

Speaking Anxiety in English Classrooms: Perspectives from Polytechnic Students in Malaysia

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Abstract

English speaking skills are essential for polytechnic students preparing for the workforce, yet many still struggle with anxiety in the classroom especially during speaking activities. This study explores the levels of English language anxiety among Malaysian polytechnic students, with a focus on speaking anxiety. Data were collected from 34 diploma students using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which measures four key components: test anxiety, speaking anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation. The study adopts Krashen's Affective Filter and Monitor Hypotheses to interpret how emotional barriers impact language acquisition. Findings indicate that while students experience moderate overall anxiety, higher levels are reported during tests and speaking tasks. These results suggest that certain speaking activities involving evaluation or performance heighten students' affective filters, which limit their ability to communicate effectively. Students were more comfortable in small group settings, where peer support eased their anxiety. The study emphasizes the need for supportive classroom strategies, including scaffolding, low-pressure speaking tasks, and constructive feedback. By addressing emotional barriers, educators can create safer learning spaces that encourage students to engage and build confidence in using English.

Keywords: Speaking Anxiety, Test Anxiety, Communication Apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Polytechnic Students, FLCAS

Introduction

The widespread of the English language has placed a high value on higher education (Brumfit, 2004). The exposure of the language is being taught in all Malaysian schools, from preschool to higher education levels. This early introduction and years of learning English ensures that students can develop smooth proficiency in the language with guidance from the teacher, particularly in schools. Moreover, having proficiency in the language will likely assist the students in better preparation for seeking higher education where English is mainly used in teaching and learning, also supporting students to thrive in the job market, locally and

internationally (Macaro et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2021; Khairul Faiz Alimi et al., 2021). Nevertheless, not only Malaysia but other countries such as Taiwan and Bangladesh share the same perspective, which aims to see there's a need to produce more English-proficient graduates, not only for going local but also looking further into international markets. Additionally, Hirudayaraj et al. (2021) stated that students with insufficient English proficiency skills will end up finding themselves at a disadvantage. In other words, possessing technical skills alone is not enough to pass the international market. The ability to have excellent proficiency skills can help polytechnic students to communicate with diverse people effectively.

Even though it is beneficial to the students' outcomes of learning the English language, there are still many students, particularly in the polytechnic community, who are still struggling with the language. Not to mention polytechnic students are those who primarily focus on practical and technical skills, which leads to using language to emphasize a practical communication environment for specific careers. Since these students are required to have crucial skill focuses for career readiness, it emphasizes various practical applications to embark on effective communication, both written and spoken, using the language that is essential in a workplace environment. Apart from that, these students must be equipped with English skills that are highly connected to their professional career development for them to be able to successfully conduct presentations, understand any technical manuals requiring an understanding of the language and many more technical language skills needed. However, one of the major issues that impact learners' language acquisition and learning is the existence of anxiety (Ran et al., 2022). Not only that, they often face challenges in mastering speech in a language classroom due to the existence of anxiety, eventually interrupting students' academic performance in acquiring the second language (Chin, Ting and Yeo, 2016).

A study conducted by Suparlan (2021) declared that students often feel scared when speaking in English due to lacking confidence, feeling intimidated for being less competent than their peers, inadequate preparation, fear of embarrassment and making mistakes, teacher repercussions, and language tests. In addition to justifying, Saputra (2018) indicated that students may not comprehend English well enough to thoroughly learn it, which may result in them not using the language. Therefore, the factors influencing the rejection of using English for practical communication may contribute to a certain level of speaking anxiety and avoidance. Although polytechnic students are heavily focused on practical communication skills, which contribute to specific career paths, there is limited research conducted on exploring the challenges that the students face in the classroom due to high anxiety levels. Specifically, the current study is conducted to shed light on classroom anxiety levels impacting polytechnic student's proficiency skills, particularly in English classrooms. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i. What is the overall level of English classroom anxiety among polytechnic students in Malaysia?
- ii. What is the level of test anxiety experienced by polytechnic students in English language classrooms?
- iii. What is the level of speaking anxiety experienced by polytechnic students during English language learning?
- iv. What is the level of communication apprehension among polytechnic students when interacting in English during classroom activities?

- v. What is the level of fear of negative evaluation among polytechnic students in English language classrooms?

Literature Review

Language Classroom Anxiety

Speaking anxiety often occurs in language classrooms, mainly when there is a need for the students to communicate using a second or foreign language when dealing with tasks. Anxiety is a term that can be defined as a mental or emotional response such as the feeling of nervousness, excessive fear, and discomfort that is linked to students' experiences in a specific situation (Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013). According to Horwitz & Young (1991) and Pratiwi and Mukhaiyar (2020), anxiety can negatively impact students' academic performance, which may hinder students' achievement. Importantly, if one's anxiety level is high, there is a possibility that it might affect their spoken language production, which will make them look less proficient than other people. This is supported by Manan et al. (2023), who explain that speaking anxiety may highly contribute to students having poor proficiency in the target language, which will cause them to have a lack of confidence. As a result, it may pose a negative impact on students when seeking global jobs (Silalahi et al., 2023).

