



# The Speaking Anxiety Level of Newbies Debaters in an Online EFL Classroom

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## ABSTRACT

The ability to produce a well-organized, logical, and evidential speech is essential in the twenty-first century since convincing other speakers during oral information changes is advancing one's success. An English class debate is a speaking practice that supports mastering these persuasive skills. However, the result of preobservation indicates that EFL graduates show several signs and symptoms of speaking anxiety that influence the effectiveness of their English-speaking performances. Thus, this study investigates the level of speaking anxiety experienced by university students during online EFL debating classes. The research intends to conduct a survey involving 44 third-year university students. An instrument called Horwitz's foreign language classroom anxiety questionnaire was distributed to gain data; therefore, the result was statistically analyzed using IBM SPSS. The result shows that more than three-fourths of the sample suffers moderate to high speaking anxiety. It results from fewer practices of building factual and exemplification utterances to persuade other speakers in English besides individual negative perceptions of their debating skills. It recommends studying the causal factors and strategic action to overcome the collegians' speaking anxiety.

**Keywords:** Speaking anxiety level, English debate, EFL graduates Horwitz's foreign language classroom anxiety.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Society has moved forward from 4.0, which focuses on mechanical support, to 5.0, based on knowledge and qualified human beings to succeed in the job and societal interaction. People have digital skills and information and communication technology (ICT) mastery. The skills vary from personal ability to communicate with other speakers, to collaborate or do pairwork and group work activities to resolve a particular matter, to think creatively about a topic, to think critically about issues, and to solve problems in various situations (Akkaya, 2021; Santos et al., 2019). Societies must integrate those five skills into higher-order thinking skills such as digital literacy, the Internet of things, and automatization e-skills (van Laar et al., 2020). This ability leads to a broader perspective, allowing me to think comprehensively and solve life problems effectively.

Communication skills, one of the five essential competencies to survive in the twenty-first century, significantly support information sharing in the digital era. Communication is direct to individual success for academic, business, and social purposes. (Amelia & Syahri, 2021). The students achieve significant results during an academic presentation and report with good communication skills. (Zahroh, 2017) The research also reveals that people perform better job satisfaction when they can communicate warmly using a particular foreign language and integrate intercultural awareness. (Tashmatova, 2021). Moreover, a personal lack of ability to use English as a means of communication, prefers to avoid social talk and withdraw from oral interaction (Nuryanti et al., 2020).

Good communication competence enables the users to produce utterances, deliver messages, convey meaning, and accept and respond to oral and written conversations. (Tenbrink, 2020). Furthermore, they tend to be adjustable to the various setting that engages dialogue and a particular style of dynamic communication (Göncz, 2017). They are also capable of posting critical responses and delivering comments by providing further developed ideas to the topic of the talk (Zou & Xie, 2019). Last, mastering such competence enables someone to use language for many distinctive



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purposes, know the perfect time to use formal or informal language, produce suitable text types related to the need, and choose the right strategies to maintain a conversation. (Tashmatova, 2021).

People with communicative skills possess four essential language competencies: linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse, and strategy. However, learners experiencing speaking anxiety find it difficult to perform their language competence mastery once they have talked to others or performed individual speech (Babakhouya, 2019). Speaking anxiety is one of the affective factors as a consequence of personal negative perception leading to poor attitude and low motivation while learning a language (Dornyei, 2005). It arouses along with activation of stress, phobic behavior, and frightening situation (Bandura, 1999). When speaking anxiety is experienced by students in a foreign language classroom setting, they find it challenging to master the target language as a means of communication (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Research on speaking anxiety has been variously conducted over the last decade. The result reveals the causal aspects (Sadighi & Dastpk, 2017), teaching techniques to reduce (Li, 2020), internal and external actions to overcome (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020), strategies to cope (Akkakoson, 2016), effects on students' learning achievement (Dung & Hung, 2020), and learning models to minimize (Chen & Hwang, 2022) Speaking anxiety. The research involves many different levels of students' school degrees, ages, language abilities, and settings, which spread across countries of the world. Some studies focusing on Indonesia vary in the correlation between psychological aspects, speaking anxiety, and students speaking achievement (Sutarsyah, 2017), gender-based speaking anxiety (Abrar, 2018), and effects of speaking anxiety on students' performance (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2020).

Research on the level of students' speaking anxiety has also been administered in the last decades. Some studies show that the Japanese students' anxiety levels determine the result of their speaking performance (Saito & Samimy, 1996). Next, Indonesian students attribute three different levels of public speaking anxiety called trait, situation, and state anxiety (Mahmudi & Mirjam, 2021) Furthermore, the reasoning factors resulting in a low level of Indonesian students' public speaking achievement (Raja, 2017), the percentage number of students experiencing a different level of public speaking anxiety (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021) Are also performed. In addition, the degree of speaking anxiety among Turkish collegians (Balemir, 2009) Malaysian undergraduate learners (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2018), and advanced English learners and TEFL postgraduate students (Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015) They are also revealed. Another topic focuses on a comparison of speaking anxiety levels between Indonesian state and private religion-based university students. (Fitriah & Muna, 2019).

The present study places several gaps compared to the results of previous ones. The practical gap focuses on private university students located in a small town and based on the teaching profession. The conceptual gap purely lies in the level of speaking anxiety experienced by newbie debaters who have not been previously investigated. The research will also bring different insights into anxiety problems faced by university students once they have to perform oral argumentation.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. *Research Design*

The present study's design is a survey, which is preferable because it can investigate the degree of students' speaking anxiety.

