

EXPLORING ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY IN EFL CONTEXT: A LESSON FROM FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: April 2026 Revised: May 2026 Accepted: June 2026 Published: July 2026	<i>English-speaking anxiety remains a significant challenge for EFL learners, particularly in higher education contexts where students are expected to communicate actively in English despite limited linguistic competence and classroom exposure. In socio-religious learning environments such as Islamic higher education institutions, speaking anxiety may also be influenced by cultural and communicative norms. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the level, perceptions, and contributing factors of English-speaking anxiety among first-year EFL students at Nurul Jadid University. This study employed a mixed-methods design involving 43 first-year students aged 18–20 years enrolled in a second-semester speaking course. Quantitative data were collected using the English-Speaking Anxiety Scale (ESAS), while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The findings revealed that vocabulary limitation was the primary factor contributing to students' speaking anxiety, followed by low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities for speaking practice. Pedagogical factors, including classroom atmosphere and teacher support, also influenced students' anxiety levels. In addition, the socio-religious learning environment shaped students' communication behavior and classroom participation. The study suggests that supportive and context-sensitive pedagogical approaches are essential to reduce speaking anxiety and improve students' communicative competence in EFL classrooms. This research contributes to the understanding of speaking anxiety within Islamic higher education contexts and highlights the importance of integrating linguistic, psychological, pedagogical, and socio-cultural considerations in EFL instruction.</i>
Keywords English speaking anxiety; Speaking skills; Linguistic competences; Socio-cultural context;	
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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as a complex productive skill that integrates linguistic, cognitive, affective, and socio-cultural dimensions of language competence (Ghafar & Raheem, 2023). However, this skill is arguably more crucial than other basic skills in achieving English language proficiency (Hidayah et al., 2023). EFL (English as Foreign Language) students may face challenges in learning the language, such as confusion in responding to native speakers and difficulties in conveying their thoughts in an impactful and socially acceptable way (E. Malik et al., 2025). Language anxiety is a significant problem in the field of language teaching and learning (Chen, 2024).

Previous research has shown that even though college students show relatively low levels of speech anxiety, speaking still elicits an anxiety response in most college students (Docena et

al., 2023). The main causes of this anxiety are limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and limited opportunities to speak and often encounter challenges that often cause explicit anxiety from mental anxiety and personality anxiety in a person as well as student psychological factors that occur in individual students since childhood due to the lack of support from the closest people. Other research has also emphasized the importance of oral proficiency in foreign language acquisition, underscoring its role in achieving goals set in language curriculum (Jendli & Albarakati, 2024). Further, Nurul Jadid represents a social-religious higher education environment rooted in the tradition of Islamic boarding schools. In this context, students are not only expected to achieve academic competence but also maintain the social and religious values that shape patterns of communication, participation in class, and self-expression. Such cultural dynamics can affect how students experience anxiety when speaking English in a classroom setting (Carrier et al., 2022).

A number of studies have been conducted on the issue of anxiety in English learning in Indonesia at various levels of education, including junior high school, senior high school, and university (Ayuningtyas et al., 2022). These studies show that students often experience anxiety because the perception of their teachers and peers is not from the side of anxiety that arises from the psychological side of a person (MacIntyre et al., 2023), therefore researchers want to state that a person's pollution can also arise from the psychological side of the person (Millroth & Frey, 2021). M Xavier through his empirical research at Persistence and time challenges in an open online university: a case study of the experiences of first-year learners have shown that anxiety is often significant in first-year students, compared to second-year students and above.

Despite extensive research on foreign language anxiety, there is limited empirical evidence examining speaking anxiety within socio-religious higher education contexts, particularly Islamic boarding school-based universities in Indonesia. Existing studies predominantly focus on urban, secular, and general university settings, leaving a theoretical and empirical gap regarding how religious values, institutional culture, and socio-spiritual norms interact with affective variables in EFL learning. This study addresses this gap by integrating psychological, pedagogical, and socio-cultural perspectives through a mixed-methods design. An in-depth and comprehensive study that examines the context of anxiety of speaking in a foreign language in the level of psychological measurement and relative anxiety comes from mental to explain the variation in EFL anxiety in Indonesia (Abdurahman & Rizqi, 2021).