A recent study by Aarif, Sapuan, and Isnin (2020) identified that polytechnic students often face speaking anxiety when using the language to communicate in the classroom. This anxiety is likely related to practical communication skills for career development in polytechnic institutions where students are expected to use language in real-life speaking situations. Consequently, having high anxiety levels not only hinders these students' academic performance but also affects their readiness to be able to communicate in the workplace. Yoskapela et al. (2022) advise teachers to be brilliant in using diverse language learning strategies to help students overcome their negative feelings about speaking in front of an audience. One of the techniques that can be applied to overcoming student fears of speaking English is to try coping with their anxiety with nonverbal behaviour and nonverbal communication features such as smiling, practising, and preparation (Abdous, 2019). Therefore, applying numerous techniques to overcome students' speaking anxiety is highly required to minimize their level of anxiousness when there is a need to communicate.

Theoretical Framework

In the 1980s, Krashen proposed five hypotheses relating to second language acquisition to offer insights into how languages are learned and perceived. Among these, the Affective Filter Hypothesis and Monitor Hypothesis are specifically relevant and connected to this study. These hypotheses apply to the study as they underline how anxiety can have a mark on the acquisition of language learning and speaking output performance, influencing the learner's ability to communicate effectively. The following discussions explain further the Affective Filter Hypothesis and Monitor Hypothesis to understand the applicability between students' level of speaking anxiety and their language-speaking outcomes:

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

According to Krashen and Stephen (1988), the term "Affective Filter" operates like an invisible wall that can either assist language production or delay the language acquisition process in a second language. Anxiety is one of the features that regularly occurs in an EFL classroom, particularly when it comes to speaking tasks. Students who have social anxiety will

have a hard time concentrating in class and communicating their thoughts (Ewald, 2007). This will eventually lead polytechnic students to have trouble picking up information to effectively use what they learn in verbal practices. In worse scenarios, these students who fail to control their anxiety will cause them to underachievement in both academics and practical communication skills. For instance, a study conducted by an educator at Unismuh Makassar institution found evidence of anxiety that had an impact on the student's performance in the classroom. There are quite a number of students that are dealing with symptoms such as becoming nervous, avoiding interaction, and reluctance to speak in front of other people (Lane, 2015).

In Young's (1922) view, one's ability to use intelligible input to fully learn a foreign language is restricted by excessive worry, which can raise the affective filter, which will cause a "mental block." In simpler meaning, the disruption from high anxiety feelings creates a disruption to fully comprehending the language input in a natural way, making it difficult for students to grasp what they had learned to reach the language acquisition device (LAD). In turn, it may lead to slow progression, eventually making them feel less confident and decreasing learning motivation. Furthermore, research by Aeni et al. (2017) highlights that students who suffer from high levels of anxiety will exhibit greater symptoms compared to students with low levels of anxiety. Empirical evidence was provided from prior findings by Alias and Rashid (2018), who investigated the relationship between polytechnic students' level of language anxiety and students' proficiency ability. It is revealed that students with higher levels of proficiency in the language possess lower test anxiety. In comparison, students with higher levels of anxiety claim to have lower proficiency skills in the language. For instance, students demonstrate many negative symptoms caused by anxiety and struggle to even raise their hands to participate in a class discussion as they lack self-reassurance, which will eventually result in them being uninterested and passive in trying to improve their speaking skills (Marais, 2016).

Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis

The Monitor hypothesis studies the role of learners using their learned or previous knowledge to "monitor" their conscious output (Kurniawati, 2021). Krashen points out that the language acquisition process starts when students utter words, while language learning acts as a "monitor" process. The term monitoring can be performed well when there are adequate time limits, understanding the guidelines of how monitoring operates, and self-correcting (Krashen, 1982). This hypothesis stresses that the learner's usage of "monitor" varies depending on each learner, as outlined by Krashen (1981), a reference by Fikroni (2018) distinguishes "monitor" learners into three classifications: over-users, under-users, and optimal users.

Krashen (1982) described that over-user learners are those who excessively rely on monitoring their language output critically, which may lead to unnecessary worries and heightened levels of speaking anxiety. To illustrate, students who are excessively focused on self-monitoring each of their utterances and wanting to be flawless before speaking will consequently remain silent and not want to partake in any classroom discussion even when they perceive good ideas to convey. Conversely, under-user learners are those who are not supplied with sufficient knowledge, and they might struggle with grammatical accuracy, which may lead to misunderstandings as errors are made, making learners appear less

proficient in speaking. Significantly, it will end up influencing language learners to have elevated anxiety when interacting in classrooms. Frequent errors constructed by learners are driven by their struggling to speak "correctly" and self-correcting based on their feeling of correctness (e.g., it sounds correct).

In contrast, optimal users are defined as learners who can balance out their fluency and accuracy of comprehensible output using the "monitor" system, resulting in a slighter experience overcoming anxiety, according to Krashen (1982). Hence, it stimulates learners to communicate satisfactorily with their peers and teachers in language classrooms. In the polytechnic education context, practical communications are essential for students' career eagerness. Students with heightened anxiety oftentimes fall under over-users and under-user learners' categories, causing them to have disrupted conversing ideas for future workplace scenarios. On the other hand, the utilization of this "monitoring" process highly depends on students' language proficiency to tackle it effectively. Hence, it accentuates the demand for more techniques given by the teacher (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2022) to assist polytechnic students in striking a balance to carefully monitor their language output and use correct grammatical order while understanding the input.

