# The Types and Causes of Anxiety in EFL Students during Proposal Seminar Presentations

**DIANA ACHMAD¹\*, ISKANDAR ABDUL SAMAD², ASNAWI MUSLEM³, YUNISRINA QISMULLAH YUSUF⁴, SITI SARAH FITRIANI⁵, THARA HENDRI SAFITRI⁶, AND HEATHER LINVILLE⁷**

## Abstract

A proposal seminar presentation is one of the compulsory activities that university students must undertake before writing their thesis. This usually causes anxiety for students because they have to present their research proposals in front of lecturers as reviewers. Therefore, this study aims to identify the types and causes of speaking anxiety among English Education Department students at Universitas Syiah Kuala during their proposal seminar presentations. This study used a descriptive qualitative design in which questionnaires, interviews and observation were employed as research instruments. The data were collected from ten students who were presenting their research proposals. The analysis, involving percentages and transcript examination, revealed three types of speaking anxiety: test anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of evaluation. Test anxiety emerged as the most prevalent type. Additionally, the study identified three primary factors contributing to speaking anxiety: fear of making mistakes, insufficient knowledge, and low self-confidence.

¹\* Lecturer in the English Education Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia; Corresponding author: diana.achmad@usk.ac.id
²,³,⁵Lecturer in the English Education Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia
⁴Professor in the English Education Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia
⁶English instructor at BahasaKademi in Banda Aceh
⁷Professor, University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, WI (1725 State St, La Crosse WI 54601, the United States)

**Introduction**

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students face a unique challenge in developing strong speaking skills. While fluency, the ability to speak smoothly and confidently with minimal pauses (Nunan, 2006), is essential for effective communication in various domains like education, employment, and social life (Brown, 2007), many EFL students struggle with speaking anxiety (Foreign Language Anxiety, FLA) (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Trang et al., 2013). FLA is a unique form of worry that significantly impacts many students, as evidenced by extensive research (e.g., Coryell & Clark, 2009; Kostić-Bobanović, 2009; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Tallon, 2009). This anxiety, often characterized by fear, shyness, and discomfort (Horwitz et al., 1986; Pabro-Maquidato, 2021), can significantly hinder their proficiency in spoken English. Besides those psychological factors, reliance on their native language (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013; Ur, 1996; Young, 1990) and target language barriers, such as difficulties with vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency, are significant challenges (Abrar et al., 2018). The learning environment also plays a crucial role, with the influence of lecturers, peers, and the relevance of speaking module topics impacting learners' progress in speaking English (Abrar et al., 2018).

Horwitz et al. (1986) categorized FLA into three main components: communication anxiety (fear of speaking in general), test anxiety (fear of performing poorly in speaking assessments), and fear of negative evaluation (anxiety about being judged by others). In the Indonesian university context, in terms of speaking in front of others in general (class presentations, public speaking, etc.), Akbar (2018) discovered that test anxiety was the predominant factor in Bengkulu, with students dreading the repercussions of failing their speaking class. Meanwhile, communication anxiety is the primary source of speaking anxiety in Aceh (Sari, 2017) and Lampung (Rumiyati & Seftika, 2018), followed by fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Hanifa (2018) elaborated on these findings by discussing cognitive, affective, and performance-related factors contributing to speaking anxiety. These studies reveal the importance of understanding the types and causes of foreign language anxiety (FLA) to develop effective strategies for helping EFL students overcome their anxieties and enhance their speaking skills.

Other studies have explored the factors contributing to FLA in Indonesian EFL students at the university level of first-degree students who major in English (e.g. Fitriah & Muna, 2019; Erdiana et al., 2020; Jaya & Oktavia, 2022). These studies identified factors such as inadequate preparation, weaknesses in grammar or vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes as significant contributors to FLA. Fitriah and Muna (2019) found that the teachers' inadequate planning, the students' lack of mastery of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, and prior knowledge of lessons' activities are contributing factors to FLA. Correspondingly, Erdiana et al. (2020) studied the levels of anxiety in speaking and found that most EFL students in their study experienced moderate levels of anxiety in speaking performance. Some students experience low anxiety, while others experience high anxiety. The main causes of anxiety identified include speaking in front of the class, fear of negative comments, being corrected by teachers, lack of confidence, and feeling confused. Furthermore, Jaya and Oktavia (2022) conducted a study investigating English students when presenting proposal seminars. By interviewing 20 respondents, the study revealed various reasons why students felt anxious

'when presenting their proposal seminars, including fear of failure, criticism, lack of vocabulary, mispronounced words, and fear of negative judgment.

Motivated by these findings, the present study investigates speaking anxiety faced by Acehnese students majoring in English at Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia, during proposal seminar presentations. This research brings novelty by specifically focusing on EFL students' anxiety during proposal seminar presentations. This is an underexplored context in the broader study of FLA. While previous studies have identified general factors contributing to speaking anxiety, this study offers a perspective on the specific setting of proposal seminars. The objective of this study is to determine if the types and causes of anxiety differ from those reported in previous studies, potentially due to the specific context of presenting research proposals. Subsequently, two research questions were formulated as follows:

- What types of speaking anxiety do English major students experience during proposal seminar presentations?
- What factors contribute to speaking anxiety in English major students during proposal seminar presentations?

