

A Study on the Levels and Situational Factors of English-Speaking Anxiety among Undergraduate Tesl Students

May May Grace Derioh*, Rabiha Maya Adiera Ab Rahim,
Dharshini A/P Ganeson, Sarenayaa A/P Rajendram, Vyeshnavi
A/P Mohan

Faculty of Education and Humanities, UNITAR International University, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author Email: grace@unitar.my

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Abstract

This study investigates English-speaking anxiety among TESL undergraduates at UNITAR International University. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected from 100 students through a structured questionnaire. The analysis revealed that oral presentations and unexpected questions were the primary triggers of anxiety, while informal conversations with friends caused the least stress. Findings also showed that self-perceived proficiency significantly influenced anxiety levels, with lower-proficiency students reporting the highest anxiety. Coping strategies most used were preparation and relaxation techniques. The study concludes that supportive teaching strategies, such as rehearsal opportunities, collaborative learning, and constructive feedback, are essential to reduce speaking anxiety and enhance students' confidence.

Keywords: Anxiety, Collaborative Learning, Constructive Feedback

Introduction

English speaking skills are required for academic success and future career opportunities in Malaysia. As English is still the common second language used in Malaysian tertiary institutions, the students are regularly requested to engage in academic speaking activities such as presentations, in-class group discussions, and oral examinations. But even with years of English language training, students in general struggle with some level of anxiety when they communicate in English, particularly in formal or academic situations.

English-speaking anxiety is a type of foreign language anxiety that negatively affects learners' communicative willingness and performance (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). English-speaking anxiety is typically triggered by fear of making mistakes, perceived self-doubt about the ability to pronounce or use vocabulary, and desire to be evaluated by others. Thus, students refrain from engagement, which in turn takes away from their communicative competence and learning.

This study aims to examine the extent of English-speaking anxiety among undergraduate students at UNITAR International University and to identify specific academic situations in which English-speaking anxiety is most common. The findings are expected to offer insights that may assist in institutions in understanding students' emotional responses to speaking tasks and in making informed decisions for improving support within the language learning environment.

Problem Statement

While English-speaking ability has been considered a core skill in the Malaysian education system, research shows that over 70% of Malaysian university students experience anxiety when speaking English in academic situations (Latif, 2007; Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012). This anxiety often leads to reduced participation, avoidance of speaking tasks and limited oral language development. It was first established by Horwitz et al. (1986) that foreign language classroom anxiety, especially during speaking activities, can significantly hinder language acquisition and performance. Since then, numerous studies have confirmed that language learners frequently experience fear, nervousness, and lack of confidence when required to speak in English (Tóth, 2011; Riasati, 2011; Tanveer, 2007). These emotional barriers not only affect students' speaking fluency but also their academic engagement and classroom interaction.

Despite this growing body of research, studies that focus specifically on the situational causes of English-speaking anxiety in Malaysian private universities are still limited. Tanveer (2007) and Tóth (2011) emphasized that language anxiety is often context-specific fluctuating in different speaking scenarios such as public presentations, in-class discussions, or unplanned responses. However, Malaysia-based studies often treat language anxiety as a general issue and do not explore how it manifests across different academic speaking situations.

At UNITAR International University, students are frequently required to speak English during classes, presentations, and collaborative group tasks. Yet, the degree and specific triggers of their speaking anxiety have not been extensively researched. Without clear knowledge of when and why learners are most anxious, educators may find it difficult to support students' affective needs referring to the emotional and psychological support necessary for effective language learning, such as building confidence and reducing fear of judgment.

Therefore, the current research seeks to bridge this gap by examining the level and situational causes of English-speaking anxiety among undergraduate students at UNITAR International University. The findings may provide valuable insights for improving oral language instruction, identifying high-anxiety scenarios, and reducing communication barriers in the academic context.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study extends to educators, students, and researchers in the field of TESL. For educators, the identification of situational triggers of English-speaking anxiety provides essential insights for designing pedagogical approaches that promote psychological safety and foster greater learner engagement. For students, awareness of their own anxiety patterns may serve as an important step toward developing effective coping mechanisms and enhancing their self-confidence in academic oral communication. For future research, this

study enriches the body of scholarship on language anxiety in private higher education, offering a foundation for further inquiry into the interplay between emotional and contextual variables in second language learning.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the overall level of English-speaking anxiety among undergraduate students at UNITAR International University.
2. To examine in which academic situations (e.g., presentations, discussions) trigger higher speaking anxiety.
3. To explore any significant differences in anxiety levels based on English language proficiency.

