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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SPEAKING ANXIETY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS EFL STUDENTS: PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW

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Abstract

English is widely spoken over the world, so students should improve their English communication skills. Some problems with speaking include language and psychological problems. Psychological problems such as anxiety when learning to speak English. Speaking anxiety is a common issue among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, and it negatively affects their language learning experience and communication skills. The purpose of this research is to determine students' perceptions of psychological problems related to the phenomenon of speaking anxiety as an EFL student in the English Language based on the theory developed by Hortwitz (1986). This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. The writer collected data using techniques through a questionnaire and Interviews. The respondents of this research are 20 students in the 11th grade in Senior high school student. The results of this investigation show that most of the students are anxious 8 students (40%), followed by those who are very anxious 7 students (35%), and mildly anxious 5 students (25%). Fear of negative evaluation has the highest average score among FLCAS, at 3.80, followed by test anxiety at 3.68 and Communication Apprehension at 3.45. Most students stated psychological factors were the key contributors. Students most often claimed fear of making mistakes in interviews.

INTRODUCTION

The four skills of language are speaking, writing, listening, and reading. These are four essential skills that comprise basic language competency. Speaking ability has become more important in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), in recent years due to the language's increasing importance as a language for global communication. Speaking, according to Batang, (2016) is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Speaking skill is the most important skill to acquiring foreign or second language learning and speaking is deemed to be the most important skill in learning a foreign or second language among the four key language skills (Rao, 2019).

Speaking is essential for learning a foreign language since it gives us the ability to communicate with other people. Bueno, et al., (2006) stated that one of the hardest things for language students to do is speak. Nowadays, students must become proficient speakers of the English language since speaking allows them to measure the language ability of people (Nazara, 2011). Furthermore, Nazara (2011) said that because English is considered an international communication language, mastery of the language is important.

As a student, learning to speak English can be a difficult thing to practice. This can be due to the fact that English in Indonesia has a position as a foreign language. In learning English, there are certainly many problems faced by students of English as a foreign language. Shen & Ciu (2019) find that students' speaking difficulties are caused by psychological problems, linguistic problems, and environmental problems. Further, they explained that English speaking difficulties in psychological problems have many contributing factors (e.g. nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence). As a result, the writer assumed that the lack of a limited English setting in the EFL learning context would make the EFL students in this study anxious about speaking the language. According to Horwitz (1986), Anxiety is an emotional feeling of tenseness, fear, nervousness, and worry caused by an activation of the autonomic nervous system. Anxiety occurs in every person in normal life, every time, everywhere, and in every condition of the people (Susanto, et al., 2018). In fact, speaking anxiety is a factor that significantly affects students' self-esteem since it often leads them to feel deficient when they are unable to communicate and exhibit their knowledge. Students who experience speech anxiety find it difficult to perform in front of others or to understand what their teachers are trying to explain.

Speaking Anxiety can negatively impact students' behavior. Anggraeny, et al, (2020) argued in their research titled "The EFL Students' Perception of Their Foreign Language Anxiety in Speaking Class" that EFL learners who encounter foreign language speaking anxiety may lead them to the failure to speak English fluently. Besides that, the result of the research explained that psychological factors dominate the causes of English speaking difficulties in EFL students, It was found that 62.5% of students felt anxious when they were unable to comprehend communication in class, 43% of students experienced anxiety by the test and speaking in front of the class, and 61,8% students fear of receiving bad comments from the teacher and the other students.

It is related to Aini & Lubis (2023) research with the title "Investigating EFL Student's Speaking Anxiety At English Department Of Unisu" The results show that the EFL students at UIN Sumatera Utara's English Department feel anxiety in speaking English. That means the psychological factor has

an important effect on speaking English in EFL Students, in addition, In the classroom, students face the issue of foreign language speaking anxiety. These opinions and research results, prove that students' ability to speak English is closely related to the psychological factors that students have, so it is something that needs to be explored further.

Based on the theory above the writer concluded that psychological problems have an important role in the continuity of a student in learning English, even poor psychological factors can have a bad influence on students' speaking skills. So, students must be able to exhibit their speaking abilities to be assessed for the English language. English skills in both formal and informal communication are the aim of learning a foreign language. Speaking fluency must be improved through the design of class activities. However, despite their ability to communicate, students still struggle with a variety of issues.

