

Factors Affecting Students' Speaking Anxiety: A Systematic Literature Review

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: EFL students, foreign language anxiety, systematic literature review, speaking anxiety. DOI: http://doi.org/10.22437/langue.v4i2.58652 Received: April 15, 2026 Reviewed: June 25, 2026 Accepted: June 28, 2026	<i>The purpose of this research was to examine what factors of speaking anxiety causing the EFL students to become incapable of speaking using English as a foreign language. The four current articles reviewed were taken from Google Scholar and Semantic Scholars databases which were limited to those published two and a half years namely in the year of 2024 to June 2026 to see the most recent development regarding factors of speaking anxiety. The researchers applied Systematic Literature Review as the method of research. The result of the review indicated that there were five main factors of anxiety obtained in the articles reviewed by the researchers such as: lack of/low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes in speaking, the limited number of vocabularies the students had, fear of negative evaluation especially by their peers and the last one was the inaccurate use of grammar. Some suggestions and recommendations to overcome foreign language anxiety problems were given at the last part of the article as well as implications and limitations.</i>

1. Introduction

Although English has been a compulsory subject at schools and becomes one of the general basic subjects at universities in Indonesia, many students are still not able to communicate with their peers and teachers using that language since speaking is proven to be both the most anxiety-producing experience and the most anxiety-provoking language skill for almost all students. (Young, 1990; Price, 1991; Palacios, 1998; Mukminin et al., 2015). On the way to good speaking ability, one must encounter many obstacles among other things vocabulary mastery (Martínez Lirola, 2018) grammatical errors (Soma, 2023), and inaccurate pronunciation.

Speaking anxiety refers to a person's state where he or she feels reluctant to involve him or herself in conversations using a particular language because of below average motivation and declined performance (Khusna, 2024). There is such psychological pressure to speak the language even if they have good foreign language skills, especially on unplanned occasions or in spontaneous occasions. Theories from speaking experts mention that there are some factors which may cause learners to feel anxious in performing their speaking skill ability which can be outlined into extrinsic which means things that come from outside and intrinsic which come from inside. Negative feelings including fear of making mistakes, stage fever, inadequate vocabulary mastery committed by students either as a second or foreign language and influence their performance in speaking the foreign language.

According to Mahammed & Rawian (2018), there are two kinds of anxieties which cause someone to get difficulties in speaking a foreign language. The first one is related to linguistic factor in which someone cannot speak a language well due to the low knowledge of grammatical rules and the second one is in relation to psychological factor where someone has the incapability of controlling him or herself while performing the speaking ability, and this factor will in turn affects the overall performance (Mahmudi et al., 2024).

In addition, El Meysarah (2015) divided speaking anxiety into several causes. The first one linguistic problem which covers insufficient vocabulary mastery, not mastering grammar well, and pronunciation problem. The second one cognitive challenge including the feeling of being unable to communicate using foreign language, feeling of failing the test, fear of making mistakes, shame to fail in front of other people and the problem of self-esteem. The third one not enough understanding about the target language. The last one the role of the teacher which makes the students become more competitive human resources in English.

There have been a lot of research regarding speaking as a performative skill the students need to master, and many of them stress on what causes them unable to speak English fluently, but still not many research attempt to document systematically what factors contributing the English as a Foreign Language students' speaking anxiety. Even though previous studies have answered what lied behind the anxiety feelings, lacking research have indicated the primary factors which have the most contribution to those psychological factors. Through this study, the writer is trying to explore the factors of speaking anxiety based on the previous research which were carried out by the experts and showcased from their research findings. Through this systematic literature review article, the researchers were trying to address the research question regarding what factors affecting students' speaking anxiety