Research Questions

1. What is the overall level of English-speaking anxiety among undergraduate students at UNITAR International University?
2. Which academic situations cause the most anxiety for students?
3. Are there significant differences in anxiety levels based on English language proficiency?

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Theory (FLCAT) proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). This theory offers an integrated explanation of how foreign language anxiety, particularly speaking anxiety, can interfere with second language learning and communication. It identifies three main components of anxiety in classroom language use:

1. **Communication Apprehension**
Fear or discomfort in engaging in verbal communication with others, often experienced during public speaking or class discussions.
2. **Test Anxiety**
Stress is caused by the fear of being evaluated, especially during oral presentations or examinations where performance is judged.
3. **Fear of Negative Evaluation**
Concern about how others (educators or peers) perceive one's language performance, especially fear of criticism, embarrassment, or making mistakes.

This framework is applicable in this study, as it focuses on learners' internal emotional states as well as the external classroom conditions that influence English-speaking anxiety. The theory supports the idea that anxiety can vary based on the speaking context, self-confidence, and perceived English language proficiency.

The FLCAT will guide the development of the research instrument (questionnaire), the formulation of research questions, and the interpretation of results. It also supports the inclusion of a mixed-method approach, where quantitative data will be collected through questionnaires and qualitative insights will be gathered using a small set of open-ended questions, allowing deeper understanding of students' individual experiences.

Literature Review

Anxiety associated with speaking English is a widely recognized barrier to learning a second language, particularly in educational settings. In Malaysia, English serves as a vital second language, particularly in higher education institutions. Nevertheless, many students continue to experience anxiety when participating in spoken English tasks, such as presentations and classroom discussions. This chapter reviews recent and relevant literature from 2021 to 2025, focusing on the characteristics of English-speaking anxiety, its situational factors, the effects of language proficiency, and potential coping strategies, all within the context of Malaysian higher education. The observations presented aim to establish a foundational understanding and highlight the importance of the current study at UNITAR International University.

Nature of English-Speaking Anxiety

English-speaking anxiety is a specific type of language anxiety. It describes the apprehension learners experience when they must speak a second or foreign language. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) characterized Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) as "a unique amalgamation of self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and actions associated with the process of learning a language in a classroom setting." This anxiety often stems from students' fears of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and the expectation of negative judgment, particularly during structured speaking activities such as presentations or oral examinations (Achanan et al., 2021).

Academic Situations that Trigger Anxiety

Levels of anxiety can be influenced by the specific academic environments in which English is used. A study conducted by Dellah et al. (2021) at UiTM found that oral presentations were the most anxiety-inducing activity, primarily due to their formal nature and the evaluative feedback received from both peers and educators. This stress was exacerbated by students' perceptions that they needed to be grammatically correct and fluent to be considered competent.

A study by Ibrahim (2024) found that postgraduate students' anxiety levels peaked during oral presentations, exceeding those experienced during discussions or exams. The participants reported that internal factors, such as self-doubt and the fear of misinterpretation, were more significant than external influences, highlighting the deep connection between their anxiety and self-image.

Yacob and Mohamad (2024) broadened this research to online learning environments. Their findings revealed that anxiety related to speaking persisted in virtual classrooms, particularly during online group discussions and presentations. The lack of physical presence did not reduce students' anxiety; instead, diminished interaction and limited non-verbal cues contributed to communication challenges and discomfort.

Together, these studies affirm that anxiety associated with speaking English is not consistent; situational factors influence it. Different tasks evoke varying levels of fear and discomfort depending on their formality, spontaneity, or evaluation nature.

English Proficiency and Speaking Anxiety

A growing body of research suggests a negative correlation between English language proficiency and anxiety experienced during speaking activities. In other words, individuals who exhibit higher levels of proficiency in the English language typically report lower levels of anxiety. Research conducted by Dellah et al. (2021) and Tee et al. (2022) found that students who excelled in written, and comprehension tasks also displayed increased confidence and reduced anxiety during speaking activities.