The literature study that the writer conducted, which deals with speaking anxiety, can be relevant to the experiences that the writer had. The writer has an experience during an Internship program in school, and from that, the writer found phenomena about students' difficulties in speaking after observation some students showed that they were anxious when speaking English in class while learning the English Language. This needs to be investigated and researched further because speaking is very important in the process of learning English as an EFL student. Therefore, from that experience, the writer would like to investigate, is the students' perceptions of speaking anxiety from a psychological view.

THEORITICAL FRAMWORK

Speaking anxiety is a significant concern for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, affecting their language acquisition and communication effectiveness. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is a valuable tool for measuring anxiety in language learning contexts. The FLCAS framework identifies three primary dimensions of anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These components provide a comprehensive understanding of how anxiety can impede EFL learners' speaking abilities and overall language performance (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Communication apprehension involves the fear of interacting with others, which can lead to reluctance in participating in speaking activities. For EFL students, this anxiety may manifest as hesitation or avoidance in classroom discussions and oral presentations. Test anxiety, another crucial dimension, refers to the stress experienced during language assessments, which can exacerbate anxiety and negatively impact performance during speaking tasks (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Fear of negative evaluation pertains to concerns about being judged or criticized by peers and instructors, contributing to heightened anxiety levels and decreased self-confidence in speaking situations (Chen & Lin, 2009).

Recent studies have expanded our understanding of speaking anxiety by highlighting its implications for EFL learners. For example, Zhang and Liu (2022) explored how speaking anxiety influences EFL students' willingness to communicate and found that higher levels of anxiety were associated with lower participation rates in speaking activities. This finding underscores the importance of addressing anxiety to enhance students' engagement and language development.

Additionally, research by Saito and Koyama (2021) demonstrated that targeted interventions, such as creating a supportive classroom environment and providing constructive feedback, can significantly reduce speaking anxiety and improve learners' speaking performance.

Utilizing the FLCAS approach allows educators to systematically assess and address the different dimensions of speaking anxiety among EFL students. By identifying specific anxiety-related challenges, educators can implement tailored strategies to create a more supportive and less intimidating learning environment. Techniques such as fostering peer support, offering positive reinforcement, and incorporating low-stakes speaking opportunities can help alleviate anxiety and enhance students' confidence and proficiency in speaking English (Young, 2021). Thus, the FLCAS framework remains a valuable tool for understanding and mitigating speaking anxiety in EFL contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore speaking anxiety among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, leveraging the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) framework. The research focuses on understanding the nuanced experiences and perceptions of students regarding their speaking anxiety, using semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. The semi-structured format allows for in-depth exploration of individual experiences while ensuring that key areas related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation—central components of the FLCAS—are addressed (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Interview questions are designed to elicit detailed responses on how these anxiety dimensions affect students' speaking practices and their overall language learning experience.

Data collection involves conducting one-on-one interviews with a purposive sample of 15-20 EFL students from intermediate and advanced language courses. Each interview will be guided by a set of questions derived from the FLCAS dimensions, focusing on specific instances of speaking anxiety and its impact on students' classroom behavior and performance (Chen & Lin, 2009). Interviews will be audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and stored securely to ensure confidentiality. This approach enables the collection of rich, qualitative data that captures the depth of students' experiences and provides a comprehensive understanding of their speaking anxiety (Young, 2021).

Data analysis will be conducted using thematic analysis to identify and interpret patterns within the interview transcripts. The analysis process involves coding the data based on recurring themes related to the FLCAS dimensions, such as communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation (Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999). These codes are then organized into broader themes that reflect the participants' experiences of speaking anxiety. This approach allows for a systematic examination of how different aspects of anxiety manifest in students' speaking activities and provides insights into potential interventions (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). The findings aim to contribute to a better understanding of speaking anxiety and offer recommendations for creating supportive learning environments for EFL students.

FINDING AND DISCUSSING

The writer determined and classified each student into different categories (Very Anxious, Anxious, Somewhat Anxious, Relaxed, and Very Relaxed) based on their responses to the FLCAS questionnaire. The table below displays the responses from the FLCAS categorization of the student's anxiety levels in 5 Likert scales: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.