A presentation is the activity of showing, explaining, and demonstrating something to an audience. Huda and Ma'mun (2020) identify key characteristics of presentations, including a focus on message and audience, predictable organization, the importance of form and accuracy, and language similar to written language. Therefore, a presentation is a formal conversation aimed at providing information, ideas, or explanations to an audience. Lado (2021) additionally explains that a proposal seminar is an advanced stage in presenting a thesis plan. The purpose is to identify research topics, find mentors, formulate hypotheses, understand the research background, develop or adjust methods, and summarize the project as a proposal. Students receive guidance from lecturers throughout the proposal process until completion.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding and awareness of FLA to further provide strategies to support EFL students. The formulated research questions are hoped to reveal the speaking anxiety during proposal seminars and the factors influencing it. These discoveries would offer meaningful perspectives for educators, students, and also researchers in the field of English language learning and teaching.

**Literature Review**

*Speaking and its aspects*

Speaking is a crucial skill for English students. Bailey (2003) defines speaking as an interactive activity where speakers convey meaning through production, reception, and information processing. Siahaan (2008) describes speaking as a skill necessary for producing sounds easily understood by others, facilitating effective interpersonal communication. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that speaking fluently requires not only knowledge of language functions but also the ability to process information and language in real time. Thus, speaking is both an activity and a skill aimed at directly communicating information and ideas, as well as verbally expressing feelings.

Speaking in English covers various aspects. According to Brown (2001), speaking ability can be divided into four categories: fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Firstly,

fluency refers to the ability to speak effectively and smoothly, without frequent pauses or fillers like "hmm." Brown (2001) indicates that speaking fluently means the speaker does not spend excessive time searching for words or vocabulary to convey ideas. Secondly, Harmer (2001) explains that accuracy involves the correct use of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Bailey (2003) adds that accuracy means the absence of grammatical or vocabulary errors during speaking activities. Thirdly, vocabulary is essential for effective communication. Alqahtani (2015) defines vocabulary as a set of words that facilitate successful communication. A limited vocabulary can hinder effective communication and impact speaking ability, potentially leading to speaking anxiety. Lastly, pronunciation involves how sounds are produced and perceived. Harmer (2007) defines pronunciation as the way sounds are heard, how language is formed, and how word and sentence stress, pitch, and intonation are used to convey meaning. Additionally, Richard and Schmidt (2002) emphasize the listener's perception of sound. In conclusion, speaking in English involves a comprehensive consideration of fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation. By understanding and honing these aspects, English speakers can enhance their overall communication skills and proficiency

### *Foreign language anxiety*

Spielberger (1983, as cited in Horwitz, 2001), defines anxiety as a sensation of tension, unease, nervousness, and worry triggered by the activation of the autonomic nervous system. The process of learning a new language, whether foreign or second, includes learning its grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence formation to communicate proficiently. Students may feel anxious at different stages of this process (Ekalestari et al., 2023). Language anxiety refers to the fear or apprehension individuals feel when communicating in a foreign language (Hsiao & Tseng, 2022).

Gardner (1985, as cited in Tóth, 2008) states that proponents of the foreign language anxiety model view L2-related anxiety as a specific type of anxiety that arises from the unique experience of learning and using a language other than one's native tongue (L1). This is different from general anxiety, which can occur in many different situations. Furthermore, Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed a theoretical model of foreign language anxiety (FLA). Horwitz et al. (1986) argue that FLA type of anxiety is mainly about performance evaluation in academic and social contexts. They consider FLA comprised of these three types of performance anxieties, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. They propose that these three elements form the basis of what they call foreign language anxiety.

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), communication anxiety is the fear and shyness associated with communicating with others. Communication anxiety especially affects minority language learners, like Thai-speaking Malaysian students, making them uncomfortable in English-speaking situations, particularly during spontaneous tasks (Nasir et al., 2023). Test anxiety is the fear of exam situations. Students often experience anxiety before exams, develop negative thoughts about exams, and have irrational views about assessment situations (Horwitz et al., 1986). Finally, fear of negative evaluation is defined as an "apprehension about other's evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the. expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Tóth

(2008) further states that fear of failure arises from students' worries about others' evaluations, leading them to avoid evaluative situations and anticipate negative judgments.

Language anxiety significantly affects language learners, often causing them to be silent in class (Maher & King, 2023). This type of anxiety can negatively impact language learning, affecting how well students do, how they process information, and their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Collins & Baker, 2023). Research suggests that the pressure to learn languages in a globalized world can contribute to FLA, leading to nervousness when using foreign languages (Horwitz et al., 1986; Cárdenas-Hbner, 2013). Understanding how language anxiety affects students' behavior and interactions in the classroom is important for teachers to create supportive environments that help reduce anxiety and promote language learning (Cabrera, et al., 2022).

Several studies have explored speaking anxiety. Fauzi et al. (2021) examined college students, highlighting factors like lack of preparation, fear of mistakes, and nervousness in front of others. Similarly, Huda and Ma'mun (2020) explored anxiety in presentations among EFL students, noting factors such as lack of preparation, overthinking, low proficiency, bad experiences, fear of mistakes, and low confidence. Wiranda (2019) studied second-semester English students, pinpointing communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation as principal components, with test anxiety being the most dominant. Nurhaeni (2019) investigated gender differences in language learning anxiety, finding no significant variation between male and female students. A comprehensive understanding of these factors assists in the development of strategies to lessen anxiety and enhance speaking skills.

Zabidin et al. (2023) conducted a study on undergraduates from various social science courses in Malaysia, revealing a modest relationship between motivation and communication apprehension, motivation and fear of negative evaluation, and motivation and test anxiety among ESL students. Although students exhibited high motivation levels, fear of learning a foreign language had minimal impact on their motivation. Aulia et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study on EFL students in Makassar, highlighting the significant influence of communication apprehension on speaking anxiety, particularly in public settings, and the experience of state anxiety when questioned by lecturers. They suggested that preparation, including practice and relaxation techniques, could reduce students' anxiety before speaking engagements. Additionally, Kadir and Raof (2021) investigated anxiety-related issues among undergraduate students at a public university in Malaysia, identifying factors such as presentation type, language proficiency, and preparation as contributors to anxiety. Their findings categorized anxiety symptoms into bodily, expressive, verbal, and emotional reactions, revealing the complex aspects of speaking anxiety in students.

