

**THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SPEAKING ANXIETY AND
WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE (WTC) AMONG ENGLISH
EDUCATION STUDENTS**

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Anisa Bela, 2026 : The Correlation Between Speaking Anxiety and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Among English Education Students

Speaking ability is a crucial component of English proficiency, particularly for students in English Education programs who are expected to communicate effectively in academic and professional settings. However, many EFL learners experience speaking anxiety, which may influence their willingness to participate in oral communication. This study aimed to examine whether there is a significant correlation between speaking anxiety and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among English Education students. A quantitative correlational design was employed, involving 110 students from semesters 1, 3, 5, and 7 at Universitas Lancang Kuning. Data were collected using validated questionnaires adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Willingness to Communicate Scale. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman Rank Correlation through SPSS. The results indicated that students' speaking anxiety was at a moderate level ($M = 2.76$), with test anxiety showing the highest mean among its dimensions ($M = 2.86$). Meanwhile, students' WTC was categorized as moderate to relatively high ($M = 2.98$), with motivation to communicate obtaining the highest mean score ($M = 3.15$). The correlation analysis revealed a very low positive correlation between speaking anxiety and WTC ($\rho = 0.020$), which was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). These findings suggest that speaking anxiety does not significantly influence students' willingness to communicate, indicating that other psychological or contextual factors may contribute more substantially to communicative readiness in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: Speaking Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, EFL learners, English Education Students, Correlational Study

ABSTRAK

Anisa Bela, 2026 : Korelasi Antara Kecemasan Berbicara dan Kesiapan untuk Berkomunikasi (WTC) di Antara Mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Kemampuan berbicara merupakan komponen penting dalam kemahiran bahasa Inggris, terutama bagi mahasiswa program Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang diharapkan dapat berkomunikasi secara efektif di lingkungan akademik dan profesional. Namun, banyak pelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) mengalami kecemasan berbicara, yang dapat memengaruhi kemauan mereka untuk berpartisipasi dalam komunikasi lisan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji apakah terdapat korelasi yang signifikan antara kecemasan berbicara dan Kemauan untuk Berkomunikasi (WTC) di kalangan mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Desain korelasi kuantitatif digunakan, melibatkan 110 mahasiswa dari semester 1, 3, 5, dan 7 di Universitas Lancang Kuning. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner yang telah divalidasi, yang diadaptasi dari Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) dan Willingness to Communicate Scale. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan Korelasi Peringkat Spearman melalui SPSS. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan berbicara mahasiswa berada pada tingkat sedang ($M = 2.76$), dengan kecemasan ujian menunjukkan rata-rata tertinggi di antara dimensinya ($M = 2.86$). Sementara itu, tingkat kecemasan berbicara (WTC) siswa dikategorikan sebagai sedang hingga relatif tinggi ($M = 2.98$), dengan motivasi untuk berkomunikasi memperoleh skor rata-rata tertinggi ($M = 3.15$). Analisis korelasi menunjukkan korelasi positif yang sangat rendah antara kecemasan berbicara dan WTC ($p = 0.020$), yang tidak signifikan secara statistik ($p > 0.05$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan berbicara tidak secara signifikan mempengaruhi kemauan siswa untuk berkomunikasi, mengindikasikan bahwa faktor psikologis atau kontekstual lain mungkin berkontribusi lebih besar terhadap kesiapan berkomunikasi di kelas bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL).

Kata Kunci: *Kecemasan Berbicara, Kemauan untuk Berkomunikasi, Pembelajaran Bahasa Asing (EFL), Mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Studi Korelasi*

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

Speaking ability is widely recognized as one of the most essential competencies in mastering English, both in academic environments and professional settings. This skill reflects more than linguistic proficiency; it also signals learners' readiness to participate in authentic communicative situations. In today's globalized context, oral communication serves as a critical indicator of cross-cultural communicative competence, a requirement that continues to grow in educational and workplace demands (Lee & Lee, 2019). English learners are therefore expected to express ideas clearly, spontaneously, and appropriately within a given context. MacIntyre et al. (1998) emphasize that oral proficiency is closely connected to an individual's Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which determines the extent to which learners are prepared and inclined to engage in language interaction. This relationship suggests that speaking ability cannot be separated from psychological factors that shape one's readiness to communicate.

Nevertheless, speaking anxiety continues to pose a significant challenge in many contexts worldwide, including in Indonesia. This form of anxiety typically arises when learners perceive their linguistic abilities as inadequate or feel threatened during communicative tasks. Horwitz et al. (1986) note that foreign language anxiety (FLA) represents one of the most substantial psychological barriers to effective oral communication, particularly in formal instructional settings. Classroom environments that require visible performance often intensify emotional pressure, leading students to become reluctant to speak. Recent findings among EFL university students indicate that speaking anxiety tends to escalate during performance-based activities such as presentations and classroom discussions, which subsequently limits their participation (Suleimenova, 2013). These observations underline the importance of addressing speaking anxiety as a critical factor in language learning.