Methodology

This study is mono-method quantitative research using a non-experimental approach (Saunders et al., 2012) which entails gathering and statistically evaluating close-ended data in a single study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Hence, a full set of questionnaires on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) consisting of 33 constructs was adopted from previous studies that examined anxiety among second or foreign-language students (Horwitz et al., 1986; Huang, 2022) as the data collection instrument of the current study. In addition, FLAS was also chosen for this study due to its strong reliability with reported Cronbach Alpha values between .795 (Dutra & Finger, 2020) and .904 (Huang, 2022). The questionnaire contains three sections: Section A on consent, Section B on demographic information, and Section C on FLCAS. The 33 constructs of FLCAS in the final section are distributed into four components as shown in Table 1 that characterize anxiety students experienced in a language classroom using a 5-point Likert scale options of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 1

FLCAS Constructs

Components	Item No	Total Items
Test anxiety	8, 10, 21, 28	4
Fear of communication and negative evaluation	2, 9, 13, 15, 19, 20, 23, 27, 29, 32, 33	11
Speaking anxiety	1, 3, 14, 24	4
General English class apprehension	4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 22, 25, 26, 30, 31	14
TOTAL		33

Participants

Since it is not feasible to include everyone as a respondent when conducting research, a group of samples was used as the participants of this study. They were chosen based on convenience and non-probability sampling design as it is quick, easy, and inexpensive to conduct (Wiśniowski et al., 2020). It was also convenient as the researchers had easy access to the targeted participants through colleagues. As a result, a total of 34 diploma students from a selected polytechnic took part voluntarily in this study.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data collection for this study followed a snowballing technique where the link to the online questionnaire was sent to English lecturers through a social network service (SNS) and later distributed to students who are the target participants. The collected data was downloaded into a spreadsheet and analyzed using a statistical tool namely Microsoft Excel 2021 for Windows. All responses received through online questionnaire were used to be analyzed and reported as the findings of this study since there was no missing answer for any of the constructs and none of the participants declared English as their native language which met the scope of this study that investigated second language classroom anxiety. As this study does not investigate any relationship between variables, the findings are reported in the form of a summary of statistics using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean.

Findings and Discussion*Demographic Background*

Table 2

Participants' Demographic Background

Constructs	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	18	52.9
Female	16	47.1
Age		
18	14	41.2
19	6	17.6
20	7	20.6
21	5	14.7
22	2	5.9
Programmes		
Mechanical Engineering	1	2.9
Mechanical Engineering (Automotive)	9	26.5
Mechanical Engineering (Manufacturing)	4	11.8
Marketing	3	8.8
Logistics and Supply Chain	17	50.0
Mother Tongue		
Malay	31	91.2
Tamil	2	5.9
Chinese	1	2.9

Table 2 presents the distribution of participants' demographic background in terms of their gender, age, academic programs, and native language. It was found that majority of the participants were males at 52.9% while females were represented by a smaller percentage of 41.7%. In relation to their age, most of them were 18 years old (41.2%), which is the common entrance age to higher education for diploma programs. Moreover, exactly half of these participants (50%) were pursuing their academic in logistics and supply chain, while the other half (50%) were taking marketing (8.8%) or other technical fields including automotive (26.5%), manufacturing (11.8%) and pure mechanical engineering (2.9%). It was interesting to discover that none of these respondents used English as their mother tongue. Instead, they used either Malay language (91.2%), Tamil (5.9%), or Chinese (2.9%) in their daily lives, hence fulfilling the context of this study where English acts as a second or foreign language.