**Methodology**

***Research design, site, and participants***

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method. Heigham and Crocker (2009) describe qualitative research as a means to understand participants' experiences of a phenomenon in a specific time and environment, exploring the various meanings these experiences hold for them. This study was conducted at the English Education Department, Universitas Kuala University, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. The subjects of this research were ten

English Department students who presented their proposal seminars. The participants were purposely selected based on specific criteria needed to address the research questions, specifically the students who were in the proposal seminar. Purposive sampling is a method used in research to select participants or data sources based on specific characteristics relevant to the study's objectives (Douglas, 2022).

### Data collection instruments and analysis

Data collection was carried out through questionnaires, interviews, and observation ensuring a thorough examination of the students' experiences and the factors influencing their speaking anxiety. The questionnaire was used to answer the first research question, and the interviews were to address the second question. Observations were also conducted to reinforce the data obtained. To determine the types of speaking anxiety among students, the researcher used the Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), consisting of 28 items related to speaking anxiety, categorized into three types: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The questionnaires were distributed to the students following their proposal seminar presentations. The data were analyzed based on the responses to the five-point Likert scale options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (McLeod, 2023). Meanwhile, the interview guide, adopted from Fauzi, et al. (2021), consisted of five questions focused on anxiety related to learning a foreign language. These interviews were conducted in Indonesian to avoid miscommunication. The purpose was to identify the factors causing student anxiety. Finally, the researchers observed the students during their proposal seminar presentations to directly understand how anxiety manifested. An observation sheet also adapted from Fauzi et al. (2021), was used to note unnatural psychological and physiological conditions. The researcher then examined the interview data to support the questionnaire findings. Responses from interviews were transcribed to identify factors contributing to speaking anxiety. Observations of the same respondents were conducted to substantiate the research data further.

The questionnaire data were separated into tables representing the three types of speaking anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The responses were calculated as percentages to determine the level of agreement with each statement and the most to the least types of speaking anxiety experienced by the students. Meanwhile, for qualitative data from the interviews and observations, the interactive model analysis (Miles et al., 2014) was used to analyze the data: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In data condensation, the transcribed data from the interviews were chosen, narrowed down, and transformed by eliminating irrelevant information and emphasizing important details. The intention is to produce a condensed, yet basic meaning-retaining representation of the data that makes analysis and interpretation easier. Meanwhile, in the data display, the data from the reduction phase were categorized and displayed in a more organized manner. This included classifying and identifying emerging themes from the interviews and observation. Hence, the themes from the observation were further calculated as percentages to determine the portion of signs of anxiety exhibited by the students during their presentations. Finally, in conclusion, drawing, the researchers identified the structure of students' anxiety in speaking English, the themes that emerged from observation, discussed them based on theoretical frameworks, and reinforced the findings with data from

questionnaires. Conclusions were drawn about the types of speaking anxiety and factors that contributed to students' speaking anxiety during proposal seminar presentations.

### Findings

In this section, the researcher presented the results of the data collected using three instruments: questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

### *The result of the questionnaire*

The questionnaire results were categorized into the three types of speaking anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986): communication fear, test anxiety, and fear of evaluation. The results are presented as follows:

***Communication fear*** arises when individuals feel afraid or embarrassed to communicate with others. This can stem from a lack of experience in interacting with society. The findings of this study related to communication fear are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Communication fear*

| No. | Statement | Scale | | | | |
|-----|-----------|-------|---|---|---|---|
| | | SA (%) | A (%) | NA (%) | D (%) | SD (%) |
| 1 | I never feel quite sure of myself when I'm speaking in English. | 0 (0) | 3 (30) | 3 (30) | 4 (40) | 0 (0) |
| 2 | It frightens me when I don't understand the material of my proposal | 3 (30) | 1 (10) | 4 (40) | 1 (10) | 1 (10) |
| 3 | I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my seminar proposal presentation | 3 (30) | 4 (40) | 1 (10) | 1 (10) | 1 (10) |
| 4 | I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language during the seminar proposal presentation | 0 (0) | 2 (20) | 3 (30) | 4 (40) | 1 (10) |
| 5 | I get upset when I don't understand what reviewers are correcting | 1 (10) | 3 (30) | 2 (20) | 3 (30) | 1 (10) |
| 6 | I feel confident when I speak in a foreign language during my seminar proposal presentation | 1 (10) | 3 (30) | 2 (20) | 2 (20) | 2 (20) |
| 7 | I feel very self-conscious about speaking a foreign language in front of others | 1 (10) | 1 (10) | 4 (40) | 3 (30) | 1 (10) |
| 8 | I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my seminar proposal presentation | 1 (10) | 4 (40) | 2 (20) | 3 (30) | 0 (0) |
| 9 | I get nervous when I don't understand every word the reviewers say | 0 (0) | 3 (30) | 3 (30) | 2 (20) | 2 (20) |
| 10 | I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules to speak a foreign language | 1 (10) | 2 (20) | 5 (50) | 1 (10) | 1 (10) |
| 11 | I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language | 1 (10) | 0 (0) | 3 (30) | 5 (50) | 1 10) |
| | Total | 24 | 64 | 96 | 88 | 35 |
| | Percentage | 2.18 | 5.82 | 8.73 | 8 | 3.18 |
| | Result | | | 27.91 | | |

The findings in Table 1 present significant levels of communication fear among the students when speaking English at seminar proposal presentations. As much as 70% of students reported feeling panic when required to communicate in English without prior preparation, as evidenced by their responses to statement number three. This high level of anxiety is further

supported by the fact that only one subject strongly agreed with the positively phrased statement six, indicating confidence in speaking English during presentations, while 40% disagreed. These responses suggest that a lack of preparation and experience in interacting in English contributes significantly to their communication fear.

