

The Interplay of Self-Efficacy, Foreign Language Anxiety, Speaking Performance, and Oral Proficiency Among EFL Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis hubungan antara efikasi diri, kecemasan berbahasa asing, performa berbicara, dan kemahiran berbicara mahasiswa EFL. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional terhadap 284 mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di STKIP Al Maksum Langkat dan Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (UMSU) yang dipilih melalui proportionate stratified random sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan English Speaking Self-Efficacy Scale, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), dan tes berbicara. Instrumen dinyatakan valid dan reliabel dengan nilai Cronbach's Alpha sebesar 0,89–0,95. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, korelasi Pearson Product Moment, regresi berganda, dan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) berbantuan AMOS 28.0. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa efikasi diri berhubungan positif dengan performa berbicara ($r = 0,684$; $p < 0,001$), sedangkan kecemasan berbahasa asing berhubungan negatif ($r = -0,611$; $p < 0,001$). Efikasi diri berpengaruh positif ($\beta = 0,51$) dan kecemasan berbahasa asing berpengaruh negatif ($\beta = -0,37$) terhadap performa berbicara. Kedua variabel menjelaskan 61,2% variasi performa berbicara ($R^2 = 0,612$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan efikasi diri dan pengurangan kecemasan berbahasa asing berperan penting dalam meningkatkan performa berbicara mahasiswa EFL.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships among self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, speaking performance, and oral proficiency among EFL undergraduate students. A quantitative correlational design was employed involving 284 students from the English Education Study Programs at STKIP Al Maksum Langkat and Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (UMSU). Participants were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected through the English Speaking Self-Efficacy Scale, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and an oral speaking test. The instruments demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.89 to 0.95. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 28.0. The findings indicated that self-efficacy was positively associated with speaking performance ($r = .684$, $p < .001$), whereas foreign language anxiety was negatively associated with speaking performance ($r = -.611$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, self-efficacy positively predicted speaking performance ($\beta = .51$), while foreign language anxiety exerted a negative effect ($\beta = -.37$). Together, both variables explained 61.2% of the variance in speaking performance ($R^2 = .612$). The findings suggest that enhancing students' self-efficacy and reducing foreign language anxiety are essential for improving speaking performance and oral proficiency among EFL undergraduate students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English speaking competence has become one of the most essential outcomes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in higher education because it enables learners to communicate effectively in academic, professional, and intercultural contexts [1]. Despite years of English instruction, many EFL undergraduate students continue to experience difficulties in oral communication [2]. Limited vocabulary, inadequate grammatical control, pronunciation problems, and insufficient opportunities for authentic interaction often hinder speaking development [3]. However, linguistic competence alone does not fully explain learners' speaking achievement [4]. Growing evidence indicates that psychological factors, particularly self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety, substantially influence learners' willingness to communicate, confidence during speaking tasks, and overall oral performance [5]. Consequently, understanding the interaction between cognitive and affective variables has become increasingly important for improving speaking instruction in EFL classrooms [6].

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that self-efficacy plays a positive role in enhancing EFL learners' speaking achievement [7]. Learners with strong self-efficacy tend to demonstrate greater persistence, employ more effective learning strategies, participate more actively in classroom interaction, and achieve higher levels of oral proficiency than those with lower confidence. Recent empirical research has further confirmed that self-efficacy directly predicts speaking performance and contributes to learners' sustained engagement during oral communication tasks [8].

Conversely, foreign language anxiety remains one of the strongest psychological barriers to successful speaking performance. Speaking activities frequently provoke communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, all of which reduce learners' fluency, accuracy, and willingness to participate in oral interaction. Several studies have reported significant negative relationships between foreign language anxiety and speaking achievement, suggesting that highly anxious learners often avoid speaking opportunities and demonstrate lower oral proficiency. Although technological innovations and learner-centered approaches have shown promise in reducing speaking anxiety, anxiety continues to be a persistent challenge in EFL contexts [9].

Although previous studies have investigated self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, and speaking achievement separately, limited empirical research has simultaneously examined the structural relationships among self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, speaking performance, and oral proficiency within Indonesian higher education [10]. Existing studies primarily focus on simple correlations between two variables or examine psychological factors independently, providing limited understanding of how these constructs interact to influence learners' speaking outcomes. Furthermore, few studies have employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to investigate the direct effects of self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety on both speaking performance and oral proficiency among EFL undergraduate students from different institutions [11]. Addressing this gap provides a more comprehensive explanation of the psychological mechanisms underlying speaking success and offers evidence-based implications for English language pedagogy [12]. Accordingly, this study examines the relationships

among self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, speaking performance, and oral proficiency and determines the predictive effects of self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety on EFL undergraduate students' speaking outcomes [13].

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationships among self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, speaking performance, and oral proficiency among EFL undergraduate students. A correlational design is appropriate for examining the magnitude and direction of relationships among variables without manipulating the research setting and for determining the predictive effects of independent variables on dependent variables through statistical modeling [14]. To examine both direct relationships and the structural paths among the variables, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed using AMOS version 28.0 [15].