In the data processing process, the writer recorded the Likert scale generated by the students. The table below shows the result of student's responses to the FLCAS questionnaire:

**Table 4.2:
The result of students Questionnaire's Answer**

Q N	Respondent																								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20					
1	N	N	A	N	A	N	N	N	N	N	N	D	N	N	N	N	A	N	N	N					
2	SD	D	D	D	S	D	D	N	N	D	D	D	S	S	S	D	S	A	N	A	D	S	D		
3	A	A	SA	A	A	A	A	A	S	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	S	D	S	D	D	A			
4	A	A	A	N	S	A	S	A	S	S	S	S	S	D	A	D	N	A	A	N	D	S	S	A	
5	N	SA	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	D	A	N	A	N	D	D	A	D	D	D	N				
6	A	A	A	A	D	D	N	S	A	A	D	A	D	A	A	A	S	S	A	N	A	A			
7	A	N	A	A	N	A	A	S	A	A	A	A	S	D	D	S	S	S	S	S	D	N	A	S	A
8	D	A	D	D	N	N	A	D	N	A	D	N	S	A	D	N	D	S	D	N	N	D			
9	SA	A	A	S	S	A	S	S	A	A	A	A	S	S	A	A	N	N	N	N	N	N	S	A	
10	A	N	D	A	S	A	S	A	S	S	S	A	A	D	S	A	S	S	S	D	S	A	A	A	
11	N	A	D	A	N	N	N	N	S	S	A	A	N	S	D	N	A	N	S	A	A	A	A	A	
12	N	D	A	A	A	D	A	A	A	A	A	S	A	D	D	N	S	A	N	A	N	A	S	A	
13	A	N	A	N	N	N	A	D	A	S	S	S	D	N	A	A	D	N	S	A	N	A			
14	D	N	D	D	S	A	S	A	A	A	D	N	S	A	D	A	D	D	D	D	D	D	S	D	
15	A	SA	A	A	S	A	S	S	S	S	S	A	D	S	A	A	A	S	SA	A	A				

16	N	N	A	D	A	A	S	A	A	N	S	S	A	A	S	S	N	A	N	N	S	A
17	SA	N	A	D	N	D	A	A	S	A	S	S	A	N	N	S	S	S	D	A	A	A
18	N	N	SD	A	N	N	S	D	D	N	A	A	S	S	A	S	D	N	N	D	A	
19	N	D	D	N	N	N	S	A	S	S	A	A	N	S	S	A	S	S	A	N	S	S
20	A	A	SA	N	A	N	A	N	D	S	A	S	N	A	S	S	D	A	N	N	S	A
21	A	D	D	A	A	N	A	S	A	N	A	S	N	S	A	S	S	D	D	D	A	
22	D	A	D	D	N	N	N	N	A	D	D	A	S	A	S	D	A	S	A	D	N	N
23	A	N	SA	A	S	S	A	N	A	S	S	S	N	S	S	S	S	D	N	N	S	A
24	N	A	D	N	A	N	A	A	N	SA	SA	D	N	SA	N	N	D	D	N	S	A	
25	N	SA	SA	N	A	N	A	N	SA	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	A	A	A	N	A	SA		
26	N	N	SA	N	SA	A	N	SA	N	SA	SA	A	D	A	SA	D	A	A	D	N		
27	A	A	SA	A	A	N	A	N	A	SA	SA	N	SA	SA	A	SA	N	A	A	N		
28	A	A	D	N	N	N	S	S	A	A	N	D	D	N	D	D	D	S	A	D	A	N
29	A	SA	D	A	SA	A	A	A	A	A	SA	A	SA	SA	A	N	N	A	N	A		
30	N	N	D	A	A	SA	S	D	N	SA	SA	SA	N	N	A	A	SA	D	N	A	A	
31	A	D	D	N	N	A	D	N	N	SA	SA	S	D	N	A	SA	N	N	D	A	A	
32	N	D	D	N	A	N	N	D	N	D	D	D	D	N	A	D	S	S	A	D	A	D
33	N	A	D	A	SA	A	SA	N	D	SA	SA	D	A	N	SA	D	SA	S	D	SA	SA	
TOTAL	121	106	119	115	125	111	116	119	119	138	142	102	109	129	135	118	93	105	103	137		

Green columns : Positive Statement N : Neutral

White columns : Negative Statements D : Disagree

SA : Strongly Agree SD : Strongly Agree

A : Agree QN : Questionnaire Number

The Writer summarized the results and separated them into positive and negative responses, as shown in the table below, in order to make it simpler for the readers to

comprehend the responses provided by the students.