National trends likewise indicate that many English education students in Indonesia continue to face considerable difficulties when required to speak in front of the class. A range of studies has shown that competitive classroom dynamics and evaluative pressure from instructors and peers contribute substantially to heightened anxiety levels. Subekti (2018) reports that undergraduate students frequently exhibit foreign language anxiety at high to very high levels, which directly affects their academic participation. Limited psychological readiness and insufficient exposure to oral communication tasks further increase students' vulnerability to anxiety. In addition, research across several Indonesian universities has identified low self-confidence as a key factor that exacerbates speaking anxiety (Mahbub & Sari, 2023). These findings highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that foster a sense of comfort and confidence among learners during speaking activities.

This issue becomes even more critical when viewed in relation to the demands of the professional field (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2023). Graduates of English education programs are expected to demonstrate strong speaking proficiency, as their future careers rely heavily on effective communication. In professional contexts, oral communication is required in various forms, including teaching, delivering presentations, and engaging with diverse stakeholders (Sulistyo & Ningsih, 2020). Both classroom interaction and workplace communication demand a high level of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) to ensure that exchanges occur smoothly and meaningfully. However, in practice, many English education students still display reluctance to speak due to anxiety, which consequently hinders their academic and professional growth (Lee & Chen Hsieh, 2019). This condition further reinforces the need to investigate the relationship between speaking anxiety and WTC among students in English education programs.

In formal learning environments, speaking anxiety often emerges as a reaction to academic pressure, evaluative situations, and fear of making mistakes (Subekti, 2018; Tóth, 2021). Such conditions can heighten students' emotional tension, particularly when they feel compelled to perform flawlessly in front of their peers. Liu & Jackson (2008) report that many EFL students refrain from speaking

due to concerns about peer judgment. This apprehension leads learners to remain silent even when they actually understand the content being discussed. As a result, their opportunities to engage in authentic and meaningful communication are significantly reduced. Consequently, students have fewer chances to develop their speaking skills naturally.

Speaking anxiety affects not only learners' communicative performance but also their broader language development (Pham & Truong, 2021). Students who experience anxiety tend to avoid oral activities that are essential for improving language proficiency. Bashori et al. (2022) found that anxious learners typically perform poorly on speaking tasks, particularly when these tasks involve the use of technology or digital platforms. The integration of technology often heightens mental pressure for students who already lack confidence, making oral communication even more challenging (Huang, 2023). This impact is also evident among English education students who are expected to demonstrate professional competencies throughout their academic training. These circumstances indicate that speaking anxiety can become a substantial barrier to students' academic progress and professional readiness.

On the other hand, Willingness to Communicate (WTC) serves as a key indicator of students' readiness to use English spontaneously and meaningfully (Lee & Lee, 2019). A high level of WTC generally reflects greater confidence in engaging in oral communication. Peng & Woodrow (2010) emphasize that low WTC can significantly hinder the development of speaking skills. This occurs because learners with limited WTC tend to underuse the speaking opportunities available to them in classroom settings (Derakhshan et al., 2022). Consequently, the relationship between speaking anxiety and WTC becomes an essential issue to explore, particularly among English education students. A deeper understanding of this relationship can assist educational institutions in designing instructional strategies that reduce anxiety while simultaneously enhancing students' preparedness to communicate.

A growing body of research has examined the relationship between speaking anxiety and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (Khajavy et al., 2018). These studies consistently highlight the significant role that learners' emotional states play in shaping their readiness to engage in communication. Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014) found a strong negative correlation between anxiety and WTC among Turkish university students, indicating that higher anxiety levels lead to decreased communicative participation. Their findings illustrate how psychological factors can directly influence learners' communicative behavior. Moreover, the results underscore the importance of establishing supportive learning environments to help reduce emotional pressure. Consequently, investigations into the interplay between these two variables remain highly relevant within the field of language education.

Another study by Khajavy et al. (2018) revealed that emotional factors such as foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language anxiety significantly influence learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC). These two variables demonstrate contrasting roles in shaping students' communicative readiness. In this context, anxiety emerges as a dominant negative predictor, meaning that higher levels of anxiety correspond to a decreased likelihood of engaging in oral communication. The study further highlights that positive emotions, particularly enjoyment, can substantially strengthen WTC (Li et al., 2023). Accordingly, maintaining emotional balance becomes a crucial aspect in enhancing the quality of learners' language interaction.