This study, which combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and tests relevant hypotheses, has great potential to advance scientific discourse (Ioannidou & Erduran, 2021). The purpose of this study was to describe the level of anxiety, attitudes, and perceptions, as well as the causes of anxiety in English, among Nurul Jadid students. A descriptive approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods is used to explore this issue. This survey involved forty-three first-year students majoring in English from a university in Nurul Jadid. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews related to speech anxiety (Bashori et al., 2022). Quantitative data is analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data is analyzed through content analysis (Bashori et al., 2022).

Research on English-speaking anxiety among foreign language learners over the past decade shows that internal factors are the most dominant cause (Zhang & Lai, 2024). Previous studies highlight low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, negative learning experiences, embarrassment, concern about evaluation, perfectionism, and limited vocabulary as the main triggers of speaking anxiety (Salihoglu, 2024; Storm, 2025). This anxiety has been shown to inhibit fluency, reduce speaking readiness, and increase avoidance tendencies (Salihoglu, 2024). A number of longitudinal and experimental studies have also found that anxiety levels are greatly influenced by individual characteristics such as motivation, goal orientation, beliefs about language ability, and tolerance for ambiguity (Salihoglu, 2024; Yu et al., 2022).

In addition to individual factors, research focusing on the role of teachers and pedagogical practices shows that teaching methods that are overly focused on accuracy, direct correction, high-risk feedback (Fu & Zhang, 2024), minimal scaffolding, and authoritative teacher communication styles can reinforce speaking anxiety. The classroom environment—including the emotional atmosphere, peer dynamics, class size, cultural expectations about “face,” and task characteristics was also found to be an important predictor (Maan, 2022). Studies in the online classroom context identified unique triggers such as awkwardness in front of the camera, uncertainty about speaking turns, and the pressure of digital observation, while research in offline classrooms showed that structured interactive tasks can reduce anxiety (Olszewska-Guizzo et al., 2023). Existing studies on speaking anxiety predominantly emphasize individual psychological variables such as self-confidence, fear of negative evaluation, and linguistic competence. However, these studies rarely examine how institutional culture, religious values, and socio-educational environments shape affective experiences in EFL learning. This indicates a conceptual gap between individual-centered anxiety models and context-sensitive educational frameworks (Pan et al., 2023).

Findings from interventions in various academic contexts show that strategies such as mini-speaking tasks, gradual presentations, humor, low-risk exercises, supportive feedback, normalization of mistakes, and increased practice opportunities can reduce anxiety while increasing confidence (Pearson, 2025). However, most studies have limitations because they focus on general, urban, or non-religious educational contexts and rarely examine tertiary environments based on distinctive socio-cultural and religious values such as Islamic boarding schools (Horwitz, 2021). Although numerous studies have explored speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms, limited research has specifically examined how socio-religious and pesantren-based higher education environments shape students' speaking anxiety experiences in Indonesian Islamic universities. Most previous studies focused primarily on general university contexts, leaving the interaction between religious culture, classroom communication patterns, and speaking anxiety underexplored. The lack of mixed methods studies exploring the relationship between psychological factors, pedagogical practices, and local cultural dynamics in the context of Islamic boarding school-based universities indicates a research gap (Faizin, 2024). Nurul Jadid represents a social-religious higher education environment rooted in the tradition of Islamic boarding schools. In this context, students are not only expected to achieve academic competence but also maintain the social and religious values that shape patterns of communication, participation in class, and self-expression. Such cultural dynamics can affect how students experience anxiety when speaking English in a classroom setting. (Elsherif, 2024; Malik et al., 2021).