Table 4.3:
The Scoring of students' Response to the Questionnaire

Q N	Respondent																			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
2	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	5	1	4	1	3	2	4	5
3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	2	1	2	4
4	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	5	5	1	5	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	5
5	3	1	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	1	3	2	3	4	4	2	4	4	3
6	4	4	4	4	2	2	3	5	4	2	4	2	4	4	4	5	5	3	4	4
7	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	1	2	5	5	5	1	3	4	5
8	4	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	3	2	4	3	1	4	3	4	5	3	3	4
9	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	1	5	4	3	3	3	3	5
10	4	3	2	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	2	5	5	5	2	5	4	4
11	3	2	4	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	3	5	3	2	3	1	2	2	2
12	3	2	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	5	2	2	3	5	3	4	3	4	5
13	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	2	4	5	5	1	3	4	4	2	3	5	3	4
14	4	3	4	4	1	2	1	2	2	2	4	3	1	4	2	4	4	4	4	5
15	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	2	5	4	4	1	5	4	4
16	3	3	4	2	4	4	5	4	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	3	4	3	3	5
17	5	3	4	2	3	2	4	4	5	5	5	3	3	3	5	5	1	4	4	4
18	3	3	1	4	3	3	1	2	3	4	4	5	5	3	4	1	3	3	2	4
19	3	2	2	3	3	3	5	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	3	1	5
20	4	4	5	3	5	3	4	3	2	5	5	3	4	5	5	2	4	3	3	5
21	5	2	2	4	4	3	4	5	3	4	5	3	5	3	5	5	2	2	2	4
22	4	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	4	4	2	1	2	5	2	1	4	3	3
23	4	3	5	4	5	5	3	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	2	3	3	5
24	3	4	2	3	4	3	4	4	3	5	5	2	3	5	3	3	2	2	3	5
25	3	5	5	3	4	3	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	4	5
26	3	3	5	3	5	4	3	5	3	5	5	4	2	4	5	2	4	4	2	3
27	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	3	4	5	5	3	5	5	4	5	3	4	4	3
28	2	3	4	3	3	3	1	1	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	1	4	2	3
29	4	5	2	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	3	3	4	3	4

30	3	3	2	4	4	5	1	3	5	5	5	3	3	4	4	5	2	3	4	4
31	4	2	2	3	3	4	2	3	3	5	5	1	3	4	5	3	3	2	4	4
32	3	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	1	5	2	4
33	3	4	2	4	5	4	5	3	2	5	5	2	4	3	5	2	5	1	5	5
TOTAL	121	106	119	115	125	111	116	119	119	138	142	102	109	129	135	118	93	105	103	137

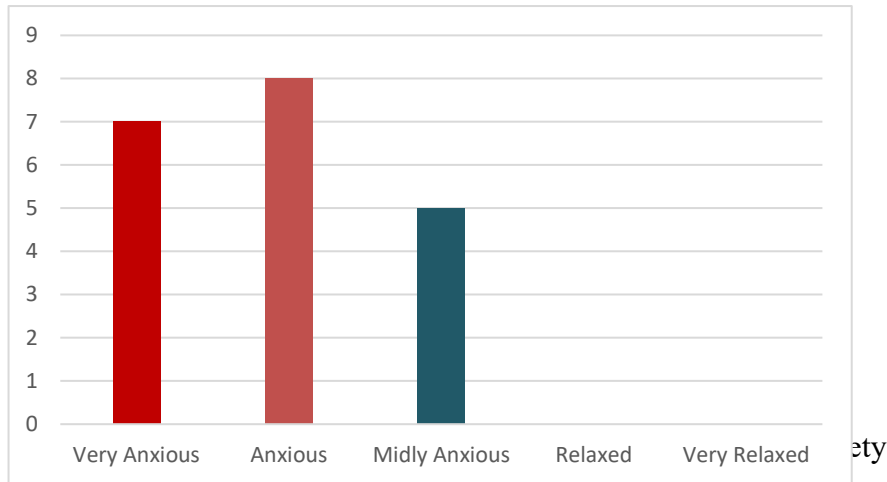
Red columns : Very Anxious
 Orange columns : Anxious
 Blue columns : Mildly Anxious

Horwitz categorizes student anxiety into five levels. A score between 124 and 165 is classified as "very anxious," a score between 108 and 123 is classified as "anxious," a score between 87 and 107 is classified as "mildly anxious," and a score between 66 and 86 is classified as "relaxed." The lowest score, between 33 and 65, is classified as "very relaxed". The questionnaire scores were used to classify the level of anxiety in students using an anxiety scale.