Level of English Language Classroom Anxiety

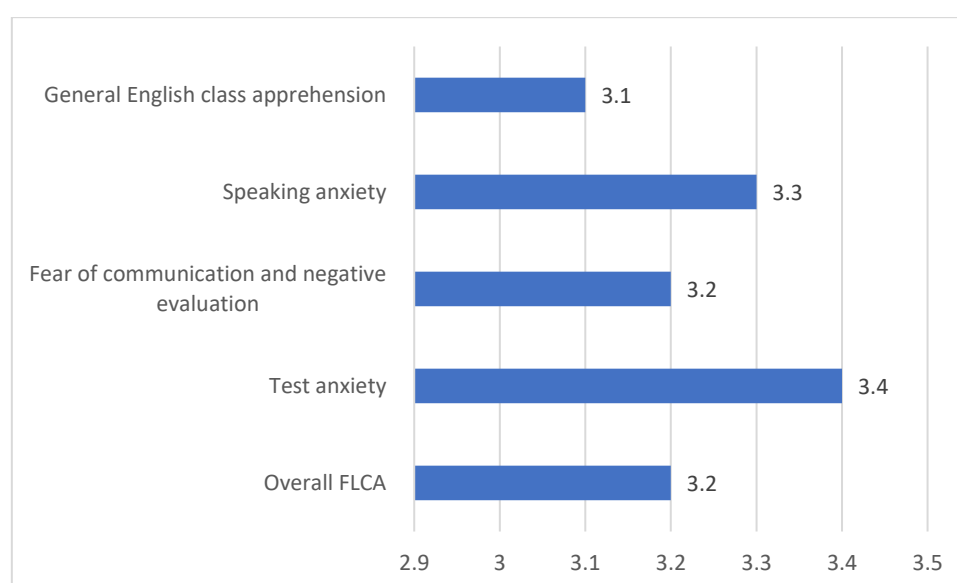


Figure 1 Mean Scores of English Language Classroom Anxiety

Figure 1 illustrates the mean scores for the four components of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the total overall constructs. The mean score for the overall FLCAS was 3.2, which fell between “neither disagree nor agree” and “agree” on the Likert scale employed. This informed that students generally experienced moderate anxiety in the English language classroom. However, their level of anxiety was higher when it came to tests and speaking with mean scores of 3.4 and 3.3 respectively. In contrast, the students were calmer with a more controlled level of anxiety when dealing with general English as indicated by the lowest mean score of 3.1.

The findings revealed that test anxiety and speaking anxiety elicited higher mean scores (3.4 and 3.3), highlighting the heightened affective filters in evaluative or performance-based scenarios. These findings are in line with the Monitor Hypothesis that argues that students who are excessively concerned with linguistic accuracy overuse their internal “monitor” leading to delay and increased fearfulness. These results align with Xiwei’s (2023) study that highlights the importance of performance anxiety in language learning, especially during speaking tasks. In contrast, low levels of anxiety associated with ordinary classroom

apprehension (mean=3.1) reveal that non-assessment interactions offer an environment that is more relaxed for learning purposes.

This is a pattern consistent with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) assertion which stresses anxiety's role in eroding student confidence needed for achievement. These results stress the significance of creating a non-evaluative atmosphere in class that encourages real communication opportunities (Manan et al., 2023).

The moderate level of anxiety (mean score = 3.2) observed reflects students' struggle to manage their apprehensions. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety can act as filters that either facilitate or hinder language acquisition (Yaoqing, 2021). In this case, the anxiety may not be incapacitating but nevertheless is likely to heighten the filter, thereby restricting the students' ability to fully grasp and internalize the language. These results are consistent with Zain et al., (2023) who found out anxiety can highly block the learning of a language by creating psychological barriers that obstruct communication

Test Anxiety

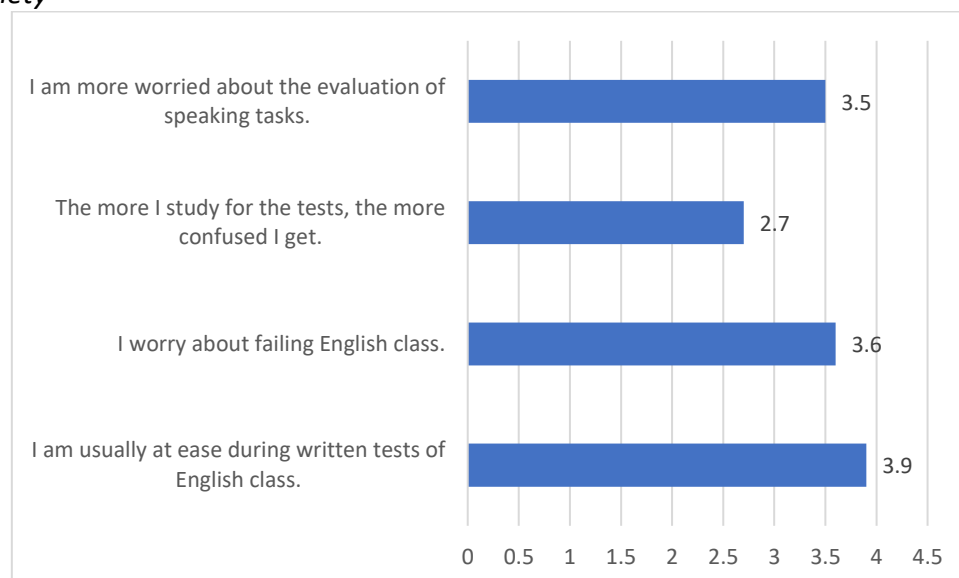


Figure 2 Mean Scores of Test Anxiety

Figure 2 shows mean scores for the test anxiety component in the FLCAS. The highest mean score of 3.9 was recorded for the statement "I am usually at ease during written tests of English class". As this construct carried a positive statement and responses provided inclined toward agreement, this implied that students were not anxious when sitting for English written tests. In contrast, students reported a slightly high level of anxiety (mean score of 3.5) when they were being evaluated for their speaking skills as they described that "I am more worried about the evaluation of speaking tasks". Consequently, they had higher anxiety with the idea of failing this subject. This is shown in a moderate-high mean score of 3.6 for agreeing to "I worry about failing English class" statement. Therefore, students managed this situation by preparing themselves for the tests. The students' anxiety level was low at a mean score of 2.7 indicating disagreement for "the more I study for the tests, the more confused I

get” statement. This means that students were able to understand what they learned in English classes when they did revision and prepared for tests.