The existing literature English speaking anxiety among Nurul Jadid students is caused by a number of factors, including modern teaching methods, the characteristics of teaching staff, and individual factors of students in the realm of psychology (Tang & Zhu, 2024). This study further postulates that the application of a tailored pedagogical approach and a supportive classroom atmosphere can help reduce speech anxiety, improve students' communication skills, and encourage the creation of a more constructive learning environment (Wang, 2024). By building a dynamic and supportive learning environment, innovative teaching strategies such as gamification and the implementation of online learning environments such as Moodle have been shown to increase student engagement and reduce language anxiety (Boudadi et al., 2024).

In the context of Nurul Jadid, this study aims to address the following primary question: What is the level of English language anxiety among first-year students at Nurul Jadid University?; How do students assess their English language skills in EFL classes?; and What are the factors that contribute to students' English language anxiety in the context of socio-religious learning at Nurul Jadid University?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods design (Alotumi, 2022), integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches within descriptive methods (Alotumi, 2022), to gain a comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety among students in English classes at Nurul Jadid University. The quantitative component aims to measure the prevalence and intensity of students' English-speaking anxiety using (Waluyo et al., 2025). Quantitative data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire to generate measurable indicators of anxiety prevalence and intensity. The results of this quantitative data will allow for the identification of the prevalence of anxiety and the measurement of its intensity in the context of English classes.

In the qualitative section of the study (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025), the objective is to investigate attitudes, perceptions, and contributing factors associated with English-speaking anxiety among students (Tsang, 2025). The in-depth interview method allows researchers to gain insight into students' personal experiences, providing a detailed context for understanding the nature and causes of their anxiety, as well as the specific triggers (T. F. Liu et al., 2025; Rich et al., 2024). The combination of these two approaches yields a robust and comprehensive research design (Hendren et al., 2023). Methodological triangulation was employed to enhance analytical depth and strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of 43 first-year EFL students enrolled in a second-semester speaking course at Nurul Jadid University. The participants were 8 males and 35 females, with an age range between 18 and 20 years old at the time of the study, during their first year of college. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their enrollment in speaking courses and their relevance to the research objectives. Indonesian was used as the primary language of communication during data collection to ensure clarity, accuracy, and participant comfort.

Instruments

The English-Speaking Anxiety Scale (ESAS) (Ran et al., 2022), was employed as the instrument for the collection of data pertaining to the level of speaking anxiety experienced by students enrolled in English classes at Nurul Jadid University. The Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Botes et al., 2022), which originated as a student questionnaire by a group of early academics in the field, served as the basis for the ESAS. Fifteen of the thirty items on a rating response scale were chosen to create the Foreign Anxiety Inventory (Botes et al., 2022). One item exemplifies this process: "I feel nervous when I speak English in front of the class." Respondents chose one of five alternatives to indicate how they felt about the anxiety associated with speaking English: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or disagree. Furthermore, the total score is calculated on a scale of 20 to 100, as the questionnaire employs a 5-point rating scale. Consequently, the EFL speaking anxiety levels for this study were classified as 20–55 (low), 56–75 (moderate), and 76–100 (high) (41, 42). The ESAS is designed to ascertain the extent of anxiety experienced by students when speaking English, particularly in an academic setting (Jin & Qin, 2024). The results will facilitate the grouping of students according to their anxiety levels for subsequent analysis (Yang et al., 2024).

The SRF (Speaking Reflection Form) is employed to gather data pertaining to the underlying causes of anxiety, as well as the perceptions and attitudes of students with regard to English-speaking activities conducted within the classroom setting (Shadiev et al., 2024). The objective is to gain a more profound understanding of the underlying causes of students' anxiety, their perception of the anxiety, and to identify the attitudes or efforts made by students to overcome anxiety when speaking English (Mouhoubi-Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). All questions

are designed to elicit responses pertaining to three distinct forms of anxiety related to performance: communication anxiety, performance anxiety, and negative judgment anxiety (Rowland et al., 2021). The SRF comprises three open-ended questions, the responses to which are expected to provide valuable data for the research project, as students are able to express their feelings freely (Petchamé et al., 2021). To ensure construct validity, both the ESAS and Three applied linguists approved the Indonesian translation of SRF after it was translated. To ensure the validity and reliability of the ESAS and SRF, these instruments can be reviewed by three experts in the field of applied linguistics and tested on a group of students to obtain their validity and reliability indexes (Nejadghanbar et al., 2024).

