

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY AND STUDENTS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE AT MA NURUL FALAH AIR MOLEK

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Abstract: This study investigated the correlation between English speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance among tenth-grade students at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek. The research aimed to determine the level of students' English speaking anxiety, describe their speaking performance, and examine the significance, strength, and direction of the relationship between the two variables. A quantitative approach with a correlational research design was employed. The participants consisted of 60 tenth-grade students. Data on English speaking anxiety were collected through a questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, while speaking performance scores were obtained from the English teacher's assessment records. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk normality test, a linearity test, and Pearson Product-Moment correlation with SPSS. The results showed that students' English speaking anxiety was in the moderate category, with a mean score of 89.07 and a standard deviation of 9.690. A total of 63.33% of the students experienced moderate anxiety. Students' speaking performance was also predominantly moderate, with a mean score of 75.35 and a standard deviation of 10.338; 65.00% of the students were classified in this category. The correlation analysis produced a coefficient of 0.614 with a significance value of $p < 0.001$, indicating a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between English speaking anxiety and speaking performance. The coefficient of determination showed that the variables shared 37.70% of their variance. It was concluded that English speaking anxiety was significantly associated with students' speaking performance, although the correlational design did not establish a causal relationship.

Keywords: anxiety, speaking, performance

A. Introduction

Speaking is one of the essential productive skills in English language learning because it enables students to express ideas, exchange information, and communicate directly with others. Speaking is not merely the production of sounds, but an interactive process of constructing meaning through producing, receiving, and processing information in a particular context (Brown, 2001). In the context of English as a foreign language, speaking performance is frequently regarded as an important indicator of students' language proficiency because it reflects their ability to use pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension simultaneously (Brown, 2004). Therefore, students are expected not only to understand linguistic knowledge but also to apply it effectively in oral communication.

Despite its importance, speaking is often considered one of the most challenging skills for English learners. Students may understand vocabulary and grammatical rules but still experience difficulty using English orally. Speaking performance is influenced by several factors, including linguistic competence, learning conditions, motivation, self-confidence, preparation, classroom environment, and psychological conditions (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Among these factors, anxiety is considered an important psychological barrier because it can prevent students from demonstrating their actual speaking ability.

English speaking anxiety refers to feelings of nervousness, apprehension, tension, and fear experienced by learners when they are required to communicate in English. Foreign language anxiety is described as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors associated with the unique process of learning a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986). It is generally represented through three major components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension occurs when students feel uncomfortable communicating

with others, while test anxiety is related to fear of failure in academic evaluation. Fear of negative evaluation refers to students' concerns about being judged negatively by teachers or classmates (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Anxiety may create a psychological barrier that interferes with students' language learning and performance. According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis, negative emotional conditions, particularly anxiety, may increase students' affective filter and prevent language input from being processed effectively (Krashen, 1982). During speaking activities, anxiety can also interfere with students' ability to retrieve vocabulary, organize ideas, apply grammatical structures, and maintain fluency. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) explain that anxiety can affect language learning at the input, processing, and output stages. At the output stage, anxious students may experience hesitation, mental blocks, loss of vocabulary, and difficulty producing coherent spoken language.

Students who experience speaking anxiety commonly demonstrate various behavioral and physical symptoms. They may avoid classroom participation, remain silent when asked questions, speak with excessive pauses, stammer, or refuse to perform in front of the class. Anxiety may also arise because students are afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation and grammar, being corrected by the teacher, or being laughed at by their classmates. Scovel (1978) states that situation-specific anxiety is particularly relevant to language learning because it occurs consistently in a clearly defined situation, such as speaking a foreign language in the classroom.

Speaking performance itself represents the actual production of spoken language in a particular communicative situation. It reflects not only students' linguistic competence but also their ability to manage psychological pressure while communicating (Brown, 2007). Students may possess sufficient vocabulary and grammatical knowledge but fail to perform effectively when they feel nervous or afraid. Consequently, speaking scores may not always reflect students' actual linguistic competence because their performance can be influenced by emotional conditions at the time of assessment.

The relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance has been widely examined in English-language education. Fauzi (2023) found that students' speaking anxiety was commonly associated with fear of negative evaluation, limited linguistic competence, lack of confidence, and discomfort when speaking in front of others. These conditions can reduce students' classroom participation and prevent them from displaying their actual speaking ability. Okyar (2023) also reported that foreign language speaking anxiety was closely associated with students' willingness to communicate. Students with higher anxiety tended to participate less frequently in oral communication than students who felt more confident.

Recent studies have further demonstrated that anxiety is related to fluency and classroom participation. Szyszka (2024) found that language anxiety was associated with several temporal aspects of speech fluency, including hesitation and disruption during oral production. Similarly, Alamri and Qasem (2024) reported that speaking anxiety remained an important issue among English as a foreign language learners because it affected students' perceptions of their speaking ability and classroom communication. Quvanch and Na (2024) identified fear of making mistakes, negative evaluation, limited vocabulary, insufficient preparation, and lack of speaking practice as major sources of speaking anxiety.

The reduction of speaking anxiety is therefore important in helping students use their language competence more effectively. Dağ-Akbaş et al. (2024) found that communication-strategy training could reduce speaking anxiety and improve students' confidence and classroom participation. Özdemir et al. (2025) further emphasized that positive feedback, praise, pair work, group activities, and adequate linguistic preparation could help students cope with speaking anxiety. These findings suggest that teachers should create a supportive classroom environment in which students feel safe to make mistakes and are encouraged to participate gradually in speaking activities.

A similar problem was identified among tenth-grade students at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek. Based on preliminary classroom observations, several students appeared passive and reluctant to participate in English-speaking activities. Some students became nervous when they were asked to speak individually, hesitated before answering questions, and experienced difficulty producing appropriate pronunciation and intonation. Other students were worried about making mistakes and receiving negative judgments from teachers or classmates. These conditions indicated that speaking anxiety might be related to students' speaking performance.

Although previous studies have discussed foreign language anxiety in various educational contexts, research focusing specifically on tenth-grade students in an Islamic senior high school context remains necessary. Students in the first year of senior high school experience increasing linguistic demands and adjustments to a new academic environment. These conditions may influence both their anxiety and their ability to perform spoken English. Therefore, investigating this issue at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek can provide contextual evidence regarding the psychological factors associated with students' oral language achievement.

This study aimed to identify the level of English speaking anxiety, describe the level of students' speaking performance, and determine whether there was a significant correlation between the two variables among tenth-grade students at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek. The results are expected to contribute to English-language teaching by providing teachers with information about the importance of students' emotional conditions during speaking activities. The findings may also support the development of instructional strategies that promote confidence, active participation, and effective oral communication.

B. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using a correlational research design. A correlational design is used to examine the degree and direction of the relationship between two variables without providing treatment or manipulating the participants (Creswell, 2012). In this study, English speaking anxiety was treated as the independent variable, while students' speaking performance was treated as the dependent variable. The research focused on determining whether English speaking anxiety was significantly correlated with the speaking performance of tenth-grade students.

The research was conducted at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek, Indragiri Hulu, Riau, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants consisted of 60 tenth-grade students. The participants were selected because they had participated in English-speaking activities and had speaking-performance scores recorded by the English teacher. The use of 60 participants was consistent with the data analyzed in the findings of the study.

The data were collected using two research instruments. English speaking anxiety data were obtained through a questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The questionnaire consisted of 33 statements measured using a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire measured three major components of foreign-language anxiety, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Communication apprehension referred to students' nervousness or discomfort when communicating in English. Test anxiety referred to students' fear of failure during speaking assessments, while fear of negative evaluation referred to students' concerns about receiving unfavorable judgments from teachers or classmates (Horwitz et al., 1986). The total score obtained from the questionnaire represented each student's level of English speaking anxiety.

Students' speaking-performance data were obtained from the English teacher's assessment records. These scores represented students' achievement in classroom speaking activities. Speaking performance was evaluated through relevant speaking components, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These components were selected because they represent the principal criteria used to assess spoken-language performance (Brown, 2004).

