According to the responses, most educators are aware that their students suffer from speaking anxiety. The majority of responders confirmed this by saying things like:

"Yes"

"yes, I do"

"To a certain extent."

However, a small number of lecturers expressed students had not explicitly shared these concerns with them, suggesting that while anxiety is acknowledged, not all students vocalize it. One lecturer stated, *"I asked them instead when I see the signs. And they confessed."* This indicates that, in some cases, lecturers proactively initiate discussions to uncover students' anxiety. This study backs up the findings of Horwitz et al. (1986), who highlighted the importance of teachers recognizing anxiety as a key component of learning a foreign language. This understanding is crucial because it supports educators' roles as promoters of students' emotional and intellectual development (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Occasionally, lecturers have to initiate a discussion about speaking anxiety. When instructors notice symptoms of anxiousness, students open up to them about their struggles. Student disclosure may be limited or incomplete, according to some respondents ("To a certain extent," "Some"). This implies that although students may voice their worries, they may not always do so in detail or may only do so under specific conditions.

Observable Signs of Speaking Anxiety

Various behaviour and speech-related indicators were reported by lecturers when asked to describe observable signs of speaking anxiety. These comprised:

Stammering or stuttering: *"Stammering and grammatical mistakes"*

Avoiding eye contact: *"Some of the signs are anxious, stuttering, no eye contact."*

Refusing to speak or remaining silent: *"Keep silence and quiet when we ask questions or in a discussion."*

These results support the body of research on language anxiety symptoms and imply that lecturers are skilled at identifying typical anxiety symptoms. Previous research on communication anxiety is also supported by the avoidance of participation, quietness, and physical symptoms like fidgeting. Lecturers reported various signs of speaking anxiety, including stammering, avoidance of eye contact, and refusal to speak in class. These findings are consistent with MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) study, which identified avoidance behavior and speech disruptions as common symptoms of language anxiety. Such indicators suggest that students may experience high levels of discomfort in oral communication tasks, which correlates with research on communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1984). This helps establish that lecturers not only are aware of speaking anxiety but also are capable of identifying several observable symptoms in students.

Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety

When asked about the main causes of speaking anxiety, lecturers gave a number of important explanations. These comprised:

Lack of proficiency: *"Lack of proficiency and ideas," and "Poor command of language."*

Low self-confidence: *"Low confidence level, afraid of making mistakes."*

Fear of mistakes: *"Afraid to make mistakes," and "Fear for public speaking."*

A significant contributing element to anxiety is the interaction between low self-confidence and public speaking anxiety, indicating that resolving these underlying worries may help students feel less anxious. Numerous answers emphasized that speaking anxiety gets worse by inadequate language skills, a small vocabulary, and an inability to articulate thoughts. Because they question their capacity to utilise English successfully, students experience anxiety. This is aligned with one of the researches that stated It was discovered that the students' own concerns about their language proficiency were the primary source of their speaking anxiety. Stated in different ways, people have significant levels of speaking anxiety because they believe they are not proficient in the language (Afzal et al., 2023). Students' general willingness to speak is impacted when they feel inadequate or nervous about making mistakes. Their anxiety of being evaluated by classmates or teachers is heightened by this lack of confidence. "Apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" is the definition of dread of negative evaluation. This means that fear of a negative evaluation is a combination of worry about other people's opinions, avoiding circumstances that require evaluation, and the delusion that one will always be evaluated negatively (Prillienia, n.d.).

Impact of Speaking Anxiety on Language Learning

Speaking anxiety, according to lecturers, greatly hinders students' development. According to the respondents, anxious students are less likely to participate, which has an impact on their language learning. Few lecturers stated:

"They are not going to master the language hence it will affect their studies."

"Yes, it might hinder their learning process, if they couldn't get past the fear, how would they improve?"

The affective filter theory was also mentioned, with one lecturer explaining, "If language learners are unable to lower their affective/emotions, they will have difficulty in the learning process." This aligns with Krashen's theory that high anxiety can act as a barrier to effective language acquisition. According to the affective filter theory hypothesis, a high affective filter may discourage language learners from looking for input and impede their ability to acquire the language (Gu Liang et al., 2008). speaking anxiety plays a critical role in reducing student participation, hindering language mastery, and negatively affecting academic performance. This anxiety, if not managed, could have lasting effects on the students' ability to perform well in both language assessments and overall language proficiency. This was aligned with a study that stated that even if students major in English, lecturers and professors should be mindful of the phenomenon of speaking anxiety. If they are unaware, this could potentially lead to

apprehensive and unwilling students impeding their teaching approaches (Zahidah Zahra Mohd Zamri & Hashim, 2023).