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out in two stages. Prior to the data collection process, all participants were informed of the purpose of the research, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to participate voluntarily. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to filling out the questionnaire and interview session. In the first stage, an English-Speaking Anxiety Scale (ESAS) questionnaire was distributed to 43 EFL first-year students during their speaking class sessions. The participants filled out the questionnaire anonymously within the time determined by the researcher. In the second stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to gain deeper insight into their experiences and perceptions of English-speaking anxiety. Interviews are conducted individually, audio recorded with the participant's permission, and then transcribed for analysis. Field notes were also taken during the interview session to support the interpretation of the data. To facilitate a more detailed and natural response, the researcher used the participants' native language, namely Madurese, during several parts of the interview process. The use of native language helps participants express their feelings, experiences, and perceptions more comfortably and comprehensively.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the English Speaking Anxiety Scale (ESAS) questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to assess the overall level of English speaking anxiety among the participants. Anxiety levels are interpreted based on a predetermined classification of ESAS categories, ranging from low, moderate, to high anxiety levels. This analysis provides insight into the prevalence and intensity of speaking anxiety students experience during English class activities. Furthermore, qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and Speaking Reflection Forms (SRFs) were analyzed using content analysis. After the interview data was transcribed, the researchers conducted systematic coding to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories related to students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of English speaking anxiety. The coding process involves organizing meaningful statements into thematic categories to facilitate data interpretation.

To increase the credibility and credibility of the findings, triangulation is used by comparing data obtained from questionnaires, interviews, and field notes. In addition, collaborative reviews and repeated coding were conducted among the researchers to ensure consistency and reliability in the identification and interpretation of the theme. This procedure helps to strengthen the validity and credibility of qualitative findings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The results and discussion section presents the findings of the first research question, which aimed to establish a baseline for anxiety levels within the EFL context in Nurul Jaded. To this end, 15 descriptive questions were formulated to elicit anxiety responses. In addition to the aforementioned report, several studies have indicated that students from the Indonesian

province of East Java, in particular, experience sustained levels of anxiety when expected to speak publicly in English. A comparative study also indicates that EFL students in Sumatra, specifically in Aceh and North Sumatra, exhibit higher levels of anxiety. This report emphasizes that the phenomenon of anxiety among students when speaking English varies across different regions. In light of the aforementioned, This indicates that regional differences may be a significant factor in the variation of anxiety levels among EFL students. This study was designed to ascertain the prevalence of anxiety in Nurul Jaded, which could be classified into three levels, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
The Prevalence and Frequency of EFL Speaking Anxiety Levels

Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Low Anxiety	24	55%
Moderate Anxiety	13	30%
High Anxiety	6	15%
Total	43	100%

From the results of the table above, it can be seen that low anxiety level is superior to medium and high anxiety level. This brings the result that most of them feel calm in interpreting speaking English, some research results mention that anxiety in speaking English, especially students who choose English majors tend to be relatively high, this is due to individual confidence in their abilities. Especially to carry out a series of activities to achieve certain goals tend to be relatively high and vice versa for students who tend to relax have low effectiveness. This ability to speak English has clear benefits for future career support as an English teacher or tour guide, as a result they can improve their ability to speak English as a first step in achieving their respective personal goals.

Student Perception of English Speaking Ability

The study's second research topic examined students' perceptions of spoken English and assessed their proficiency in the language and observed their involvement in English language activities. The initial two open-ended inquiries on the Student Interview Form (SIF) were devised to ascertain how students in the Nurul Jadid region evaluate their own spoken English abilities, their sentiments when utilizing English in the classroom, and their involvement in English language activities.