Before being used in the study, the research instruments were evaluated in terms of validity and reliability. Content validity was applied to determine whether the questionnaire and speaking assessment appropriately represented the variables being measured. The anxiety questionnaire was adapted from the standardized Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, while the speaking-performance assessment referred to established speaking components. Instrument validity is important to ensure that an instrument measures the construct it is intended to measure (Gay et al., 2012).

The questionnaire's reliability was examined using internal consistency analysis with Cronbach's Alpha. An instrument was considered reliable when the reliability coefficient exceeded the acceptable criterion of 0.60. Reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument in measuring the same construct under similar conditions (Gay et al., 2012). The speaking scores used in this study

were obtained from the English teacher's assessment records to provide an established measure of students' classroom performance.

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics were initially used to calculate the total score, minimum score, maximum score, mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage of each variable. Students' English speaking anxiety and speaking-performance scores were then classified into low, moderate, and high categories using the mean and standard-deviation criteria.

The categorization criteria were formulated as follows:

Low category: $X < M - SD$

Moderate category: $M - SD \leq X < M + SD$

High category: $X \geq M + SD$

In these formulas, X represents the individual student's score, M represents the mean score, and SD represents the standard deviation.

Before testing the research hypothesis, normality and linearity tests were conducted. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine whether the data for both variables were normally distributed. The data were considered normally distributed when the significance value was greater than 0.05. A linearity test was also performed to determine whether the relationship between English speaking anxiety and speaking performance followed a linear pattern. The relationship was considered linear when the significance value of deviation from linearity was greater than 0.05.

After the statistical assumptions had been fulfilled, the research hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product-Moment correlation. Pearson correlation was used because the study examined the relationship between two numerical variables that were normally distributed and linearly related. The correlation coefficient was interpreted using the following criteria: 0.00–0.19 as very weak, 0.20–0.39 as weak, 0.40–0.59 as moderate, 0.60–0.79 as strong, and 0.80–1.00 as very strong (Creswell, 2012).

The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H_0 : There is no significant correlation between English speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance.

H_a : There is a significant correlation between English speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance.

The decision was based on a significance level of 0.05. When the significance value was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Conversely, when the significance value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted. Because the study used a correlational design, the findings were interpreted as a statistical relationship rather than evidence of a direct causal relationship.

C. Research Result and Finding

The findings of this study were obtained from the analysis of English speaking anxiety scores and speaking performance scores of 60 tenth-grade students at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek. English speaking anxiety was measured using a questionnaire, while students' speaking performance scores were obtained from the English teacher's assessment records. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality and linearity tests, and Pearson Product-Moment correlation.

Descriptive Results of English Speaking Anxiety

The descriptive statistical analysis showed that the students' English speaking anxiety scores ranged from 67 to 106. The mean score was 89.07, with a standard deviation of 9.690.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of English Speaking Anxiety

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
English Speaking Anxiety	60	67	106	89.07	9.690

The students' anxiety scores were classified into low, moderate, and high categories using the mean and standard deviation. A total of 10 students, or 16.67%, were categorized as having low

speaking anxiety. Meanwhile, 38 students, or 63.33%, were categorized as having moderate speaking anxiety, and 12 students, or 20.00%, were categorized as having high speaking anxiety.

Table 2. Categorization of English Speaking Anxiety

Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Low	$X < 79.38$	10	16.67%
Moderate	$79.38 \leq X < 98.76$	38	63.33%
High	$X \geq 98.76$	12	20.00%
Total		60	100%

These findings indicate that most students experienced a moderate level of English speaking anxiety. This means that the majority of students experienced nervousness, worry, or discomfort during English-speaking activities, although their anxiety was not categorized as extremely high.

Descriptive Results of Speaking Performance

The students' speaking performance scores ranged from 54 to 98. The mean score was 75.35, with a standard deviation of 10.338.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Performance

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Speaking Performance	60	54	98	75.35	10.338

The categorization results showed that 11 students, or 18.33%, had low speaking performance. A total of 39 students, or 65.00%, were classified in the moderate category, while 10 students, or 16.67%, were classified in the high category.