However, these studies acknowledged certain exceptions. Some individuals with a strong command of English still experience anxiety due to personality traits such as introversion or perfectionism. Additionally, Tee et al. (2022) emphasized that a student's self-assessment of their abilities, rather than their actual proficiency level, was a more significant predictor of anxiety. As a result, students who perceived themselves as poor speakers tended to feel more anxious, regardless of their true capabilities.

This highlights the complex and subjective nature of anxiety associated with speaking in English, which cannot be attributed solely to language proficiency but must also consider psychological and emotional factors.

Coping Mechanisms and Pedagogical Support

While not the primary focus of this research, understanding how students manage their speaking anxiety may offer valuable insights that could inform the development of more effective teaching strategies (Tee et al., 2022). Self-regulatory techniques, such as positive self-talk, thorough preparation, and consistent practice, were the most employed coping strategies. Students who utilized these methods were more likely to participate in class and progressively improve their speaking skills.

Furthermore, Yacob & Mohamad (2024) emphasized that supportive classroom environments significantly reduced anxiety, as students felt safe from judgment, particularly in online settings. This observation reinforces the understanding that emotional support and constructive feedback from educators play a vital role in fostering students' confidence.

These findings suggest that, although speaking anxiety is a widespread challenge, it can be relieved through targeted strategies and positive reinforcement. Educators and curriculum innovators are essential in cultivating these supportive environments.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing a structured survey to examine the levels and situational determinants of English-speaking anxiety among UNITAR students. The survey method enabled the identification of consistent patterns and statistical trends, thereby generating reliable and measurable data. Grounded in FLCAT, this approach provides a robust theoretical lens for analysing the extent and contextual triggers of language anxiety in academic settings.

The study was carried out at UNITAR International University, a private higher education institution in Malaysia. The university's English-medium instruction and varied student

population make it an ideal location for researching English-speaking anxiety in academic settings.

Sample of Study

The study involved a sample of 100 undergraduate students from the Bachelor of Education program, specifically within the TESL, program at UNITAR International University. Participants were chosen based on their experiences with English-speaking academic tasks, including oral presentations, in-class discussions, and group work.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling technique was employed for this study, primarily due to considerations of accessibility and time constraints. This approach enabled the collection of data from 100 undergraduate students with direct experience in English-speaking academic activities. The structured questionnaire was disseminated through various online platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and other student-oriented social media channels, ensuring wide reach and participation. While convenience sampling may limit the overall generalizability of the findings, it proved effective in facilitating timely and efficient data collection from the targeted population.

Research Instrument

This study employed a single primary research instrument: a structured questionnaire designed for the quantitative component of the research.

1. Structured Questionnaire (Quantitative)

The questionnaire was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), with modifications made to reflect the Malaysian tertiary education context. It was distributed to a sample of 100 undergraduate students.

The instrument was organized into three sections:

Section A: Demographic Information

Collected details such as age, gender, faculty, and students' self-perceived English proficiency level.

Section B: English-Speaking Anxiety Scale

Comprised Likert-scale items measuring students' overall levels of English-speaking anxiety.

Section C: Situational Anxiety Triggers

Focused on identifying specific contexts that provoke anxiety, including presentations, group discussions, and impromptu speaking tasks.

All items in Sections B and C employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to capture varying degrees of agreement and intensity of anxiety experienced by respondents.

Results

Socio-Demographic Information

Table 4.1 presents the age distribution of the respondents. Most of the participants (56%) were within the 21–23 age range, aligning with the typical demographic of TESL undergraduates. A smaller proportion (25%) belonged to the 24–26 age group, 15% were aged 18–20, and only 4% were 27 years or older. This distribution aligns with the TESL student population at the university and suggests that the findings effectively represent the perspectives of the dominant age group within the program.

Table 4.1

Age Distribution of Respondents (N = 100)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–20 years	15	15.0
21–23 years	56	56.0
24–26 years	25	25.0
27 years and above	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of respondents (N = 100).

Table 4.2 presents the gender distribution among the respondents. Out of a total of 100 participants, 65 identified as female and 35 as male. This data indicates a higher enrolment of female students in the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program.

Table 4.2

Gender Distribution of Respondents (N = 100)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	35	35.0
Female	65	65.0
Total	100	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of respondents (N = 100).