Furthermore, the data showed the students' overall low confidence in speaking English. For instance, the positively framed statement about feeling confident during seminar presentations received minimal strong agreement, and a substantial proportion of students expressed disagreement. This lack of confidence worsened their communication fear, making it challenging for them to engage effectively in seminar proposal presentations.

**Test anxiety** refers to the anxiety that one experiences due to the fear of failing during a test. This type of anxiety occurs when an individual is confronted with an examination. The results of the questionnaire regarding test anxiety among the subjects of this study are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Test anxiety*

| No. | Statement | Scale | | | | |
|-----|-----------|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | | SA (%) | A (%) | NA (%) | D (%) | SD (%) |
| 1 | I tremble when I know that I'm going to present my seminar proposal | 2 (20) | 2 (20) | 0 (0) | 4 (40) | 2 (20) |
| 2 | During the presentation, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the seminar proposal presentation | 2 (20) | 2 (20) | 3 (30) | 1 (10) | 2 (20) |
| 3 | I am usually at ease during the seminar proposal presentation | 1 (10) | 5 (50) | 1 (10) | 3 (30) | 0 (0) |
| 4 | I worry about the consequences of failing my seminar proposal presentation | 5 (50) | 1 (10) | 2 (20) | 1 (10) | 1 (10) |
| 5 | In seminar proposal presentation, I can get so nervous until I forget things now | 3 (30) | 1 (10) | 1 (10) | 3 (30) | 2 (20) |
| 6 | Even if I am well prepared for seminar proposal presentation, I still feel anxious about it | 2 (20) | 5 (50) | 2 (20) | 1 (10) | 0 (0) |
| 7 | I often feel like not going to my seminar proposal presentation because of fear | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 2 (20) | 5 (50) | 3 (30) |
| 8 | I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called in my seminar proposal presentation | 4 (40) | 2 (20) | 2 (20) | 2 (20) | 0 (0) |
| 9 | The more I study for the presentation, the more confused I get | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (10) | 4 (40) | 5 (50) |
| 10 | I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for my seminar proposal presentation | 1 (10) | 3 (30) | 2 (20) | 3 (30) | 1 (10) |
| 11 | I feel more tense and nervous during my seminar proposal presentation | 2 (20) | 3 (30) | 2 (20) | 3 (30) | 0 (0) |
| 12 | When I'm on my way to my seminar proposal presentation, I feel very sure and relaxed | 2 (20) | 4 (40) | 2 (20) | 2 (20) | 0 (0) |
| | Total | 40 | 80 | 60 | 108 | 76 |
| | Percentage | 3.33 | 6.67 | 5 | 9 | 6.33 |
| | Result | 30.33 | | | | |

Table 2 shows the levels of test anxiety experienced by students during their seminar proposal presentations. Test anxiety, characterized by a fear of failing their seminars, is evident in several of the responses. For instance, statement number four reveals a noticeable fear of failure, with 50% of the students (5 out of 10) strongly agreeing (SA) that they worry about the

consequences of failing their seminar proposal presentation. This anxiety is further supported by the responses to statement number six, where 70% of the subjects (7 out of 10) selected either strongly agree (SA) or agree (A) to the statement "Even if I am well prepared for the seminar proposal presentation, I still feel anxious about it", indicating that preparation does not significantly mitigate their anxiety.

Additionally, the data show other dimensions of test anxiety. For example, 60% of students (6 out of 10) reported feeling their hearts pound when they are about to be called for their presentation (statement number eight). Moreover, 80% of students (8 out of 10) admitted to experiencing distracting thoughts during their presentations (statement number two), and a notable percentage (70%) expressed a tendency to forget things due to nervousness (statement number five). These findings emphasize the nature of test anxiety among the students, affecting not only their preparation and performance but also their physical and mental state during the presentations.

***Fear of evaluation*** occurs when someone experiences anxiety about receiving criticism or negative evaluations from others. This fear can lead individuals to be hesitant about evaluation and may even cause them to avoid it altogether. In the context of foreign language learners, fear of evaluation can stem from assessments by teachers, audiences, or peers. The results of data collection using questionnaires in this study concerning this type of anxiety are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Fear of evaluation*

| No. | Statement | SA (%) | A (%) | Scale NA (%) | D (%) | SD (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I don't worry about making mistakes in seminar proposal presentation | 0 (0) | 1 (10) | 2 (20) | 4 (40) | 3 (30) |
| 2 | I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am in the presentation | 1 (10) | 6 (60) | 1 (10) | 1 (10) | 1 (10) |
| 3 | It embarrasses me if I have to answer questions from the reviewer | 1 (10) | 2 (20) | 2 (20) | 4 (40) | 1 (10) |
| 4 | I am afraid that my reviewers are ready to correct every mistake I make | 0 (0) | 5 (50) | 2 (20) | 2 (20) | 1 (10) |
| 5 | I am afraid that the others will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language | 2 (20) | 5 (50) | 0 (0) | 2 (20) | 1 (10) |
| | Total | 4 | 40 | 23 | 44 | 23 |
| | Percentage | 0.8 | 8 | 4.6 | 8.8 | 4.6 |
| | Result | 26.8 | | | | |

Based on Table 3, the fear of evaluation is a significant source of anxiety for students during their seminar proposal presentations. Fear of evaluation, which involves anxiety about receiving criticism or negative judgments from others, is highlighted in several statements. For example, statement number two indicates that 70% of students (7 out of 10) feel that other students are better at languages than they are, with 10% strongly agreeing (SA) and 60% agreeing (A). This suggests that many students are self-conscious about their language skills in comparison to their peers, contributing to their anxiety. Additionally, statement number four shows that half of the students (50%) strongly agree (SA) that they are afraid reviewers will correct every mistake they make, further indicating a significant fear of being judged.