2. Research Methodology

The researchers carried out a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to find out the factors of speaking anxiety on the English as a Foreign Language. A systematic literature review aims to comprehensively locate and synthesize related research, using organized, transparent, and replicable procedures at each step in the process (Higgins et al., 2011 as cited in Mahat, 2023). In addition, Mali (2025) and Hitokdana (2025) asserted that the systematic literature review method in this article applied the process of searching databases and journals, identifying relevant studies, locating articles, creating annotated summaries, sorting evidence, and categorizing the evidence (Hitokdana, 2025). A systematic Literature review was a valuable tool for academic research whose process involved all the personnel of the research beginning from the first writer, the second, the third and so on. This kind of academic research helped us to collect, evaluate and synthesize all the empirical research artifacts pertaining to the factors of speaking anxiety on the students' speaking ability. In this case, we specifically focused on the most current issues regarding factors of speaking anxiety. The researchers selected the articles based on those which were suitable for the purposes of this study ranging from the year 2024 until the middle of 2026. The chosen relevant articles were taken from the two journal databases, namely *Google Scholar* and *Semantic Scholar* by using the keywords *factors of speaking anxiety*. Among the ten articles obtained from the two databases ranging from 2024 to June 2026, only four of them fulfilled the exact time of publication and discussed speaking anxiety as a whole rather than focused on the single specific anxiety. Moreover, some relevant articles are inaccessible due to limitation of the data. The following table was the review of the selected articles.

Table 1. Articles Reviewed in This Study

Author & Year/Article Title	Journal name	Method	Result Goal	Results
Quvanch et al (2024)/ Analyzing levels, factors, and coping strategies of speaking anxiety among EFL undergraduates in Afganistan	Cogent Education	Mixed method	Investigating speaking anxiety among EFL students in Afghanistan.	The results revealed speaking anxiety like shaking, sweating, forgetfulness, negative thoughts, difficulties in recalling words, maintaining eye-contact, and concentrating. Contributing factors such as low self-confidence, fear of negative evaluation and feedback, limited exposure of authentic English, language proficiency challenges, inadequate linguistic knowledge, difficulty of adapting to a new environment, and cultural influences.

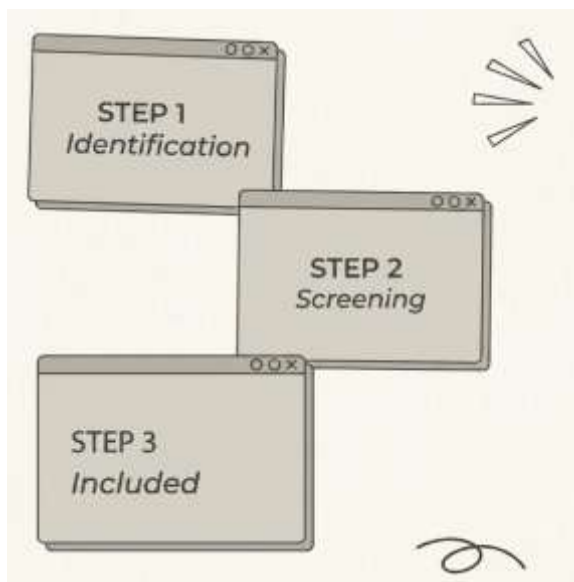
Author & Year/Article Title	Journal name	Method	Result Goal	Results
Paraguas, A. M. (2025)/ Exploring the causes and factors of speaking anxiety of EFL students: A systematic literature review	Canadian Journal of Educational and Social Studies	Systematic literature review	Examining the levels, causes, and dominant factors of speaking anxiety among EFL students based on the information presented in the literature.	Revealed two classifications of speaking anxiety in terms of internal (fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, lack of intrinsic motivation, shyness, nervousness, and fear of losing face) and external (lack of/limited English vocabulary, lack of English oral proficiency, lack of practice, and inaccurate use of grammar.
Ratnawati, R et al (2026)/ Exploring of afctors of speaking anxiety during dialogue practice at SMPN3 Masbagik in the academic year of 2025-2026	Professional Journal of English Education	Descriptive qualitative method	Exploring the factors contributing to the students' speaking anxiety during English dialogue practice of the eight graders	State anxiety: trembling hands, shaky voices, forgetting line, and excessive sweating. Treat anxiety: limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracy, and lack of confidence. Main factors: fear of making mistakes, pronunciation difficulties, and fear of negative evaluation.
Arsalan, M. et al. (2025)/ A bibliometrik analysis of speaking anxiety in English Language education	Indonesian Journal English Education	Descriptive Qualitative	Presenting bibliometric and thematic analysis of research on speaking anxiety in English language education	Peer scaffolding is still minimum, still lack of constructive feedback and lack of using interactive technologies.