Table 4.4:
Table summary of students’ Responses in FLCAS

Range	Level	Respondent
124-165	Very anxious	7 Respondents (35%)
108 – 123	Anxious	8 Respondents (40 %)
87 – 107	Mildly anxious	5 Respondents (25%)
66 – 86	Relaxed	-
33 – 65	Very Relaxed	-

Afterward, the writer obtained results regarding the student's level of anxiety. Based on the foreign language classroom anxiety scale table results The writer identified that 7 students (35%) had a range score of 124-165, based on the FLCAS Anxiety Scale adapted by Horwitz, a score of 124 165 means students experience a "Very Anxious" level. Then, 8 students (or 40%) with a range score of 108–123 which means students experienced an "Anxious" level, 5 students (25%) had a score of 87-107 which means students experienced a level of "Mildly Anxious" level, then No student (0%) reports feeling "relaxed" or "very relaxed" with scores ranging from 66-86 and 33-65.



Based on the chart above, the writer can conclude that the dominant level of student anxiety was observed in the "Anxious" level, with 8 respondents, representing less than 50% of the students. This indicates that students also experience feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and concern about making mistakes when speaking English. However, the data also revealed that the "Very anxious" category had 7 respondents. The participant with the highest score in the level of speaking anxiety was 'NA', with a score of 138. Conversely, the participant with the lowest score in the level of speaking anxiety was 'MF', with a score of 90.

The FLCAS questionnaire has several aspect questions, such as negative evaluation, communication comprehension, fear of tests, and concern about speaking a foreign language. The results of each aspect will be explained and discussed more fully below:

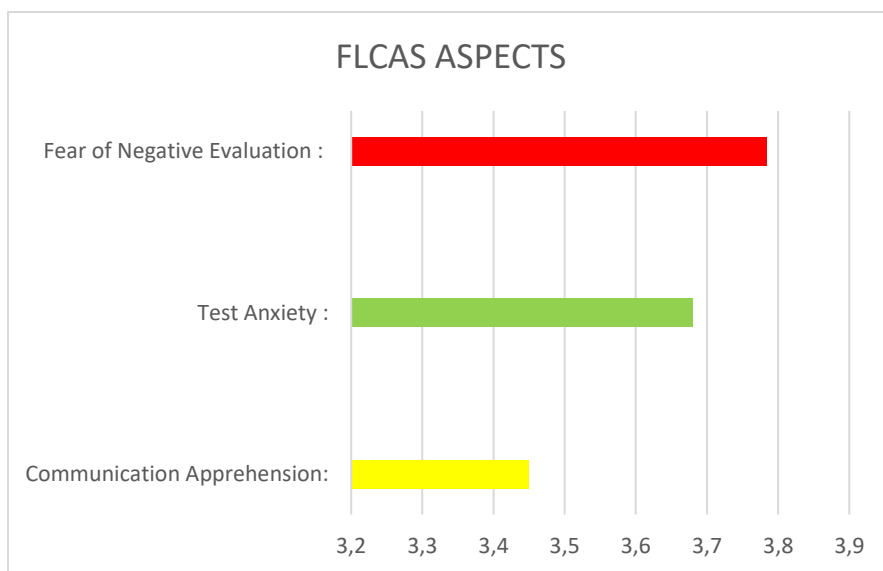


Figure 4.5: Mean of Students to FLCAS ASPECT

From the chart above, the three aspects of speaking anxiety from the questionnaire FLCAS can affect students' speaking in the classroom, which includes communication anxiety, test anxiety, and negative evaluation, which is categorized as a moderate anxiety level.

a. Fear of Negative Evaluation

The result of the Mean from FLCAS for the negative Evaluation Aspect is 3,8. Fear of negative evaluation, also known as social anxiety, refers to the avoidance of conditions under which someone gets evaluated by others and is afraid of receiving negative evaluations from others. One reason for the fear of making mistakes is the fear of appearing unintelligent in front of others and worrying over how other people perceive and evaluate themselves.