Moreover, fear of embarrassment is also evident. Statement number five reveals that 70% of students (7 out of 10) are afraid others will laugh at them when they speak in a foreign language, with 20% strongly agreeing (SA) and 50% agreeing (A). This indicates a strong fear of ridicule. Additionally, 60% of students (6 out of 10) express embarrassment at the prospect of answering questions from reviewers (statement number three), and 70% (7 out of 10) worry about making mistakes during their presentations (statement number one). These findings suggest that fear of evaluation is a common issue, causing significant stress and hesitation among students during their seminar proposal presentations.

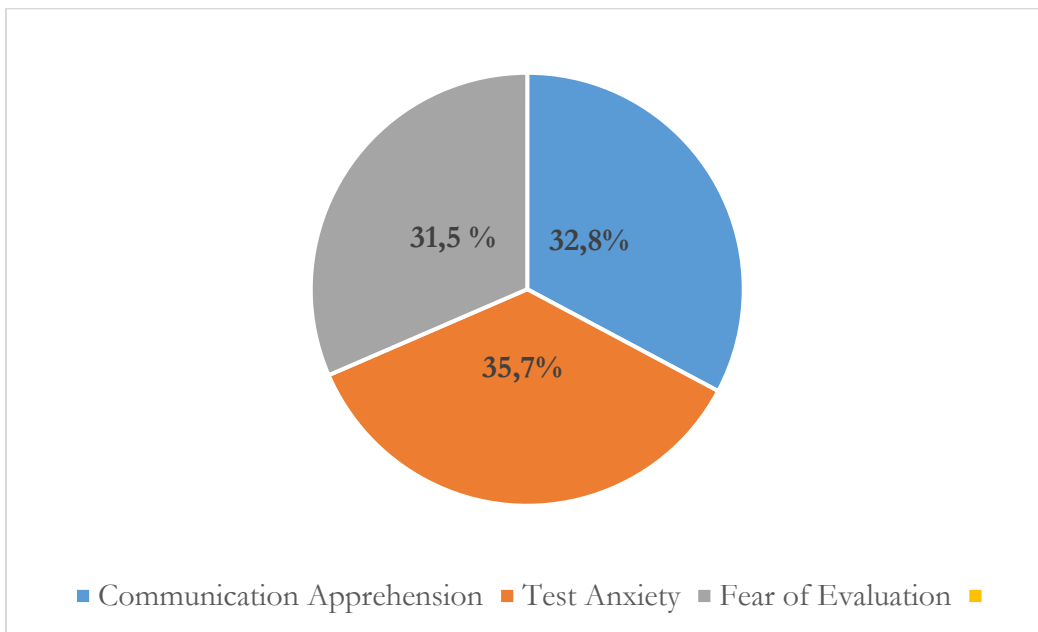**Figure 1.** *Percentage of types of speaking anxiety*



Figure 1 illustrates that the students experience varying levels of three types of speaking anxiety, each with different percentage distributions. The average percentage across all statements regarding types of speaking anxiety reveals that test anxiety holds the highest percentage at 36%, making it the most prevalent type among the three. Communication fear follows as the second most common type of speaking anxiety experienced by these students, with a percentage of 33%. Finally, fear of evaluation represents the least common type of speaking anxiety among students, with a percentage of only 31%. Nevertheless, the percentages of the three types of anxiety are not much different from each other (i.e., 36%, 33%, and 31%). It can be said that these three types of anxiety are experienced almost equally by these students when they present at proposal seminars in front of their lecturers.

### Result of the interviews

During the interviews, the students revealed that several factors contributed to their speaking anxiety. These factors include fear of making mistakes, lack of knowledge, and lack of self-confidence.

***Fear of making mistakes*** emerged as a significant factor in the interviews, aligning with the dominant type identified in the questionnaire results. Students expressed anxiety about making errors during their presentations, particularly concerning grammar and word usage in English. Excerpts from the interviews illustrate these opinions:

Excerpt 1: "At the beginning of the presentation, I was a bit nervous because using English doesn't come as naturally as using Indonesian, but towards the end, I became more comfortable and less nervous, although there were still many mistakes." (Student 1)

Excerpt 2: "When presenting in English, I feel nervous and anxious because I am afraid that I will get stuck when presenting it and not be able to proceed to the next stage." (Student 2)

Excerpt 3: "My feelings were very tense because I was actually not prepared, it was difficult to express words also because I had to translate first in the brain so it made me nervous even more with the lecturer, so I felt very insecure with my speaking skills." (Student 3)

These findings pinpoint the fear of making mistakes as a contributing factor to speaking anxiety among the students, corroborating one of the types identified in the questionnaire responses, fear of negative evaluation. The interview excerpts in (1) to (3) show how students expressed apprehension about committing errors during their presentations, especially concerning English grammar and vocabulary usage. Student 1 acknowledged initial nervousness due to the unfamiliarity of speaking English, leading to concerns about mistakes persisting throughout the presentation. Student 2 articulated anxiety about getting stuck while presenting in English, reflecting a fear of faltering mid-speech. Similarly, Student 3 highlighted the tension arising from feeling unprepared and the challenge of translating thoughts into English on the spot, worsening feelings of insecurity during the presentation. These excerpts highlight the common anxiety and tension experienced by students, particularly revolving around fears of making mistakes and inadequacy when presenting in English.