2.1. Research Design

As previously mentioned, we applied the Systematic Review design by applying descriptive narrative technique to review, summarize some current issues regarding speaking anxiety the published scholarly works in relation to a particular research topic in explicit, rigorous, and comprehensive ways (Mahmudi et al., 2024). The reason why the researchers chose this kind of study was to strengthen our research contribution in Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) specifically in the domain of speaking anxiety as one of the most prominent barriers which affect oral proficiency and cognitive speech processing. In addition, the SLR approach is used to brush up as well as to explore the scientific literature by applying the steps of SLR proposed by Ramiro, (2017). The writer adapted and modified SLR stages by applying some stages: (1). sorting, (2). Displaying, and (3). Explaining. It was also integrated with Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 as a

published standard to conduct a systematic literature review using a flow diagram comprising three processes as shown in the following figure:

Figure 1. Inclusion Steps



Source: Mahat (2023)

From Figure 1 above, it could be elaborated that step 1 called as *Identification* means the process used to discover the primary keywords and similar terms for the study. Whereas step 2 called as *Screening* aimed at eliminating irrelevant articles by taking inclusion and exclusion criteria into consideration (see table 2). Step 3 called as *Included* explaining the selection process of how many articles are included in the Systematic Literature Review.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Timeline	2024- June 2026	<2024
Document type	Research articles containing empirical studies	Article review, chapters in book, book series, book.
Language	English	Non-English
Scopes	Speaking anxiety	Speaking in general

The category of the articles chosen were the ones which were limited to be published in the year 2024- June 2026 only, not any other years since the writer wants to see the most current research findings regarding the factors of speaking anxiety. Another limitation is that in terms of scope discussion in which this article only discusses the articles about speaking anxiety in the scope of senior high school students and university level students.

2.2. Research Subject and Instrument

To gather the data of this research, the researchers conducted document analyses, collecting, and coding existing literature regarding the speaking anxiety faced by the Indonesian EFL students' in using the English language. Then, the research findings were used to answer the two research questions stated previously by the researchers in the research question's section in which we tried to review the empirical findings on the factors of speaking anxiety students' face in speaking and the common factors that the Indonesian EFL students' usually face in performing their speaking competence.

3. Findings

For this systematic literature review, Quvanch el al (2024) which was the first article about speaking anxiety to review mentioned some main factors and followed by some additional factors contributing speaking anxiety. In view of this article, there are several main factors of students' speaking anxiety. The first factor is *shaking* which characterizes of body reaction especially the two hands indicating of fear and then the body becomes *sweating* and begin to feel hot around the whole body. The third factor is *forgetfulness* indicated by the symptom of confusing due to memory lost regarding the points which are going to deliver in speaking. The next factor is *negative thoughts* that other people' have regarding the ability of his speaking English. The students oftentimes feel that people around them have negative view and the last one, *the difficulty in recalling words*. English vocabulary consists of simple words with one or two syllables indicated by the simplest and the most complex formations. That is why, EFL students often get bogged down in remembering words especially low frequency vocabulary. The next factor is *maintaining eye contact* which also one of the most important things in fixing speaking performance and overcoming speaking anxiety at a time. And the last factor is *concentration*, which also has an important finding of this article. This factor plays an important role in minimizing speaking anxiety. By having poor concentration, EFL students will not be able to express what they have in their minds. Therefore, they need to control themselves to keep focusing on the important points they are meant to deliver in front of the audience.