Table 4. Categorization of Speaking Performance

Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Low	$X < 65.012$	11	18.33%
Moderate	$65.012 \leq X < 85.688$	39	65.00%
High	$X \geq 85.688$	10	16.67%
Total		60	100%

The findings demonstrate that the speaking performance of most students was at a moderate level. Most students were able to communicate in English, but they may still have experienced difficulties related to pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, or comprehension.

Prerequisite Analysis

Before conducting the correlation analysis, normality and linearity tests were performed. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test showed a significance value of 0.309 for English speaking anxiety and 0.139 for speaking performance. Both values were greater than 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed.

The linearity test showed that the significance value of deviation from linearity was 0.947. Since the value was greater than 0.05, the relationship between English speaking anxiety and speaking performance was considered linear. Therefore, the assumptions required for Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis were fulfilled.

Correlation between English Speaking Anxiety and Speaking Performance

Pearson Product-Moment correlation was used to determine the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the relationship between English speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance.

Table 5. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation

Variables	English Speaking Anxiety	Speaking Performance
English Speaking Anxiety		
Pearson Correlation	1	.614**
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	60	60
Speaking Performance		
Pearson Correlation	.614**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	—

N	60	60
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The correlation analysis produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.614, with a significance value of 0.000, which should be reported as $p < 0.001$. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there was a statistically significant correlation between English speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance.

The correlation coefficient of 0.614 was categorized as strong because it fell within the interval of 0.60–0.79. The positive value indicated that the two variables tended to move in the same direction. In the dataset used in this study, an increase in the English speaking anxiety score was associated with an increase in the speaking performance score.

However, the direction of this relationship should be interpreted carefully. The anxiety questionnaire contains both positively and negatively worded items. Therefore, reverse scoring must be correctly applied to the negative statements. When the scoring procedure is inconsistent, a higher total score may not accurately represent a higher level of anxiety. The questionnaire scoring system should therefore be rechecked before drawing a final substantive interpretation of the positive relationship.

The coefficient of determination was calculated as follows: $r^2 = (0.614)^2 = 0.377$. This result means that English speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance shared approximately 37.70% of their variance. The remaining 62.30% was associated with other factors not investigated in this study, such as vocabulary mastery, grammar, pronunciation, self-confidence, motivation, preparation, speaking practice, teaching strategies, and classroom environment. Overall, the findings demonstrated that English speaking anxiety was significantly associated with the speaking performance of tenth-grade students at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek. Nevertheless, because this study used a correlational design, the result indicates a statistical relationship and does not prove a direct cause-and-effect relationship.

D. Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that the English speaking anxiety of tenth-grade students at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek was generally categorized as moderate. The mean score of English speaking anxiety was 89.07, with a standard deviation of 9.690. A total of 38 students, or 63.33%, were in the moderate category, while 10 students, or 16.67%, were in the low category and 12 students, or 20.00%, were in the high category.

The students' speaking performance was also generally categorized as moderate. The mean score was 75.35, with a standard deviation of 10.338. A total of 39 students, or 65.00%, were classified in the moderate category, while 11 students, or 18.33%, were in the low category and 10 students, or 16.67%, were in the high category.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis showed a correlation coefficient of 0.614 with a significance value of $p < 0.001$. This result indicated that there was a strong and statistically significant correlation between English speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The coefficient of determination showed that English speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance shared approximately 37.70% of their variance. Meanwhile, the remaining 62.30% was associated with other factors, such as vocabulary mastery, grammar, pronunciation, motivation, self-confidence, preparation, speaking practice, teaching strategies, and classroom environment. It can be concluded that English speaking anxiety was significantly related to the speaking performance of tenth-grade students at MA Nurul Falah Air Molek. However, since this study employed a correlational design, the findings indicate a statistical relationship rather than a direct cause-and-effect relationship.

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