The student expressed a positive sentiment, indicating that their confidence in speaking English was bolstered by their frequent involvement in group discussions. "I utilize the English language on a daily basis, particularly when accessing social media or watching films." Such practice facilitates the acquisition of confidence when speaking in class. Negative "I experience significant anxiety when I am required to speak in front of the class, particularly due to concerns about making mistakes." "Only when there are assignments or class activities that require me to utilize the English language. "I still lack the requisite confidence to utilize the language on a daily basis."

The objective of this study is to identify the causes of speaking anxiety among students at Nurul Jadid in the context of English language classes. A total of 96 responses were collected from the interviews conducted with 43 students, providing insight into the underlying reasons behind their speaking apprehension in the classroom. The following table illustrates the six primary factors that contribute to anxiety. This study aims to identify the factors that cause speaking anxiety among students at Nurul Jadid in English class as a result of the third question. From the interviews with 43 students, 96 responses were collected detailing the reasons why they felt anxious about speaking in class. There are six main factors that cause anxiety as shown in the following the table bellow.

Table 2
The Factors Causing Speaking Anxiety

Source of Anxiety	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Limited Vocabulary	14	33.33%
Lack of Confidence	8	18.75%
Lack of Speaking Opportunities	7	16.67%
Difficulty with Grammar	6	14.58%
Negative Attitude toward english	5	12.5%
Limited English Proficiency	2	4.17%
Total	42	100%

The findings indicate that limited vocabulary is the primary source of anxiety among students (33.33%, $n = 14$), followed by lack of confidence (18.75%, $n = 8$) and lack of speaking opportunities (16.67%, $n = 7$). Other contributing factors include difficulty with grammar (14.58%, $n = 6$), negative attitudes toward English (12.5%, $n = 5$), and limited English proficiency (4.17%, $n = 2$). And researchers deliberately made a chart table to make it easier for readers .