In addition, some contributing factors were also mentioned as the findings of the research such as *low self-confidence* which stresses the students' mood and emotional condition, *fear of*

negative evaluation and feedback which makes them feel unsure with their self-ability. The next contributing factor is the *lack of time and space to express their real English* depending on what language variety they master in this case British or American English. The challenge also came from *language proficiency* that vary among students. In other words, some students have good English-speaking skill, some others have the average speaking ability and even some others have poor capability to express ideas, thoughts, and opinions of their own. *Limited linguistic knowledge* of the students also became one factor which made them nervous. This knowledge encompasses their understanding about structures, rules and systems which form a language such as grammar, morphology, and syntax. The EFL students also got *difficulty to adapt themselves with new environment* as mentioned by the article due to the reluctance to meet new people and get acquainted with new place and situation. And the last one is *cultural influence* in which the students have been educated by their parents and their surroundings not to speak and talk much.

The second study, which was conducted by Paraguas (2025) confirmed that there were two classifications of speaking anxiety. The first one was internal factors consisting *fear of making mistakes* due to mental and physical pressures, *lack of self-confidence* which indicates the feeling of uncertain with his/her own ability in doing things, *lack of intrinsic motivation* which comes from the students' own willing to do something, *shyness* which means the state of reluctance of doing things due to psychological factors, *nervousness* which more or less means the state of awkwardness, and the *fear of losing face* means the state of public embarrassment, humiliation and dishonour. In addition, external factors which were revealed from this research namely *lacking number of or very limited number of English vocabularies* which makes the students unable to produce many sentences and English expressions to respond the interlocutors. *Lack of English oral proficiency* which means that the student's capability of expressing their feelings and opinions. *Lack of practice* can also become the factor of anxiety in this article. By not having inadequate practice, students feel worried about being unable to speak in foreign language. Sometimes, students pay too much attention to *the accurate use of grammar* which makes them reluctant to speak English without putting forward the aspect of communication as the priority.

The third study which was conducted by Ratnawati et al (2026) divided speaking anxiety into two factors namely (1) state anxiety and (2) trait anxiety some factors of speaking anxiety among other things; state anxiety such as *trembling hands* due to the unexplained reasons. Then it was followed by *shaky voice* which asserts that the speaker is under stressed. *Forgetting line*

and *excessive sweating* which make the students feel hot for no reasons. For treat anxiety, it could be observed from the real symptoms linguistic weaknesses signed by *limited vocabulary*, *grammatical inaccuracy* and *lack of confidence* indicating psychological weakness. In addition, some main factors were discussed in this article like *fear of making mistakes*, *pronunciation difficulties*, and *fear of negative evaluation*.

The fourth study by Arsalan et al., (2025) which conducted a research applying qualitative with bibliometric analysis of speaking anxiety in English language education. They found several factors of speaking anxiety such as *the minimum of peer scaffolding* so that the students did not have useful suggestions for their speaking improvements. Next, there were *still lack of constructive feedback* especially in terms of linguistic factors in relation to grammar, and vocabulary. The important factor also discussed here related to *lack of interactive technologies* which enables the EFL students to communicate in the English language much easier. From the findings above, it could be shown in the form of table of specification below:

Table 3. Table of specification

	Intrinsic Factor(s)	Extrinsic Factor(s)
Article 1	Shaking, sweating, forgetfulness, negative thoughts, difficulty in recalling words, maintaining eye contact, concentration, low self confidence, language proficiency, limited linguistic knowledge, adaptation of new environment.	Fear of negative evaluation and feedback, lack of time and space to express their real English, cultural influence.
Article 2	Fear of making mistakes, lack pf self-confidence, lack of intrinsic motivation, shyness, nervousness, fear of losing face, limited number of English vocabulary, lack of English oral proficiency, lack of practice, inaccurate group of grammar.	-
Article 3	State anxiety (Trembling hands, shaky voice, forgetting line, excessive sweating). Treat anxiety (limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracy, lack of confidence) fear of making mistakes, pronunciation difficulties	Fear of negative evaluation.
Article 4	-	The minimum peer scaffolding, lack of constructive feedback, lack of interactive technologies.