***Lack of Knowledge,*** the second most significant factor contributing to speaking anxiety identified in the interviews was a lack of knowledge. Many students expressed uncertainty about their linguistic abilities, fearing potential mistakes in pronunciation and grammar during their presentations. These apprehensions worsen, due to a perceived lack of coherence and limited vocabulary, resulting in feelings of nervousness, confusion, and blanking out during speaking engagements. The excerpts from the interviews depict the students' concerns about the pervasive impact of language proficiency on their confidence and performance during proposal seminar presentations:

Excerpt 4: "Fear of mistakes in pronunciation, fear of forgetting vocabulary." (Student 4)

Excerpt 5: "At first, it was because I had been indoctrinated that *sempro* (*seminar proposal*) was scary using English, so that made me nervous, blank, and confused about what to convey. Limited vocabulary and lack of daily practice." (Student 5)

Excerpt 6: "Because of fear of wrong pronunciation, fear of wrong grammar, fear of the audience not understanding what I am saying." (Student 6)

Excerpt 7: "Afraid of making mistakes in grammar, often blanking out due to lack of coherence." (Student 7)

These excerpts illustrate the students' anxiety stemming from their perceived inadequacies in English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, which significantly impact their confidence and performance during proposal seminar presentations.

**Lack of self-confidence** is another significant factor contributing to speaking anxiety, particularly when students feel less fluent in English during their proposal seminar presentations. This is evident from the interviews conducted, with selected excerpts highlighting these feelings:

Excerpt 8: "Many pronunciations are wrong so it's a little insecure to speak English." (Student 8)

Excerpt 9: "The interlocutor, if the opponent is more skilled than us, we are afraid of being wrong." (Student 9)

Hence, lack of self-confidence is a notable factor contributing to speaking anxiety among students, particularly when they feel less proficient in English during their proposal seminar presentations. This sentiment is evident in the interview excerpts, where students expressed concerns about their pronunciation and the possibility of being perceived as less skilled than their peers. These excerpts illustrate how students' self-assurance is weakened by their apprehension about making errors and facing judgment from others, thus intensifying their anxiety levels during presentations.

### The result of observation

A number of five unnatural psychological and physiological conditions emerged from the observation data, they are: trembling, voice intonation/articulation, gestures, eye contact, and nervousness. During the observations, the students exhibited various combinations of these conditions. Each of the five conditions was experienced by the students either in entirety or partially. The results of the observation are presented as percentages in Table 4.

**Table 4.** *Result of observations*

| Psychology and Physiology Condition | Percentages |
|---|---|
| Trembling | 90% |
| Voice (Intonation/Articulation) | 60% |
| Gesture | 50% |
| Eye Contact | 10% |
| Nervous | 100% |

Based on Table 4, the results of the observation indicate that students experience speaking anxiety during their proposal seminar presentations. The signs of anxiety observed

included nervousness, trembling, exaggerated gestures, and stammering or shaky voices. Nervousness was the most prevalent sign of anxiety, with 100% of the students displaying this behavior. Students often took deep breaths and trembled, as observed in 90% of them (9 out of 10). This was evident from their shaky hands, causing objects they held to visibly shake. Voice intonation or articulation was the third most common, affecting 60% of the students (6 out of 10). These students were heard speaking with varying intonations, sometimes very fast or slow, and occasionally in a very low voice, indicating doubt or uncertainty about their speech. Furthermore, gestures or nervous tics, observed in 50% (5 out of 10) of the students, included repetitive movements such as twisting a pen rapidly or frequently adjusting their hijab for female students. Finally, 10% of the students (1 out of 10) exhibited flushed faces or unusual eye contact. Here, they avoided looking directly at the lecturers and frequently shifted their gaze to windows, notes, or their laptops. This behavior was observed to be the least prevalent indicator of anxiety in this study.

These findings suggest that while all students showed signs of anxiety, the specific symptoms varied in frequency and intensity. Nervousness and trembling were the most common indicators, whereas avoiding eye contact and showing a flushed face were less common. This variation emphasizes the different ways in which speaking anxiety can manifest during high-pressure situations like proposal seminar presentations.

### Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the common types of speaking anxiety that English major students at Universitas Syiah Kuala experience during proposal seminar presentations, confirming results from earlier research. The identification of test anxiety as the dominant form of anxiety aligns with a study conducted by Wiranda (2019) that identified test anxiety as a primary concern among university students. This consistency across studies suggests that the fear of failure in academic settings significantly impacts students' speaking anxiety levels. Furthermore, the acknowledgment of communication apprehension and fear of evaluation as significant contributors to speaking anxiety resonates with the findings of Fitriah and Muna (2019), who also identified these factors among EFL students.

Moreover, the factors identified in this study as contributing to speaking anxiety are fear of making mistakes, lack of knowledge, and lack of self-confidence. These factors mirror those found in previous research by Fitriah and Muna (2019) and Jaya and Oktavia (2022). Similarly, Fitriah and Muna (2019) highlighted a lack of prior knowledge, inadequate grammar, and lack of vocabulary as significant contributors to speaking anxiety. However, the differences between Jaya and Oktavia (2022) are fear of criticism and mispronouncing words.