The study also considered the respondents' year of study. As shown in Table 4.3, the largest group of participants was in Year 3 (49%), followed by Year 2 (29%) and Year 1 (22%). This suggests that most respondents had more extensive exposure to academic English and speaking-related activities.

Table 4.3*Year of Study Distribution of Respondents (N = 100)*

Year of Study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Year 1	22	22.0
Year 2	29	29.0
Year 3	49	49.0
Total	100	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of respondents (N = 100).

Perceived English Skills

Participants were also asked to provide a self-assessment of their English-speaking skills. As presented in Table 4.4, 37.8% of respondents classified themselves as advanced, another 37.8% identified as fluent, 20.4% considered themselves at an intermediate level, and 4.1% rated their skills as basic.

Table 4.4*Self-Assessment of English-Speaking Skills (N = 100)*

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Basic	4	4.1
Intermediate	20	20.4
Fluent	38	37.8
Advanced	38	37.8
Total	100	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of respondents (N = 100).

Participants were also asked to indicate their general English-speaking proficiency. As shown in Table 4.5, the largest proportion of respondents (39.8%) reported speaking English at an intermediate level, suggesting they can manage basic conversations. A further 29.6% identified as advanced, reflecting strong command of English, while 25.5% rated themselves as fluent, indicating the ability to communicate with ease and accuracy. Finally, 5.1% considered their skills basic, signifying that they are still at the early stages of learning.

Table 4.5*General English-Speaking Proficiency (N = 100)*

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Basic	5	5.1
Intermediate	40	39.8
Advanced	30	29.6
Fluent	25	25.5
Total	100	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of respondents (N = 100).

Participants were also asked to self-assess their ability to use English sentences effectively. As shown in Table 4.6, 39.6% of respondents rated themselves as advanced, while 34.4% identified as intermediate. Additionally, 20.8% considered themselves fluent, and 5.2% reported being at the basic level.

Table 4.6*Self-Assessment of Sentence Use in English (N = 100)*

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Basic	5	5.2
Intermediate	34	34.4
Advanced	39	39.6
Fluent	21	20.8
Total	100	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of  ndents (N = 100).

Participants were also asked to assess their vocabulary proficiency. As presented in Table 4.7, most respondents (42.9%) identified their vocabulary level as intermediate, suggesting they have a good understanding of commonly used English words. A further 31.6% reported being at the advanced level, indicating extensive vocabulary and effective usage. Meanwhile, 21.4% considered themselves fluent, demonstrating the ability to use vocabulary with ease in both speech and writing. Only 4.1% of respondents rated themselves as basic, reflecting limited word knowledge.

Table 4.6*Self-Assessment of Sentence Use in English (N = 100)*

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Basic	5	5.2
Intermediate	34	34.4
Advanced	39	39.6
Fluent	21	20.8
Total	100	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of  onents (N = 100).

Participants were also asked to evaluate their comfort and ability in public speaking. As shown in Table 4.8, 37% of respondents rated themselves as intermediate, indicating moderate confidence in speaking before an audience. Another 30% identified as advanced, reflecting strong ability and comfort, while 26% considered themselves fluent, demonstrating high proficiency in public speaking contexts. A smaller proportion (7%) reported being at the basic level, suggesting limited confidence and experience.

Table 4.8*Self-Assessment of Public Speaking Proficiency (N = 100)*

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Basic	7	7.0
Intermediate	37	37.0
Advanced	30	30.0
Fluent	26	26.0
Total	100	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of respondents (N = 100).

Situational Factors of Anxiety

As shown in Table 4.9, respondents reported experiencing varying levels of anxiety across different speaking scenarios. Oral presentations elicited the highest levels of anxiety, with 23% of participants strongly agreeing and 15% agreeing that they felt anxious in this context. Group discussions and responding to spontaneous questions were associated with moderate

levels of anxiety. In contrast, speaking casually with friends generated the lowest levels of reported anxiety, suggesting that informal settings were perceived as less threatening.