Analysis of test anxiety results reveals a contradiction that indicates students’ preference for writing examinations rather than oral ones. During the written tests, the students reported that they were fairly relaxed (mean score = 3.9), which means that these tasks reduce the affective filter as they are structured and predictable enough. Nonetheless, there is a spike in nervousness during oral exams (mean = 3.5). This finding is consistent with Huang (2022), who noted that oral proficiency tests evoke greater anxiety due to their immediate and public nature. This disparity shows a need for a balanced approach where confidence and fluency can be built upon by both structured and all-skill speaking opportunities (Su, 2022).

Structured preparation was also shown to alleviate anxiety, as demonstrated by the low mean score (2.7) for the statement, “The more I study for tests, the more confused I get.” This finding suggests that preparation reduces anxiety by increasing linguistic competence and self-confidence, as per Krashen’s theories (Yaoqing, 2021).

Fear of Communication and Negative Evaluation

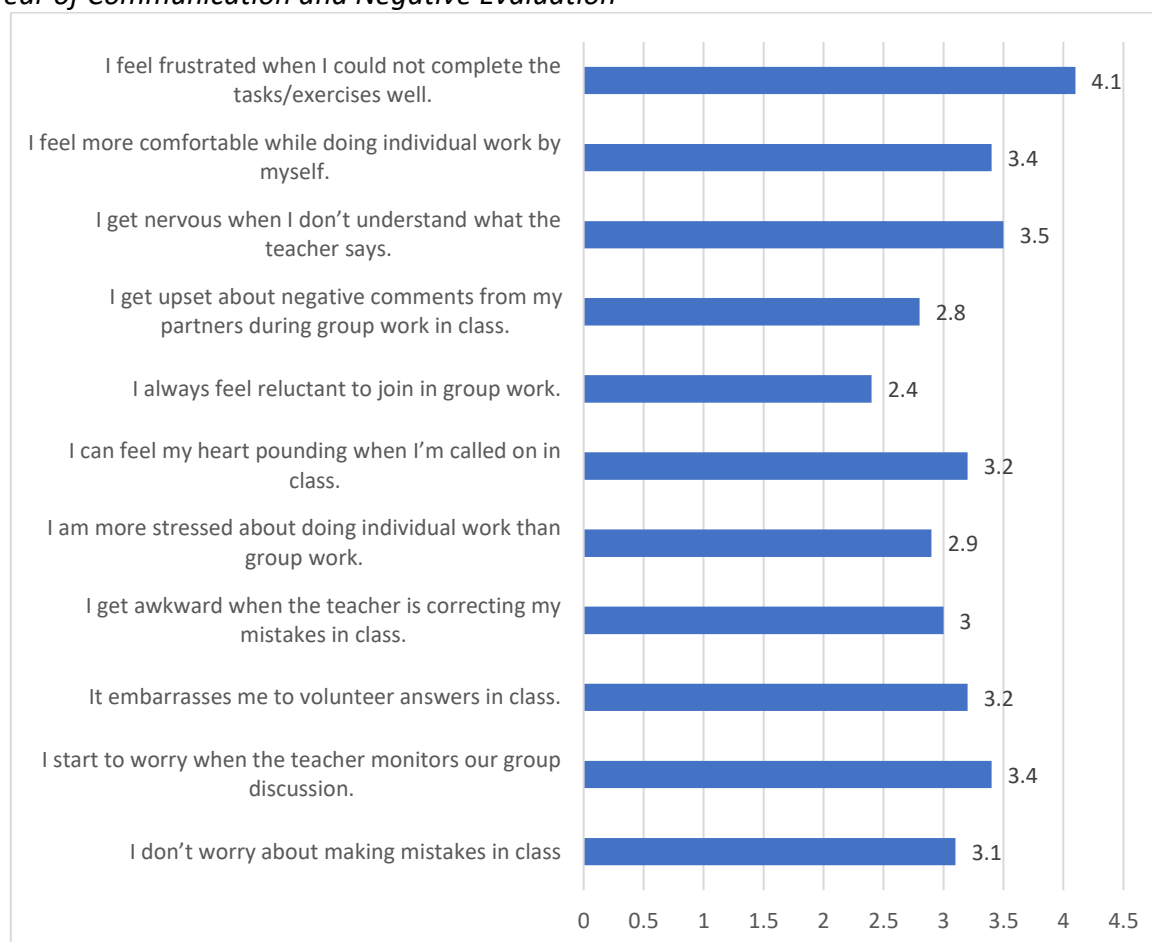


Figure 3 Mean Scores of Fear of Communication and Negative Evaluation

Figure 3 displays mean scores for fear of communication and negative evaluation which is one of the components of the FLCAS. All in all, the mean scores recorded an