### 2.2. *Sampling*

The study entails twenty-eight students from a private university in East Java, Indonesia. It is a professional university for teachers located in a small town. The sample is in the third semester of their bachelor's degree study and taking the English Debate class in the English Education study program.

### 2.3. *Instrument and Data Analysis*

An eleven-item questionnaire on speaking anxiety was spread out to the students. The questionnaire was typed in an online Google form, and the students completed it by clicking the best statements related to their actual situation. The data gained from the answers to the questionnaire are then analyzed statistically to find out the average score of each sample and categorize each anxiety level.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. *The speaking anxiety of newbie debaters*

The survey consists of eleven indicators: heart beating, perspiration, sleep difficulty, less concentration, unrelax, willingness to end speech soon, dread feeling, speech test avoidance, tense feeling, nervousness, and relief feeling. The detailed result of the survey is shown as follows:

**Table 1.** Newbie debaters' speaking anxiety

Speaking Anxiety Items	N	%			Mean score
		Low	mod	high	
Heart beating (A1)	28	0	32	68	4.1
Perspiration (A2)	28	32	21	46	3.1
Sleep difficulty (A3)	28	39	32	29	2.8
Hard to concentrate (A4)	28	25	25	50	3.4
Unrelax feeling (A5)	28	18	18	64	3.8
Willingness to end soon (A6)	28	21	14	64	3.5
Dread feeling (A7)	28	46	25	29	2.6
Speech test avoidance (A8)	28	32	39	29	3.0
Tense feeling (A9)	28	18	21	61	3.6
Nervous feeling (A10)	28	18	18	64	3.6
Relief on speech over (A11)	28	0	0	100	4.6

Table 1 shows that newbie debaters in one of the private universities in East Java experience high anxiety on eight of eleven questionnaire items. They are on the aspects of heart beating, perspiration, sleep difficulty, difficulty concentrating, unrelax feeling, willingness to end the speech soon, tension, nervousness, and relief to know the speech over. In detail, all students are happy to know that their performance time is over with a percentage of 100%. Next, all students get their heart beat faster when they perform a speech. The result varies from moderate (32%) to high level (68%). Besides, most of the students sustain high anxiety, with a percentage over 60% on the aspects of unrelax, nervous, and tense feelings during the speech, and an expectation of having their speech performance finished as soon as possible. The detail percentage for each item is 64%, 64%, 61%, and 64%, respectively. Furthermore, almost half of the students exhibit signs of perspiration and find difficulty concentrating when they are delivering their speech because of high anxiety. The percentage ranges from 46% to 50% of the total samples.

Table 1 also shows that the number of students who prefer to have tests other than oral debating is almost the same for those experiencing low, moderate, and high anxiety. Last, most students feel fine the night before performing a speech and have no sleep difficulty. They also have no dread feeling throughout the speech performance. The last two items are less experienced by the newbie students, which means that just a few of them suffer moderate to high speaking anxiety.

**Table 2.** The level of newbie debaters' speaking anxiety

The score of Speaking Anxiety	Speaking anxiety level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
< 97	Low	7	25
97 – 131	Moderate	13	46



> 131	High	8	29
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Table 2 shows that seven of twenty-eight newbie debaters have low speaking anxiety, especially when performing an argumentative speech—furthermore, thirteen of twenty-eight newbie debaters, or about forty-six percent of samples, experience moderate speaking anxiety. Moreover, twenty-nine percent of students, or one-third of the sample, suffer from high anxiety. In conclusion, most of the newbie debaters in one of the private universities in East Java sustain moderate to high speaking anxiety. They make up about three-fourths of the total sample.

### 3.2. Discussion

The rise of speaking anxiety is commonly attributed to the sweat of the palm, fast heartbeat, and shivering (Witt & Behnke, 2006). They affect people differently. Some newbie debaters experience before speech delivery, during the monologue, or even post-debating activities. Besides, speakers usually suffer an adverse psychological reaction to their speech performance, such as high blood pressure, faster heart rate, numbness, and inability to control breathing (Arifin & Manda, 2021; McCullough et al., 2006). When newbie debaters have difficulties handling audience enthusiasm and listening to their arguments on a topic, they are stressed and feel discomfort. The situation leads to such a perspiration process. People also sign difficulty sleeping the night before performing a speech because of personal intimacy and intrusive thought (Arifin et al., 2024; Carrigan & Levis, 1999). The newbie debaters who lack debating practice usually overthink the running of the forthcoming debate. The thought often leads to negative perceptions and makes them unable to sleep tight.

People who suffer from speaking anxiety have problems with concentration (Arifin et al., 2023; Li, 2020). Newbie debaters with less concentration find it challenging to deliver their arguments smoothly, resulting in low speaking performance scores. Anxious speakers also lead to unrelaxation, tension, and nervous feelings, which make the audience fail to understand the ideas of the talk. (Nugroho et al., 2021). Newbie debaters with less preparation often find it hard to elaborate on points of argument and suffer these symptoms. Besides, some speakers might still expect to end their performance soon even if they are well-prepared (Gramer et al., 2012). When the newbie debaters experience speaking anxiety, they tend to talk less and are glad to know once their speech period is over.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The author expects to contribute further to finding the factors causing such speaking anxiety for newbie debaters. The study's results can be used as base data to overcome the problems since persuasive communication is essential in this modern era. Furthermore, the author expects to find strategies for the case.

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