Table 4.9

Respondents' Reported Anxiety in Different Speaking Scenarios (N = 100)

Speaking Scenario	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Oral presentations	20.0	18.0	24.0	15.0	23.0
Group discussions	18.0	22.0	28.0	20.0	12.0
Spontaneous questions	15.0	20.0	30.0	21.0	14.0
Casual conversations	30.0	25.0	25.0	12.0	8.0

Note. Values represent the percentage of respondents indicating their level of agreement with anxiety statements across different speaking scenarios.

Respondents also rated their anxiety levels across specific academic and social speaking situations. As presented in Table 4.10, formal oral presentations, debates or role-play, and unexpected lecturer questions were among the most anxiety-inducing situations. In contrast, speaking with friends outside of class generated the least anxiety, with 42% strongly agreeing that they felt comfortable in this context.

Speaking Situation	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Giving formal oral presentations	21.0	17.0	24.0	15.0	23.0
Participating in group discussions	18.0	30.0	16.0	14.0	22.0
Answering lecturer questions unexpectedly	11.0	22.0	24.0	15.0	28.0
Online group presentations	20.0	27.0	17.0	11.0	24.0
Recording video assignments	24.0	31.0	11.0	10.0	24.0
Debates or role-play activities	17.0	24.0	18.0	13.0	26.0
Presenting alone versus in group	18.0	19.0	20.0	15.0	27.0
One-on-one consultations with lecturers	23.0	30.0	12.0	12.0	23.0
Giving peer feedback	23.0	28.0	15.0	10.0	24.0
Speaking with friends outside of class	9.0	9.0	16.0	23.0	42.0

The findings show that situations where students are assessed or judged, like tests or presentations, tend to make TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) undergraduates feel the most anxious. On the other hand, casual talk with friends usually does not cause much anxiety. This is like what Horwitz and others found in 1986.

Coping Strategies

As illustrated in Table 4.10, respondents reported using a variety of strategies to manage speaking anxiety. The most common approaches were deep breathing techniques (74%) and rehearsing speeches (73%), highlighting students' preference for preparation and relaxation methods. Other strategies included employing memorized phrases (44%), mentally translating from their primary language (43%), refraining from speaking unless necessary (41%), and seeking help from friends (34%).

Table 4.10*Strategies Reported by Respondents to Manage Speaking Anxiety (N = 100)*

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Deep breathing techniques	74	74.0
Rehearsing speeches	73	73.0
Employing memorized phrases	44	44.0
Mentally translating from primary language	43	43.0
Refraining from speaking unless necessary	41	41.0
Seeking help from friends	34	34.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of  onducts (N = 100).

Interestingly, a few students also suggested additional coping strategies under the "Others" option. These included reading newspapers to improve language familiarity, using Google to check the pronunciation of words, and relying on the internet as a resource for pronunciation practice. Such responses demonstrate that students are actively seeking external resources and self-directed learning opportunities to overcome their speaking difficulties.

Overall, the results highlight that TESL undergraduates use a mix of avoidance, preparation, and resource-based strategies to manage their speaking anxiety. The preference for rehearsal and relaxation aligns with previous research (Tee et al., 2022), which noted that consistent preparation and positive self-regulation are among the most effective ways to reduce language-related anxiety.

Comparative Analysis Based on English Proficiency

As shown in Table 4.11, students' self-assessed proficiency levels were associated with varying degrees of speaking anxiety. Respondents who perceived themselves as having low proficiency reported the highest levels of anxiety, particularly during oral presentations and impromptu speaking tasks. Those with a moderate proficiency level experienced anxiety to a moderate degree, whereas students who rated themselves as high proficiency still reported some anxiety, but to a lesser extent overall.

Table 4.11*Comparison of Speaking Anxiety Levels by Self-Assessed Proficiency (N = 100)*

Speaking Situation	Low Proficiency (%)	Moderate Proficiency (%)	High Proficiency (%)
Oral presentations	78.0	54.0	32.0
Group discussions	65.0	48.0	28.0
Impromptu speaking	80.0	57.0	35.0
Casual conversations	40.0	25.0	10.0

Note. Values represent the percentage of respondents within each proficiency group reporting anxiety in the specified speaking situations.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight important patterns in the English-speaking anxiety of TESL undergraduates, particularly in relation to situational triggers, coping strategies, and proficiency levels.