Jin & Dewaele (2018) likewise demonstrate that foreign language anxiety exerts a strong influence on learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC), both inside and outside the classroom. Their findings indicate that learners with high levels of anxiety are more likely to withdraw from speaking opportunities (MacIntyre et al., 2022). Additionally, socially demanding interactions often intensify students' lack of confidence. They highlight that high-pressure learning environments amplify the negative effects of speaking anxiety on communicative readiness. These findings suggest that WTC is shaped not only by internal factors but also by the quality of the learning environment. Consequently, creating a supportive classroom atmosphere is essential for minimizing anxiety.

Riasati (2012) further notes that situational factors such as social pressure, classroom dynamics, and teacher characteristics can intensify the link between speaking anxiety and low Willingness to Communicate (WTC). Competitive classroom settings often heighten students' fear of performing orally. Moreover, teaching approaches that place excessive emphasis on evaluation can increase learners' emotional burden. These observations illustrate the complex and multidimensional nature of the phenomenon. Riasati stresses that situational variables can interact significantly with learners' internal psychological states. Therefore, effective classroom management can serve as a strategic means to reduce anxiety (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2020).

Fang & Dong (2010) found that students frequently encounter obstacles when speaking English due to fear of making mistakes and negative perceptions of their own abilities. Such fears create a sense of insecurity when they are required to communicate spontaneously (Subekti, 2018). This often leads to avoidance of speaking activities, resulting in missed opportunities to develop oral proficiency effectively. Consequently, their motivation and willingness to participate actively in spoken communication decline. These findings reinforce the idea that negative self-perceptions play a significant role in reducing learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (Lee & Lee, 2019).

Although numerous studies on speaking anxiety and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) have been conducted across different countries, a notable gap remains in the context of English Education students in Indonesia. Most existing research focuses on general university learners rather than students in English Education programs, who face distinct expectations regarding oral proficiency. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to how speaking anxiety and WTC manifest across specific semester levels, including semester 1, 3, 5, and 7, where students experience different stages of linguistic readiness, task complexity, academic responsibility, and performance pressure (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). Existing studies also rarely consider classroom factors such as class size, spontaneous speaking tasks, and evaluative demands, all of which strongly influence students' communicative behavior in actual speaking classrooms (Liu &

Jackson, 2008; Riasati, 2012). These observations highlight the need for research that examines both psychological and situational influences on students' readiness to communicate within their real speaking-class environment.

In addition, quantitative research that directly investigates the relationship between speaking anxiety and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among English Education students remains limited, as many previous studies rely on descriptive or qualitative approaches that do not sufficiently capture the empirical strength of the association between these two variables. Existing literature has also tended to focus on other affective variables such as foreign language enjoyment, grit, or motivation (Khajavy et al., 2018), leaving the direct link between anxiety and WTC insufficiently examined within this particular learner population. This gap becomes especially evident in the context of speaking classes at Universitas Lancang Kuning. Based on an interview conducted with the speaking lecturer on November 2, 2025, students particularly those in semester 1, 3, 5, and 7 frequently experience anxiety during impromptu speaking tasks, fear of negative evaluation, and performance pressure in classroom settings, all of which substantially diminish their readiness to communicate (Horwitz et al., 1986; Jin & Dewaele, 2018). As these situational factors have not been empirically addressed in prior studies, a more targeted correlational investigation is needed to determine the extent to which speaking anxiety shapes students' communicative readiness within academic and future professional contexts.

In light of these issues, further investigation is needed to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between speaking anxiety and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among English Education students across semester 1, 3, 5, and 7 at Universitas Lancang Kuning. Such research not only strengthens theoretical understanding of psychological factors in language learning but also offers quantitative data that is directly relevant to the training of future educators (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre et al., 1998). The findings have the potential to contribute meaningfully to the development of instructional models that promote more effective oral communication. Additionally, the results can assist educational institutions in designing data-driven strategies to reduce anxiety more efficiently

(Bashori et al., 2022; Lee & Lee, 2019). These insights are also valuable for undergraduate students in English education, who will eventually serve as language facilitators in schools. Therefore, this study carries substantial importance in enhancing students' communicative competence and professional readiness.

B. Identification of the Research

Based on the background of the problems described above, the phenomenon to be identified in this study is the relationship between speaking anxiety and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among English Education students at Universitas Lancang Kuning. One significant issue observed is that many students still experience high levels of speaking anxiety, which often cause them to become hesitant or reluctant to participate in classroom communication. This condition contributes to the variation in students' WTC, as those who feel anxious tend to avoid speaking activities, while those with lower anxiety show greater readiness to communicate. Therefore, it is important to identify how speaking anxiety influences students' willingness to communicate within formal learning contexts.

C. Limitation of the Research

In order to be more focused and directed, this study is limited to examining the correlation between speaking anxiety and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Lancang Kuning. The investigation specifically involves students enrolled in speaking courses across semesters 1, 3, 5, and 7 during the academic year 2025.