The other reason students experience fear of negative evaluation is their lack of preparation. For instance, when the teacher requires that students practice spontaneous spoken English, students may experience feelings of nervousness and anxiety, leading to a fear of receiving low scores from the teacher. On the other hand, by properly preparing, students can feel a sense of ease and proficiency. Students also consider their proficiency in foreign languages to be not enough, with quite a few other students topping their abilities in this aspect.

In line with previous studies from Young (1990), the findings of that study indicate that students' responses to error correction imply that social anxiety could be included as an additional element in a theoretical framework of linguistic anxiety. Students have a fear of receiving negative evaluations, not only from their classmates but also from their teachers. The language classroom serves as the social background that influences their concern about negative evaluation. Moreover, As noted by Worde (2003), the primary cause of anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation, which leads to a decrease in students' self-confidence and eventually affects their ability to speak properly.

The sources of anxiety include fears of speaking unprepared during class, nervousness in communicating with the teacher, the worry of being corrected by the teacher in front of the class and then being teased by classmates, and the fear of being called on in class. In general, this indicates that students experience language anxiety and apprehension about receiving negative evaluations in the classroom.

b. Test Anxiety

The Mean result of this aspect was 3,68. This study examines various factors contributing to test anxiety, including the fear of negative outcomes resulting from failures, such as low test results and the need to retake the exam or remedial,

unwillingness to fully prepare for the test, and the worry of forgetting about the material.

Test anxiety, which is the fear of failing exams, can lead to achievement anxiety in students, making them feel uncomfortable when studying English as a foreign language. Students experience increasing confusion as they spend an extensive amount of time studying in order to prepare for English examinations.

In research, Tugan (2015) explains that test anxiety can have an impact on a student's achievement, which has an impact on the decline in student learning ability, hindering academic performance, reducing motivation for attention and concentration skills, and worse causing academic failure.

It proves that test anxiety has an impact that negatively affects the learning of a foreign language. The test anxiety that students feel is not only anxious about the results of the test but also applies when the test situation is tense and uncomfortable, so nervousness appears to be a fear.

c. Communication Apprehension

The graph shows that the anxiety of communication apprehension among students has a Mean of 3,8. This aspect has the highest Mean from the others aspect. Communication apprehension occurs when students are required to speak in naturally occurring conversation in a foreign language. Moreover, students can experience anxiety when they have difficulty understanding all the words given by the teacher while studying English as a foreign language. This indicates that communication anxiety normally occurs when students find themselves in situations that require spontaneous communication, such as answering directly to questions asked by the teacher during class.

Philips (1992) found a correlation between language anxiety and oral competence. The study indicated that students who experience higher levels of worry tend to perform lower on oral tests. This is Related to Brown (2000) explained that students facing difficulties with communication tend to feel uncomfortable when speaking a foreign language in public due to inappropriate proficiency in the language, especially when speaking and listening.

Being a foreign language learner is its own challenge in communication difficulties, in communicating students need to know how to speak correctly and appropriately, on the other hand, their language skills need to have psychological intelligence so that nervousness and fear do not occur which can affect students' speaking skills.

COCLUSION

This study focuses on knowing students' perceptions of speaking anxiety in English as foreign language students at Tahfidhil Qur'an Al-Mustaqimiyyah eleventh-grade high school.

The results of this study show that students' perceptions obtained from the questionnaire concluded the level of anxiety they felt in speaking English and showed the aspects most experienced by students when learning English in class. Based on Hortwitz's theory, classify anxiety levels into 5 levels; (1) very anxious, (2) anxious, (3) Mildly anxious, (4) relaxed, and (5) very relaxed.

The majority of students have an anxiety level of Anxious with a percentage of 40%, followed by students who feel very anxious 35% and the smallest number Mildly anxious 25%. The aspect that many students feel in foreign language learning that has the highest average score is fear of negative evaluation with an average score of 3.80 followed by fear of test 3.68 and Communication Apprehension 3.45.

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