enormous range of differences between 2.4 to 4.1. These responses signified a mixed opinion on the construct asked as they leaned toward “disagree” to “strongly agree”. The high level of anxiety for this component was recorded for “I feel frustrated when I could not complete the tasks or exercises well” statement at 4.1 mean score. This showed that the majority of students had negative feelings of extreme fear of not being able to accomplish English tasks as desired. Furthermore, students also moved from being neutral to agreeing in experiencing anxiety in the case of “I get nervous when I don’t understand what the teacher says” (mean score of 3.5) and “I start to worry when the teacher monitors our group discussion” (mean score of 3.4). These notified that students cared about their English courses and were intrinsically motivated to take charge of their own learning of this subject by wanting to understand what the teacher taught them and interacting well with their peers. However, students felt anxious when their interactions were being monitored by their teacher even though they worked in groups as this somewhat involved evaluation that might result in negative outcomes, and thus preferred to work individually which limits communication as students stated that “I feel more comfortable while doing individual work by myself” (mean score of 3.4). Despite that, students disagreed with the statement “I always feel reluctant to join in group work” with the lowest mean score of 2.4. This manifested that even though individual work provided a sense of security to them, they still needed group work that could support their language learning.

The mixed responses within this category (mean range = 2.4–4.1) highlight the diversity of anxiety triggers among students. The high mean score (4.1) for fear of failing tasks underscores the emotional burden associated with perceived incompetence, reinforcing the need for supportive classroom practices (Quijano & Asio, 2022). This aligns with past research, such as Dutra & Finger (2020), which linked heightened anxiety to self-perceived linguistic incompetence. Conversely, the low mean score for reluctance to join group work (2.4) indicates that students view collaborative activities as a low-pressure platform for language practice.

However, anxiety that comes from teacher monitoring during group discussions (mean = 3.4) suggests that perceived judgment can overshadow the benefits of peer collaboration (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2020). While group work reduces the affective filter by fostering peer support, perceived judgment from instructors can heighten the filter, increasing anxiety (Xiwei, 2023). The results support the demand for educational approaches that combine supervision with self-paced learning. The scaffold and formative feedback can be used to alleviate anxiety from teacher evaluation but still maintain instructional assistance (Xiwei, 2023).

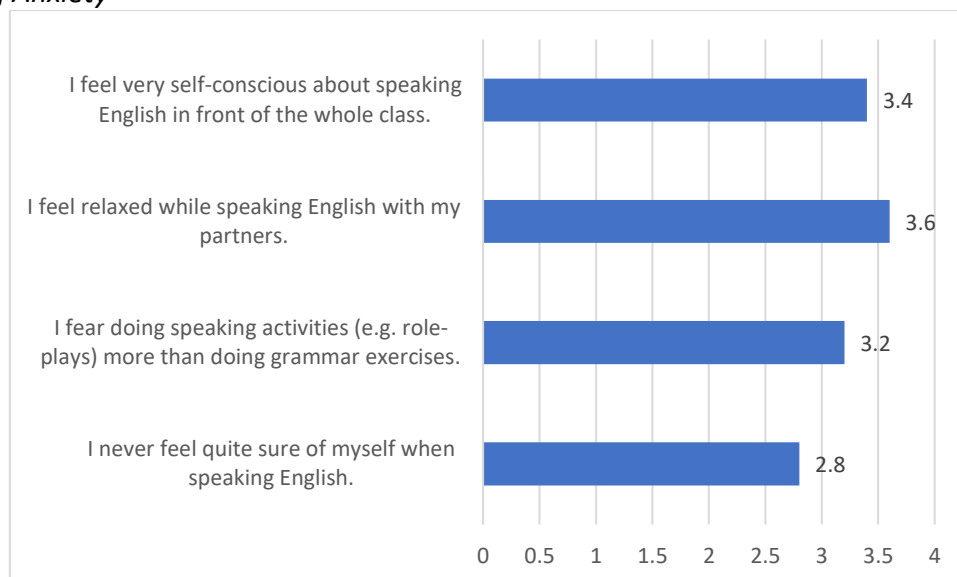
Speaking Anxiety

Figure 4 Mean Scores of Speaking Anxiety

Figure 4 portrays mean scores for the third component of FLCAS namely speaking anxiety. Generally, the recorded mean scores for this component were 3.2 to 3.6 which showed “neither disagree nor agree” and “agree” with an exception to one construct of “I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking English”. The mean score of 2.8 for the latter statement meant that students were quite confident in speaking the language in the classroom context. Unfortunately, their confidence level was still insufficient for them to communicate with others using English proficiently for various modes such as interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal communications as they still could not completely overcome their anxiety as demonstrated in the moderate mean scores recorded for “I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of the whole class” (3.4) and “I fear doing speaking activities (e.g. role-plays) more than doing grammar exercises” (3.2). Interestingly, the students were more at ease when speaking to a much smaller group of people, as evident in their statement, “I feel relaxed while speaking English with my partners” (mean score of 3.6).