Interventions to Address Speaking Anxiety

One of the questions asked, "Have you implemented any strategies or interventions to address speaking anxiety in your ESL classes? Please explain if there is any.". In their ESL classes, lecturers reported using a number of techniques to combat speaking anxiety:

Encouragement and motivation: *"By encouraging and giving them motivation."*

Creating opportunities for safe practice: *"Providing speaking opportunities to speak freely about any topics without having to worry about the technical part of the language."*

Code-switching: *"I prefer to code-switch so that students will feel easy and not stress."*

According to the data, teachers use a range of techniques to help ESL students who are nervous when speaking. These include encouraging students, establishing secure practice environments, offering rewards, employing code-switching, and giving them a say in presentations. The study stated that English-language learners should be encouraged to practice the English language inside and outside the classroom (Abbas & Kashif, 2019). Understanding one's own preferred learning style can enable both ESL students and teachers to employ a variety of appropriate learning techniques to meet their preferences in ESL lessons and reduce students' anxiety levels (Aidit et al., n.d.). According to Ezeh et al. (2022), In ESL contexts, code-switching and mixing have progressive and beneficial effects on language acquisition for both teachers and students. The diverse ways in which these tactics are applied indicate that although many instructors take the initiative to manage anxiety, others could require assistance in refining their methods. The overall goal of these treatments is to foster a less scary and more encouraging learning atmosphere so that students feel comfortable participating in speaking assignments.

Resources and Support Systems

On the question about the specific resources or support systems available to English major students who struggle with speaking anxiety, some lecturers cited one-on-one support and counselling services. Personalized help, including one-on-one discussions with instructors and counsellors, is highly valued, with the presence of certified counsellors at UnIPSAS provides students with an alternative resource for discussing their anxiety. This option is crucial for students who may feel more comfortable talking to someone outside the classroom environment. With this method, pupils can get individualized support and direction, enabling them to deal with their anxieties in a more private environment.

"One-to-one conversation with lecturers and counselors."

"Certified counselors available if they do not want to share it with the lecturers."

According to the study, psychological therapy for enrolled English language learners is desperately needed in order to enable them to learn comfortably and with confidence (Abbas & Kashif, 2019). There may be a communication or support system gap, nevertheless, as some lecturers indicated that they were unaware of some services, according to some of the respondents ("I am not aware of it.", "Not that I know of"). Students are cited as using the internet as a resource, suggesting that they can use online resources and tools to enhance their

language proficiency and lessen their anxiety. The most common methods used by proficient language learners to enhance their listening abilities include watching western films (57.5%), listening to English music (52.5%), watching YouTube (42.5%), and watching English text chats online (20%) (Atmowardoyo & Sakkir, 2021).

Conclusion

The findings indicate that most lecturers are indeed aware of students' language anxiety, particularly speaking anxiety, and can recognize common symptoms, such as silence, avoidance of eye contact, and stammering. These behaviors align with Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) framework for foreign language anxiety, indicating students' discomfort during oral assignments. Lecturers also note that students' fear of receiving poor grades exacerbates their anxiety, sometimes manifesting in physical signs like sweating. While many lecturers can identify these signs independently, some have to ask students directly to confirm their anxieties, highlighting the importance of actively encouraging students to express their fears.

Lecturers identified several factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety, including a lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited language proficiency. These factors mirror previous findings that highlight lack of vocabulary and preparation as key causes of anxiety (Muamaroh et al., 2020). Consistent with Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, lecturers observe that negative emotions, such as fear of public speaking and peer judgment, can inhibit students' language acquisition. In response, lecturers use various strategies, like encouraging students, allowing code-switching, and providing low-stakes speaking opportunities to create a supportive environment. However, there is little formal institutional support, suggesting a need for structured resources, such as workshops, to help students manage language-related anxiety more effectively.

The findings emphasize the importance of supportive learning environments and suggest practical strategies, such as practice-based exercises and technology integration, to reduce anxiety and enhance participation. However, the study is limited by its small sample size from a single institution and reliance on self-reported data from lecturers. Future research could benefit from including student perspectives, direct classroom observations, and a mixed-method approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of strategies for reducing language anxiety. This study contributes to the field of language learning by highlighting ESL instructors' awareness of speaking anxiety, providing insights into its visible symptoms, and identifying factors contributing to it.

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