2.2 Research Participants

The study involved 284 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Programs at STKIP Al Maksum Langkat and Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (UMSU), Indonesia, during the 2025/2026 academic year. Participants were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation from both institutions and different academic levels. The sample size exceeded the minimum recommendation of 200 respondents for SEM analysis, ensuring stable parameter estimation and adequate statistical power [16].

2.3 Research Instruments

Three instruments were employed to collect the data.

- a. English Speaking Self-Efficacy Scale (ESSES) consisting of 20 items measured students' confidence in performing English-speaking tasks using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).
- b. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) consisting of 33 items measured students' anxiety related to English speaking, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.
- c. Speaking Performance Test measured students' oral proficiency through an individual presentation followed by an interview. Students' performances were evaluated independently by two certified English lecturers using an analytic speaking rubric adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Five assessment criteria were used: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and interactive communication, each scored on a scale of 1–20, producing a maximum score of 100.

Prior to the main study, a pilot test involving 40 students confirmed the instruments' psychometric quality. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.89 to 0.95, Composite Reliability (CR) ranged from 0.90 to 0.94, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.61 to 0.76, indicating satisfactory reliability and convergent validity.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The research was conducted in five stages.

- a. Obtaining institutional approval from both universities.
- b. Conducting a pilot study to evaluate instrument validity and reliability.
- c. Administering the ESSES and FLCAS questionnaires online using Google Forms.

- d. Conducting speaking performance assessments in face-to-face sessions, where each participant completed a five-minute presentation followed by a five-minute interview.
- e. Recording, scoring, tabulating, and verifying all research data before statistical analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 27 and AMOS 28.0. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to determine the mean, standard deviation, minimum score, and maximum score for each variable. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was subsequently employed to examine the relationships among self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, speaking performance, and oral proficiency. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the predictive contribution of self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety to speaking performance.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was finally employed to evaluate the overall structural model. Model fit was assessed using multiple goodness-of-fit indices, including Chi-square/df (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Following Hair et al. (2022), acceptable model fit was indicated by $\chi^2/df < 3.00$, $CFI \geq 0.90$, $TLI \geq 0.90$, $RMSEA \leq 0.08$, and $SRMR \leq 0.08$.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were first computed to examine the overall distribution of the four study variables, namely self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, speaking performance, and oral proficiency. The analysis provides an overview of the participants' responses and indicates whether the data are appropriate for subsequent inferential analyses. Overall, the participants reported relatively high levels of self-efficacy, speaking performance, and oral proficiency, whereas the level of foreign language anxiety was moderate. The standard deviation values indicate acceptable variability, suggesting that the participants represented diverse levels of psychological and speaking characteristics.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Self-Efficacy	284	2.45	4.95	4.12	0.46
Foreign Language Anxiety	284	1.68	4.72	2.83	0.59
Speaking Performance	284	58.00	95.00	82.36	6.81
Oral Proficiency	284	56.00	96.00	81.74	6.45

The findings presented in Table 1 demonstrate that self-efficacy obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.46$), indicating that most participants possessed a strong belief in their ability to perform English speaking tasks successfully. High self-efficacy has been associated with increased persistence, confidence, and willingness to participate in communicative activities, thereby facilitating better language learning outcomes.

The mean score of foreign language anxiety ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.59$) suggests a moderate level of anxiety among the participants. Although the students generally demonstrated confidence in speaking English, many still experienced nervousness during classroom presentations, oral examinations, and spontaneous communication. Such findings indicate that anxiety remains an important affective factor that may hinder students' speaking achievement despite adequate linguistic competence [17].

The descriptive results also reveal relatively high levels of speaking performance ($M = 82.36$, $SD = 6.81$) and oral proficiency ($M = 81.74$, $SD = 6.45$). These results indicate that the participants generally achieved satisfactory speaking competence across pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and interactive communication. Nevertheless, the observed variation among participants suggests that psychological variables may explain differences in speaking achievement, thereby justifying further correlation and structural analyses.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety are significant psychological determinants of EFL undergraduate students' speaking performance and oral proficiency. Students with higher levels of self-efficacy consistently achieved better speaking outcomes, whereas higher levels of foreign language anxiety negatively affected their oral performance. The structural model further confirmed that self-efficacy exerted a stronger positive influence on speaking performance than the negative influence of foreign language anxiety, indicating that learners' confidence in their speaking ability is a crucial predictor of successful oral communication. These findings support the view that cognitive and affective factors interact to shape speaking achievement and should therefore be considered simultaneously in English language instruction. The study contributes to the growing body of EFL research by providing empirical evidence of the structural relationships among self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety, speaking performance, and oral proficiency within the context of Indonesian higher education through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results also offer practical implications for English language educators by emphasizing the importance of creating supportive learning environments, incorporating confidence-building speaking activities, and implementing instructional strategies that minimize learners' anxiety. Such pedagogical practices are expected to foster greater participation, improve speaking competence, and promote more effective English language learning among EFL undergraduate students..

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