Speaking anxiety remains a significant challenge, as reflected in moderate mean scores ranging from 3.2 to 3.6. The reluctance to engage in oral tasks such as role-plays reflects the activation of the monitor, as students over-focus on linguistic accuracy at the expense of fluency. Krashen’s Monitor Hypothesis suggests that such over-monitoring disrupts spontaneous language use, contributing to anxiety (Yaoqing, 2021). Despite these challenges, a relatively low mean score (2.8) for “lack of confidence when speaking English” which indicates some level of self-esteem among these students although they face difficulties in applying this level of assurance under high-pressure situations. This is consistent with Horwitz et al. (1986), who underscored the significance of contextual factors in impacting language anxiety (Zain et al., 2023). The mean score (mean = 3.6) indicates that students are more comfortable when working in small-sized groups compared to the larger ones. The result implies that there is an alignment with communicative language teaching principles which emphasizes on peer interaction as a way of building fluency and confidence (Li, 2022

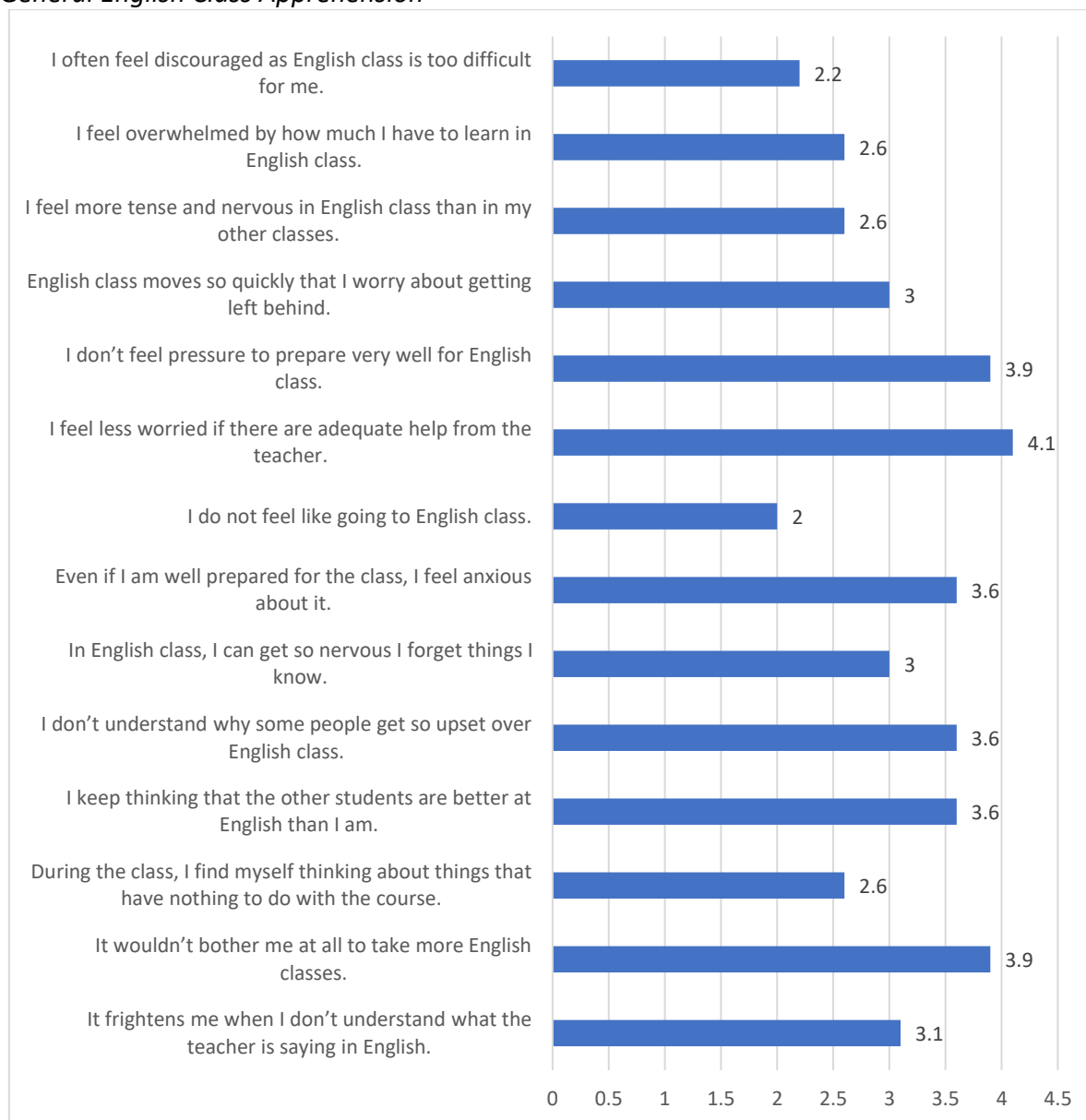
General English Class Apprehension

Figure 5 Mean Scores of General English Class Apprehension

Figure 5 portrays mean scores for general English class apprehension, the final component in the FLCAS. The highest mean score of 4.1 was obtained for one construct “I feel less worried if there are adequate help from the teacher”. This reading was significant in indicating the teacher’s role in helping diminish students’ anxiety in language classrooms. The scaffold that the teacher provided to students was able to help them navigate the intricacy of English and eradicated their negative perception toward the subject, hence explaining the lowest mean score (2.0) to the statement “I do not feel like going to English class”. Students also indicated their positivity about the subject by nearly “agree” to two statements of “It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more English classes” and “I don’t feel pressure to prepare very well for English class” (mean scores of 3.9, respectively). This showed that students were willing to put extra effort to excel in this subject and did not feel anxious about the workload. This situation occurred due to a healthy level of anxiety at a mean score of 3.6 that the students experienced when “I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than

I am” and “Even if I am well prepared for the class, I feel anxious about it” which served as motivational factors for them in learning the language. All in all, the level of anxiety that students had in English language classroom was generally bearable and not exceeding other subjects as brought by a low mean score of 2.6 for “I feel more tense and nervous in English class than in my other classes” statement, indicating their stance between “disagree” and “neither disagree nor agree” scale.