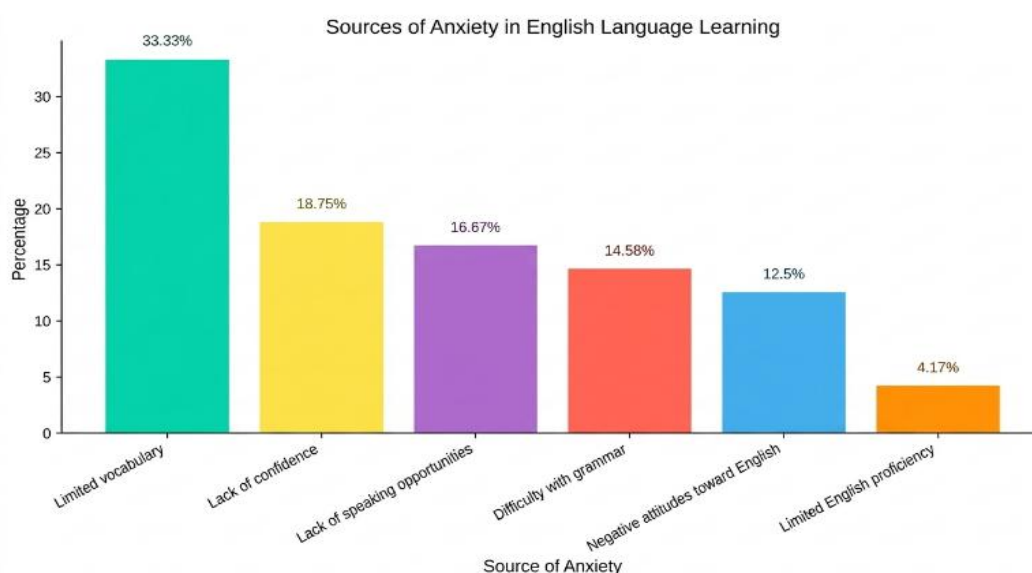


Figure 1. Speaking Anxiety Sources

According to chart Table 3, the six main causes of speaking anxiety among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at Nurul Jadid are limited vocabulary, lack of self-confidence, lack of speaking opportunities, difficulty in grammar, negative attitude toward English, and limited English proficiency. Overall, All things considered, these causes of speaking anxiety fall into three major categories: environmental, individual, and educational. The largest category of causes of anxiety are individual factors, which include limited vocabulary, self-confidence, grammar difficulties, and attitudes toward English. These factors affect students' ability to speak English, but they are not innate characteristics of individuals.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that English-speaking anxiety among first-year EFL students at Nurul Jadid University is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by linguistic, psychological, pedagogical, and socio-cultural factors. Quantitatively, the study shows that most students were categorized as having low speaking anxiety, with 24 students or 55% in the low-anxiety category, 13 students or 30% in the moderate-anxiety category, and only 6 students or 15% in the high-anxiety category . This finding suggests that speaking anxiety is present among the participants, but it does not dominate the entire student population at a severe level.

In this respect, the result confirms Docena et al. (2023), who found that speaking activities can still trigger anxiety among university students even when the overall anxiety level is not extremely high. However, the finding also differs from studies reporting that first-year students usually experience higher anxiety due to academic transition, unfamiliar classroom expectations, and limited adaptation to university learning environments. In the Nurul Jadid context, the dominance of low anxiety may be influenced by students' familiarity with a collective learning culture, supportive peer interaction, or the use of Indonesian and local language during data collection, which may have helped students express their experiences more comfortably.

The most important finding is that limited vocabulary emerged as the dominant source of English-speaking anxiety. The interview data show that vocabulary limitation accounted for 33.33% of the reported anxiety sources, followed by lack of confidence at 18.75%, lack of speaking opportunities at 16.67%, grammar difficulty at 14.58%, negative attitudes toward English at 12.5%, and limited English proficiency at 4.17%. This confirms previous studies showing that lexical limitation is one of the most influential barriers in EFL speaking performance. Winnie et al. (2023) similarly found that Indonesian undergraduate students often experience difficulty speaking English because they cannot quickly retrieve appropriate vocabulary during real-time communication. The present study extends this finding by showing that vocabulary is not merely a linguistic problem but also an affective trigger. When students lack words, they do not only struggle to express ideas; they also become more hesitant, self-conscious, and anxious. This supports the affective filter perspective, which explains that linguistic limitations can heighten anxiety and reduce students' willingness to communicate.

The dominance of vocabulary limitation over grammar difficulty is also meaningful. Although grammar is commonly viewed as a major obstacle in EFL speaking, this study shows that students were more anxious about not having enough words than about producing grammatically imperfect sentences. This finding supports Ghasemi and Mozaheb (2021), who emphasized that vocabulary development is central to speaking fluency. It also extends the findings of Malik et al. (2025), who identified EFL speaking problems as involving not only grammatical competence but also the ability to convey thoughts clearly and socially appropriately. In the context of first-year university students, vocabulary limitation may become more threatening because speaking tasks require spontaneous language production. Students may understand grammatical rules in written exercises, but they may still fail to participate orally when they cannot access enough vocabulary during classroom interaction.

Psychological factors also played a significant role in shaping students' anxiety. The findings show that lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes were closely related to students' reluctance to speak English. Students who rarely used English outside the classroom tended to report higher levels of anxiety and lower confidence when speaking in front of classmates. This confirms Ozdemir and Papi (2022), who argued that low self-confidence and negative self-perception can become important sources of second-language speaking anxiety. It also aligns with Tsang (2025), who found that oral-presentation anxiety is closely related to learners' self-perceived pronunciation and speaking proficiency. The present study extends these works by showing that confidence is strongly tied to exposure and practice. Students who used English through social media, films, group discussion, or other informal activities tended to perceive themselves more positively and felt more prepared to speak in class.

The finding on lack of speaking opportunities further reinforces the importance of exposure. Students who had limited chances to practice English appeared more anxious because they were less familiar with using the language for spontaneous communication. This confirms Lei et al. (2022), who showed that frequent language practice can improve learners' attitudes and self-regulatory capacity. It also supports Su (2021), who reported that students' confidence and communication anxiety are related to their oral communication strategy use and perceived

proficiency. In the Nurul Jadid context, limited speaking practice may be intensified by the fact that English is largely confined to classroom instruction rather than being used as a daily communicative language. Therefore, the findings suggest that speaking anxiety cannot be reduced only through classroom explanation; it requires repeated, low-risk, and meaningful speaking opportunities.