D. Formulation of the Research

Based on the limitations described above and the problems that have been identified, the formulation of the problem in this research can be stated as follows: Is there a significant correlation between speaking anxiety and students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among English Education students from semesters 1, 3, 5, and 7 at Universitas Lancang Kuning?

E. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a significant correlation between speaking anxiety and students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among English Education students from semesters 1, 3, 5, and 7 at Universitas Lancang Kuning.

F. Importance of the Research

Researchers aim for this study to provide benefits to the following parties:

a. Theoretical Importance

Theoretically, this study expands the body of knowledge concerning affective factors that shape EFL learners' communicative behavior. By analyzing the relationship between speaking anxiety and students' willingness to communicate, this research offers empirical insights that may support, refine, or challenge established frameworks such as MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) Willingness to Communicate Model and Horwitz et al. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Theory. The findings are expected to enhance scholarly understanding of how anxiety operates as a psychological constraint affecting students' readiness to engage in spoken English. In addition, this study provides context-specific evidence from Universitas Lancang Kuning, allowing meaningful comparison with studies conducted in other Asian and international EFL environments. The results can also become a foundation for future research exploring other affective constructs such as motivation, confidence, and self-efficacy that contribute to learners' communicative competence.

b. Practical Importance

Practically, this study provides implications that can support English lecturers, curriculum designers, and university decision-makers in improving instructional practices and learning outcomes. For lecturers, the findings may offer guidance in developing classroom approaches that reduce anxiety such as creating supportive interactional settings,

implementing cooperative tasks, and providing constructive feedback to encourage students' willingness to communicate. For curriculum developers, the results may highlight the need to integrate affective skill-building components, including confidence development, public-speaking training, and structured oral practice, into spoken language courses. Furthermore, this study may assist institutions like Universitas Lancang Kuning in promoting students' emotional well-being and communication confidence through counseling services, peer-support initiatives, and speaking-focused extracurricular programs. Ultimately, the outcomes of this research are expected to help learners overcome affective barriers, strengthen communicative competence, and prepare more effectively for their professional roles as future English educators.

G. Definition of Key Terms

In order to avoid misinterpretation of the results of this research, the following key terms are operationally defined:

a. Speaking Anxiety

This term refers to the negative emotional state that arises when learners are required to speak in English, particularly in formal settings such as classroom discussions, presentations, or oral examinations. It is characterized by feelings of nervousness, fear of making mistakes, worry about being judged by others, and both physical and psychological tension that may interfere with fluent communication. In this study, speaking anxiety is assessed using a standardized instrument designed to measure learners' anxiety levels during speaking-related activities.

b. Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

Willingness to communicate (WTC) describes an individual's inclination to initiate or take part actively in communication using English. It represents learners' readiness to engage in spoken interaction, whether in structured situations or spontaneous exchanges. The level of WTC is considered a key determinant of language learning success, and

in this research it is measured through a scale that evaluates students' tendency to speak across a range of communicative contexts.

c. English Education Students

This term refers to undergraduate learners enrolled in an English Education study program at a higher education institution. Students in this category undertake courses aimed at developing linguistic competence, pedagogical knowledge, and professional skills required to become future English teachers. In the present study, they constitute the primary participants whose academic and psychological characteristics are relevant for examining the relationship between speaking anxiety and WTC.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that English Education students at Universitas Lancang Kuning experience a moderate level of speaking anxiety while demonstrating a moderate to high level of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English. The results reveal a statistically significant negative correlation between speaking anxiety and students' WTC, indicating that higher levels of anxiety reduce students' readiness to engage in oral communication. Among the dimensions of speaking anxiety, test anxiety emerged as the most dominant factor, followed by communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation, highlighting the strong influence of evaluative speaking contexts on students' emotional responses. These findings imply that English language instruction should prioritize reducing evaluative pressure and fostering a supportive classroom environment through low-stakes speaking activities, formative assessment, and constructive feedback. Addressing affective factors in speaking instruction is therefore essential to enhance students' psychological readiness to communicate and optimize their speaking performance.

B. Suggestion

Based on the conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and to reduce speaking anxiety. English lecturers are encouraged to create supportive and low-anxiety classroom environments by minimizing excessive evaluative pressure, providing constructive and encouraging feedback, and promoting collaborative speaking activities. Such instructional practices may help students feel more comfortable taking communicative risks and increase their readiness to participate in oral interaction. In addition, lecturers are advised to incorporate anxiety-reduction strategies, including gradual exposure to speaking tasks, peer-based discussions, and positive reinforcement, in order to strengthen students' confidence in speaking English. For future research, it is recommended that researchers further

investigate speaking anxiety and willingness to communicate using mixed-method approaches to obtain deeper insights into students' emotional experiences. Moreover, expanding research across different institutions or educational contexts is suggested to provide a broader understanding of how affective factors influence learners' willingness to communicate in English.

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