The crucial role of teachers in shaping the classroom ambience is evident in the high mean score (4.1) for “feeling less worried with adequate teacher support.” According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis, effective teacher interventions can lower the filter, enabling greater language acquisition (Yaoqing, 2021). Sipahi, (2020) also stated that effective scaffolding, positive reinforcement, and personalized feedback not only lower the affective filter but also foster a sense of security, encouraging students to take linguistic risks. Further substantiating the significance of teacher-student relationships is students’ desire for more English lessons (mean= 3.9) and lack of concern when preparing for class (mean= 3.9). The results are consistent with previous studies like Huang (2022) which suggested that teacher support could mediate foreign language anxiety. The results show teachers should join training programs that have anxiety-reducing strategies for teachers so that they can assist students in English language learning with more confidence if they incorporate formative assessments, peer mentoring, and scaffolded oral tasks (Khoshhal, 2021).

Conclusion

A number of aspects of English language classroom anxiety among polytechnic students have been highlighted by this research, particularly in evaluation or speaking contexts. The main findings indicate that compared to general classroom apprehension, test anxiety and speaking anxiety were more prevalent Suciati (2020). Students preferred structured tasks like written assessments over oral evaluations, which they found too stressful due to the immediate feedback involved, and issues such as public exposure heightened their levels of anxiety (Suparlan, 2021). Furthermore, this study established that teacher support is a crucial element in reducing anxiety, particularly through providing students with sufficient scaffolding and positive reinforcement, which fosters a high sense of security in them (Syahrani, 2024). Thus, these results imply that for emotional factors, Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis is relevant (Ridwan & Nabilah, 2021).

Practical considerations necessitate fostering an environment conducive to the needs of polytechnic students. Small group discussions and collaborative projects, alongside scaffolded oral tasks designed to gradually increase both confidence and fluency among learners, may be beneficial (Ho, 2023). In the context of polytechnics, the incorporation of digital tools such as language-learning apps or virtual reality simulations can provide students with a private platform for speaking practice without pressure (Merkviladze, 2023). For instance, simulations using role plays prepare individuals for workplace communication while allowing them to assist each other in improving their practical English competencies through peer mentoring programs (Lomotey, 2021). Additionally, the inclusion of culturally responsive teaching approaches and formative assessments can help alleviate the fear of evaluation and improve language proficiency (Erdiana et al., 2020). Educators who implement these strategies can prepare polytechnic students to manage stress effectively and excel academically while thriving in the workforce (Viviana, 2023).

To address this, fostering supportive classroom environments is essential. Teachers should focus on creating low-pressure learning settings that prioritize positive reinforcement and collaborative activities. Incorporating small-group discussions and peer mentoring can help reduce performance anxiety. Gradual exposure to oral communication activities, starting with low-stakes tasks and progressing to more public presentations, can also help students build confidence over time (Siregar, 2022).

Teacher training programs should emphasize strategies for managing classroom anxiety, such as scaffolded feedback, formative assessments, and culturally responsive teaching methods (Alrashidi, 2022). In addition, integrating digital tools such as language-learning apps and virtual simulations can provide students with a private, low-pressure space to practice their speaking skills. These tools can complement classroom instruction by allowing students to develop confidence in a non-threatening environment.

Encouraging students to engage in self-reflection and goal setting can also build resilience against anxiety. Journaling or self-assessment tools can help them track their progress and identify areas for improvement (Anudin et al., 2022). Furthermore, future research should explore the long-term effects of anxiety-reducing interventions and investigate the role of teacher-student rapport in mitigating classroom anxiety (Hama, 2022). Huang (2022) argues that it is possible to have a deeper understanding of students' perceptions and experiences through mixed-method approaches that include both qualitative and quantitative data.

Theoretically, the study reinforces Krashen's Affective Filter and Monitor Hypotheses. It shows that elevated anxiety, especially in test and speaking contexts, can obstruct second language acquisition. High-anxiety learners may either over-monitor their speech, resulting in communication breakdowns, or disengage entirely due to heightened affective filters. Contextually, this research extends the application of these theories to the Malaysian polytechnic setting, where English proficiency is closely tied to students' future career readiness. By identifying the unique emotional and communicative barriers experienced by technical and vocational learners, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how affective factors influence language learning in skill-based tertiary education. These insights highlight the importance of integrating supportive classroom strategies, such as scaffolded tasks, peer collaboration, and formative feedback. These strategies can support learners' confidence and communicative competence in English for academic and professional success.

In conclusion, there should be a multiple approach to the problem of classroom anxiety by blending theory with practice. Through supportive environments creation as well as teaching techniques on how to manage fears, learners can be encouraged in English language acquisition thereby making them succeed in academic studies and future careers.

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