Pedagogical factors also appear to influence students' speaking anxiety. The manuscript notes that classroom atmosphere, teacher support, and speaking practice opportunities affect students' anxiety levels. This confirms Li et al. (2021), who found that classroom environment predicts foreign language enjoyment and anxiety. It is also consistent with Hu and Wang (2023), who argued that teachers' immediacy behavior can improve students' willingness to communicate and academic engagement. In this study, the role of pedagogy is important because students need a classroom environment that normalizes mistakes, encourages gradual participation, and avoids excessive correction. Direct correction, accuracy-focused teaching, or high-pressure speaking tasks may increase anxiety, as noted by Fu and Zhang (2024). Therefore, teachers should use supportive feedback, collaborative speaking tasks, and vocabulary scaffolding to help students speak without excessive fear.

Another significant contribution of this study lies in its socio-religious context. The study was conducted at Nurul Jadid University, an Islamic higher education institution rooted in pesantren tradition, where students are expected to maintain religious and social values that shape communication, participation, and self-expression. This context distinguishes the present study from previous research that mainly examined speaking anxiety in general, urban, or secular university settings. The findings extend earlier studies by showing that speaking anxiety is not only an individual psychological issue but also a context-sensitive experience. In socio-religious environments, students may be more cautious in expressing themselves publicly, especially when classroom norms emphasize respect, humility, and controlled communication. This does not necessarily increase anxiety for all students, but it can influence how students participate, how they evaluate themselves, and how they respond to speaking tasks.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English-speaking anxiety among first-year EFL students at Nurul Jadid University is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by linguistic, psychological, pedagogical, and socio-cultural factors. The quantitative findings show that most students experienced low anxiety, followed by moderate and high anxiety levels, indicating that speaking anxiety exists among the students but varies in intensity across individuals. The most dominant factor contributing to students' anxiety was limited vocabulary, followed by low self-confidence, lack of speaking opportunities, grammar difficulty, negative attitudes toward English, and limited English proficiency. These findings suggest that speaking anxiety is not caused by a single problem, but by the interaction between students' linguistic readiness and their emotional responses during classroom communication. Students who lack sufficient vocabulary tend to feel hesitant, afraid of making mistakes, and less confident when required to speak English. Therefore, vocabulary mastery, confidence-building, and repeated speaking practice should be treated as essential components in reducing English-speaking anxiety among first-year EFL learners.

The study also highlights the importance of understanding speaking anxiety within the socio-religious learning environment of Nurul Jadid University. As an Islamic higher education institution rooted in pesantren tradition, Nurul Jadid shapes students' communication behavior, classroom participation, and self-expression through social and religious values. This means that anxiety-reduction strategies should not only focus on linguistic improvement, but also consider students' cultural background, classroom comfort, and emotional safety. EFL teachers are encouraged to create supportive learning environments through gradual speaking tasks, collaborative discussion, vocabulary scaffolding, constructive feedback, and opportunities for

students to practice English in low-pressure situations. The findings imply that English-speaking anxiety can be reduced when teachers combine communicative teaching with context-sensitive pedagogy. Since this study involved a relatively small number of participants from one Islamic university, future research should involve larger samples, compare different institutional contexts, and examine intervention-based approaches for reducing speaking anxiety.

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INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Before taking part, all participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study. They were also assured that their identities would be kept confidential and that all information provided would be used solely for research purposes.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data utilized in this study cannot be made publicly available due to privacy concerns and ethical obligations to safeguard participant confidentiality. This restriction ensures compliance with ethical research standards and applicable data protection regulations. However, researchers or interested parties who require access to the dataset for validation or further analysis may submit a reasonable request to the corresponding author. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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