First, the results confirm that formal and evaluative contexts such as oral presentations, impromptu questions from lecturers, debates, and role plays are the most anxiety-inducing situations. This aligns with Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) framework of foreign language classroom anxiety, which emphasizes that evaluation and fear of negative judgment are major sources of language anxiety. The results further support findings by Liu and Jackson (2008), who also reported heightened anxiety during classroom oral tasks among Chinese EFL learners. Conversely, casual conversations with friends generated minimal anxiety among participants, suggesting that the absence of formal evaluation provides a safer, less threatening environment for communication.

Second, the findings indicate that self-perceived proficiency strongly influences anxiety levels. Students who perceived themselves as low in proficiency reported the highest anxiety, particularly during oral presentations and impromptu tasks. This reflects the cyclical relationship identified by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), where lower language confidence exacerbates anxiety, which in turn hinders performance. Interestingly, even students with high proficiency reported moderate levels of anxiety, demonstrating that proficiency alone does not eliminate anxiety, a finding also noted by Woodrow (2006). This suggests that factors beyond linguistic competence, such as personality traits and prior learning experiences, also play a role.

Third, the study found that students employ a variety of coping strategies, with the most common being deep breathing and rehearsal. These strategies reflect both physiological and cognitive approaches to anxiety management, aligning with Oxford's (1990) categorization of language learning strategies. The use of memorized phrases and mental translation shows reliance on compensatory strategies, which may reduce immediate anxiety but could hinder authentic communicative competence if overused.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings have several implications for TESL practice. First, teachers need to design classroom speaking tasks that balance academic rigor with psychological safety. This could be achieved by scaffolding oral activities, offering supportive feedback, and gradually increasing the difficulty of speaking tasks. Second, explicit instruction on anxiety-reduction strategies such as relaxation techniques, positive self-talk, and collaborative practice may help students manage their speaking anxiety more effectively. Third, greater emphasis on building communicative confidence rather than accuracy alone may encourage students to engage more actively in speaking activities, even when they feel anxious. A study on *The Relationship between Students' Attitudes and Achievement in English Language* by Baharudin, S. N. A., Said, H. M., & Stein, A. (2019) also supports that Students from the high-performance category did highlight the efforts they engage in to improve English proficiency, which amongst others include taking extra classes, meeting the lecturer when they do not understand and reading as well as finding other materials that could enhance their reading comprehension skills as well as the ability to speak proficiently.

Overall, the study underscores the complex relationship between language proficiency, situational context, and coping strategies in shaping speaking anxiety. It supports earlier research while offering practical insights for language teachers seeking to reduce anxiety and foster more confident English speakers in TESL classrooms.

Conclusion

This research provides valuable insights into the challenges TESL undergraduates face when coping with English-speaking anxiety. The findings affirm that anxiety remains a significant concern, particularly in high-pressure contexts such as oral presentations and spontaneous speaking tasks. Students' self-perceived proficiency was shown to strongly influence their confidence, with lower proficiency linked to higher anxiety. However, the study also reveals that even highly proficient students are not immune, emphasizing the powerful role of psychological factors such as fear of negative evaluation. These findings carry important implications for students, educators, and institutions, all of whom share responsibility in addressing language anxiety and cultivating a more supportive learning environment. By recognizing the emotional barriers associated with speaking English and adopting targeted strategies such as scaffolding speaking tasks, integrating stress-reduction techniques, and promoting communicative confidence all stakeholders can contribute to the development of more confident, capable, and resilient English speakers.

The research has theoretical and contextual implications to the knowledge of English-speaking anxiety among TESL undergraduates. In theory, it builds on existing models like that by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) by showing that even high-proficiency learners experience anxiety and that the latter is highly influenced by self-perceived competence and affective variables. It also points to the compatibility of the coping strategies with the taxonomy of coping presented by Oxford (1990), and warns against excessive use of compensatory strategies that might impede communicative development.

Contextually, the study offers the understanding of the Malaysian TESL classrooms, where oral performance tasks play the major role in the learning process. The results contribute to the current literature by determining the major anxiety sources, associating them with self-perception of competence, and plotting the coping strategies, which highlights the necessity

of pedagogical strategies aligned with academic and psychological security. Finally, the paper points out that speaking anxiety needs to be reduced both by gaining expertise and communicational confidence and providing students with efficient anxiety-reduction strategies.

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