4. Discussion

Having reviewed the four articles related to the factors of speaking anxiety, the very first factor of speaking anxiety was related to the inability to deliver a speech in front of a lot of

people due to low self-confidence. In other words, the feeling of EFL students' speaking anxiety in terms of conducting monologue and dialogue because they had a psychological problem in terms of their own confidence to perform their oral communication (Mouhoubi-Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). Next, fear of making mistakes became the second most dominant factor of the students' speaking anxiety. This factor happened since they were not really sure what they have spoken was grammatically or syntactically correct, inaccurate pronunciation, stress, syllable, aspirated and non-aspirated sounds (Arif, 2023).

In addition, vocabulary obstruction was also the factor which played an important role in EFL students' speaking anxiety. Not only they had limited vocabulary, they were not also skillful to present vocabulary through sentences in order to convey the intended message accurately (Putri, 2026). Not only that, they also had not good knowledge of how to put words to work to be understood by the interlocutors. Being judged negatively by the audience is a frightening thing for the students in functioning their language ability especially when it comes to productive skills like writing especially speaking because they have to show themselves in performing the oral communication skill. The last factor was the inaccurate use of grammar which also became one of the most main factors in speaking anxiety and this is in line with the study conducted by Arif (2023) that in performing oral communication skill, accurate grammar use is very important. Since the EFL students have inadequate time and supported environment to practice grammar and when it comes to speaking to other people, they often feel anxious about whether or not their sentences are grammatically well-formed because good grammatical sentences are able to communicate precise meanings in terms of what they want to the interlocutors (Thornbury, 2010).

5. Conclusion

From the explanation above, it could be inferred that there were five dominant factors obtained from the results of the articles reviewed in this systematic literature review among other things: Lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, limited number of vocabularies, fear of negative evaluation, and incorrect use of grammar. For EFL students, it was suggestible for them to upgrade their oral communication skill by making use of various learning resources which could be taken from dictionaries, books, articles from journals, authentic learning materials, and digital learning platforms. By maximizing those media, the students are able to select the materials suitable with their ability. In addition, It was also recommended that foreign language teachers should apply enjoyable strategies in teaching a foreign language to attract the

students' interests and upgrade their talents in using a foreign language using applicable and understandable teaching and learning materials so that the teaching and learning process might reach its goals.

6. Limitation

The outcomes of the research covered the identification of factors speaking anxiety experienced by the EFL students both internal and external factors, linguistics and non-linguistics factors. However, there were still drawbacks which could be mentioned from this Systematic Literature Review. First, the limited number of articles reviewed could not become the general conclusion concerning the main factors of speaking anxiety well as the journal databases used as the references could not be generalized and the method applied in every journal article should cover quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method research. Second, the articles reviewed should also cover the various methods of how to collect and analyze the data both in quantitative and qualitative ways so that the readers got more understanding about the findings of the research questions explained in the form of statistical analyses and thematic analysis.

7. Implication

Having reviewed the articles concerning the factors of speaking anxiety on students' speaking ability in terms of communication in pairs and monologue, it is important for schoolteachers and university lecturers to select the most appropriate teaching strategies which can arise the students' enjoyment in maximizing, cultivating, and exposing their capability in building interactions among friends and with English teachers and lecturers as well. However, teachers and lecturers who teach English subject at schools and universities are strongly suggested to pay attention to motivating factors supporting their students in learning English in general and speaking in particular such as communicative teachers, conducive environment, and good teaching and learning strategy. Demotivating factors such as fear of being laughed at, fear of making mistakes and other psychological factors should be minimized in that those factors may hinder the students from expressing themselves in conducting communicative activities like dialogue in pairs, group discussions, and other interactive talks.

Bio-profile

Robi Soma is from Palembang city, South Sumatra, Indonesia. He spent his whole educational history in Palembang until he obtained his bachelor and magister degree. Then, he moved to Jambi province in 2010 for marriage reasons. He devoted his knowledge at one of the most prominent public universities in Jambi until present. His research records were Grammar, Reading Literacy, Vocabulary. At present he is focusing his whole attention on his new interest, namely speaking and still struggling to reach a doctoral degree at one of the most outstanding universities in Jambi. Please feel free to contact him at his personal email robisoma858@gmail.com and his institution email robisoma858@unja.ac.id in case you have something to discuss.

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