Furthermore, the observations conducted in this study regarding students' physiological and psychological reactions during presentations resonate with the findings of previous research. The manifestation of nervousness, trembling, and voice articulation issues identified in this study aligns with observations made by Wiranda (2019). These shared observations reveal common patterns in how speaking anxiety appears among language learners and offer valuable insights for educators and practitioners aiming to help students overcome these challenges.

Moving forward, several recommendations and implications emerge from this research. Firstly, students can benefit from regular practice in speaking English to build confidence and proficiency over time. Teachers play a crucial role in creating a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable engaging in speaking activities and receiving constructive feedback. Encouraging open communication between students and teachers can help alleviate anxiety and promote collaborative learning. Furthermore, researchers are encouraged to explore additional factors influencing speaking anxiety and develop targeted interventions to support students effectively. Collaboration between students, teachers, and researchers is essential in addressing speaking anxiety and cultivating effective oral communication skills among EFL learners.

In addition to the findings and recommendations discussed, it is essential to address how students attempted to overcome their nervousness during seminar proposal presentations based on what the researchers observed during data collection. It was seen that students try to overcome their nervousness by engaging in several strategies. Some were seen to practice speaking English before their seminars started to build confidence and familiarity with what had been written in their proposals. Additionally, seeking support from peers was also noticed; they had friends waiting for them from the beginning till the end of their seminars. This perhaps provided them with reassurance and encouragement when their friends were around. Lastly, students were observed to employ relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing exercises, to calm their nerves before and during their presentations.

### Conclusion and Recommendations/Implications

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the prevalence and underlying factors of speaking anxiety among EFL students especially when engaging in high-stakes presentations such as a seminar proposal. Based on the findings, this study identified three types of speaking anxiety, namely test anxiety, communication anxiety, and fear of evaluation. Despite the differences, it can be said that these three types of anxiety are experienced almost equally by these students when they present at proposal seminars in front of their lecturers. The study also pinpointed three main factors contributing to speaking anxiety: fear of making mistakes, insufficient knowledge, and low self-confidence. The identification of test anxiety, communication fear, and fear of evaluation as the primary types of speaking anxiety emphasizes the complex nature of this issue within academic contexts. These findings highlight the importance of addressing speaking anxiety to enhance students' oral communication skills and overall academic performance.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample size was relatively small and limited to a specific group of students from one university, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-report measures and observational data may introduce response and interpretation biases. The scope of factors influencing speaking anxiety may also be limited, and time constraints may have impacted the depth of analysis of data collection. Recognizing these limitations is crucial for accurately interpreting the findings and guiding future research efforts.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

**References**

Abrar, M., Mukminin, A., Habibi, A., Asyrafi, F., Makmur, M., & Marzulina, L. (2018). "If our English isn't a language, what is it?" Indonesian EFL student teachers' challenges speaking English. *The Qualitative Report, 23*(1), 129-145. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3013

Akbar, A., Sofyan, D., & Damayanti, I. (2018). Factors causing Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) in speaking. *Journal of English Education and Teaching, 2*(2), 46–57. https://doi.org/10.33369/jeet.2.2.46-57

Al-Jamal, D. A., & Al-Jamal, G. A. (2013). An investigation of the difficulties faced by EFL undergraduates in speaking skills. *English Language Teaching, 7*(1), 19-27. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n1p19

Alqahtani, M. (2015). The importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to be taught. *International Journal of Teaching and Education, 3*(3), 21-34.

Aulia, R., Hamid, S.M., & Sulkifli. (2023). A study of EFL students' speaking anxiety in the third semester of English Department in Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. Indonesian *Journal of Psycholinguistics, 2*(1), 45-55.

Bailey, K. M. (2005). *Practical English language teaching: Speaking.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4th Ed.). Pearson Education.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (3rd Ed.). Pearson Education.

Cabrera, S., Diaz, T., & Morillo, I. (2022). Linguistic anxiety in foreign language learning process preuniversity level Dominican students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Analysis, 5*(5),1173-1179.

Cárdenas-Hbner, F. J. (2013). The impact of globalization on foreign language learning anxiety. *Educational Psychology Review, 25*(1), 121-137.

Collins, L. & Baker, P. (2023). *Language, discourse and anxiety.* Cambridge University Press.

Coryell, J. E., & Clark, M. C. (2009). One right way, intercultural participation, and language learning anxiety: A qualitative analysis of adult online heritage and nonheritage language learners. *Foreign Language Annals, 42*(3), 483-504.

Douglas, H. (2022). Principles of social research methodology. In M. R. Islam, N. A. Khan & R. Baikady (Eds). *Sampling techniques for qualitative research* (pp. 415-426). Springer.

Ekalestari, S., Manugeren, M., Purwarno, P., Wulan, S., & Siwi, P. (2023). Types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) through Belief About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI): A thematic analysis. *World Journal of English Language, 13*(5), 171-176.

Erdiana, N., Daud, B., Sari, D.F., & Dwitami, S.K. (2020). A study of anxiety experienced by EFL students in speaking performance. *Studies in English Language and Education, 7*(2), 334-346.

Fauzi, A.A., Putri, D., & Rahman, T. (2021). Students' anxiety of speaking English in public. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Education of Suryakancana* (pp. 73-78). Universitas Suryakancana, Cianjur. https://doi.org/10.35194/cp.v0i0.1320

Fitriah, F. & Muna, H. (2019). Foreign language speaking anxiety: A case study at English Department students of IAIN Lhokseumawe and Al-Muslim University. *Jurnal Ilmiah Didaktika, 19*(2), 140-158.

Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning*. Arnold.

Hanifa, R. (2018). Factors generating anxiety when learning EFL speaking skills. *Studies in English Language and Education, 5*(2), 230-239. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v5i2.10932

Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching* (3rd Ed.). Pearson Education Limited.

Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th Ed.). Pearson Education Limited.

Heigham, J., & Crocker, R. (2009). Qualitative research in applied linguistics. Palgrave Macmillan.

Horwitz, E. K. (2001). *Language Anxiety and Achievement. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 21*, 112-126.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal, 70*(2), 125-132.

Huda, N. L. A., & Ma'mun, N. (2020). The anxiety of EFL students in presentation. *ELITE Journal: Journal of English Linguistics, Literature, and Education, 2*(1), 65-88.

Hsiao, T. & Tseng, W. (2022). A meta-analysis of test-retest reliability in language anxiety research: Is language anxiety stable or variable? *Sage Open, 12*(4), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221134619

Jaya, S. & Oktavia, N. (2022). A study of anxiety experienced by EFL students in presenting proposal seminars at English Study Program Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. *Teaching English and Language Learning English Journal, 2*(2), 148-158.

Kadir, H. & Raof, A.H.A. (2021). Speaking apprehension: Evidence from oral presentations in Content Subject Classes. *International Journal of Language Education and Applied Linguistics, 10*(2), 80–88.

Kostić-Bobanović, M. (2009). Foreign language anxiety of university students. *Economic Research, 22*(3), 47-55.

Lado. V. H. (2021). *Apa itu seminar proposal atau sempro?* [What is a seminar proposal or sempro?] Retrieved from https://tirto.id/apa-itu-seminar-proposal-atau-sempro-gbRs

Liu, M., & Jackson, J. (2008). An exploration of Chinese EFL learners' unwillingness to communicate and foreign language anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal, 92*(1), 71-86.

Maher, K. & King, J. (2023). Language anxiety and learner silence in the classroom from a cognitive-behavioral perspective. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 43*, 105-111.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Anxiety and second language learning: Toward a theoretical framework. *The Modern Language Journal, 75*(4), 271-285.

McLeod, S. (2023, July 31). Likert scale questionnaire: Examples & analysis. *SimplyPsychology*. Retrieved from https://www.simplypsychology.org/likert-scale.html

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Nasir, N. A. M. Yaacob, N. H., Rashid, R. A., & Mohd Amin, M. Z. (2023). The power of spoken language: Understanding communication apprehension and English language anxiety among Thai-speaking minority students in Malaysian national schools. *Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling, 8*(50), 209-220. https://doi.org/10.35631/IJEPC.850015

Nunan, D. (2006). Task-based language teaching in Asia context: Defining "task". *Asian EFL Journal, 8*(3), 12-18.

Nurhaeni. (2019). Students' anxiety in language learning: Gender difference. *Eduvelop: Journal of English Education and Development, 2*(2), 81-86. https://doi.org/10.31605/eduvelop.v2i2.260

Pabro-Maquidato, I. M. (2021). The experience of English speaking anxiety and coping strategies: A transcendental phenomenological study. *International Journal of TESOL & Education, 1*(2), 45-64

Richard, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd Ed.). Pearson Education Limited.

Rumiyati, & Seftika. (2008). Anxiety of speaking English in English Foreign Language (EFL) class. *Journal of English Education, Literature and Linguistics, 1*(1), 46-61.

Sari, D. (2017). Speaking anxiety as a factor in studying EFL. *English Education Journal, 8*(2), 177-186,

Siahaan, S. (2008). *The English paragraph.* Graha Ilmu.

Spielberger, C. D. (1983). *Manual for the state-trait anxiety inventory.* Consulting Psychological Press.

Tallon, M. (2009). Foreign language anxiety and heritage students of Spanish: A quantitative study. *Foreign Language Annals, 42*(1), 112-137.

Tóth, Z. (2008). Foreign Language Anxiety Scale for Hungarian learners of English. *Working Papers in Language Pedagogy, 2*, 55-78.

Trang, T. T. T., Baldauf Jr., R. B. B., & Moni, K. (2013). Foreign Language Anxiety: Understanding its status and insiders' awareness and attitudes. *TESOL Quarterly, 47*(2), 216-243.

Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching practice and theory.* Cambridge University Press.

Wiranda (2019). *An analysis of students' anxiety in speaking English of the second semester students at English Language Education Department of UIR.* (Bachelor's thesis, Universitas Islam Riau).

Young, D. J. (1990). Understanding learning difficulties related to foreign language acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal, 74*(4), 413-425.

Zabidin, N., Mohamad, N. A., Razali, N. A., Ramlan, A. N. M., & Rahmat, N. H. (2023). How does motivation affect communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety among ESL learners? *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting Finance and Management Sciences, 13*(2), 218–220.

**Biographical Notes**

**DIANA ACHMAD** is a lecturer in the English Education Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala. She is currently a PhD student in the Doctor of Education Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala.

**ISKANDAR ABDUL SAMAD** is a lecturer in the English Education Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala.

**ASNAWI MUSLEM** is a lecturer in the English Education Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala.

**YUNISRINA QISMULLAH YUSUF** is a Professor in the English Education Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala.

**SITI SARAH FITRIANI** is a lecturer in the English Education Department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala.

**THARA HENDRI SAFITRI** is an English instructor at BahasaKademi in Banda Aceh.

**HEATHER LINVILLE** is a Professor, University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, WI (1725 State St, La Crosse WI 54601, the United States).