

INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' SPEAKING CONFIDENCE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY IN INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY EFL SETTINGS

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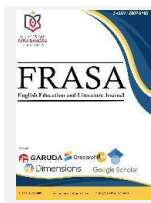
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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between students' speaking confidence and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) among Indonesian university EFL learners. While previous studies have often investigated confidence and anxiety separately, limited research has explored their relationship at the tertiary level in the Indonesian context using a mixed-methods approach. To address this gap, the study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (QUAN → qual). The participants were 24 English Education students selected through purposive sampling. Quantitative data were collected using a speaking confidence questionnaire and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which demonstrated acceptable to excellent reliability ($\alpha = .704$ for the FLCAS and $\alpha = .933$ for the confidence scale). Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were conducted, followed by semi-structured interviews to confirm the questionnaire results. The findings showed that most students reported high speaking confidence while experiencing moderate classroom anxiety. Correlation analysis revealed a strong and significant negative relationship between confidence and anxiety ($r = -0.657, p < .05$), indicating that higher confidence was associated with lower anxiety levels. Interview data were consistent with the quantitative findings and confirmed students' self-reported levels of confidence and anxiety. These results suggest that confidence and anxiety coexist in EFL speaking contexts rather than functioning as opposing states. Pedagogically, the study underscores the need for confidence-building speaking tasks and supportive classroom practices to help learners manage anxiety and sustain oral communication.

Keywords: Classroom anxiety, English Language Teaching, Foreign Language Anxiety, Indonesian students, Speaking confidence.



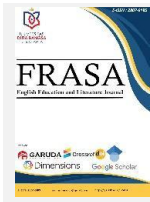
INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate effectively in English has become a fundamental competence in the globalized academic and professional landscape. For students in English Education programs, this demand is even more pressing, as they are expected not only to master linguistic knowledge but also to perform confidently as future English teachers. Paradoxically, many English Education students who possess adequate linguistic competence still experience intense anxiety when required to speak in English classrooms. This paradox, learners who are cognitively capable yet affectively constrained, highlights the importance of examining psychological factors that influence speaking performance in EFL contexts.

One of the most widely discussed affective barriers in foreign language learning is Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). FLCA refers to situation-specific anxiety arising from language learning contexts, characterized by nervousness, fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and discomfort during classroom interaction (Dikmen, 2021; Sam et al., 2024). Within the framework of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, high levels of anxiety function as a mental barrier that prevents optimal language input processing and output production. Empirical evidence consistently shows that elevated FLCA reduces students' willingness to communicate, limits classroom participation, and negatively affects speaking proficiency (Alghofaili, 2022).

Alongside anxiety, confidence plays a crucial role in shaping learners' oral communication behavior. Confidence reflects learners' belief in their ability to use English effectively and is closely related to self-efficacy in speaking tasks (Sepyanda et al., 2025; Telaumbanua et al., 2025). Students with higher confidence tend to take more communicative risks, engage actively in classroom interaction, and demonstrate greater fluency (Rambe & Daulay, 2025; Suryanto & Muthmainnah, 2024). Conversely, learners with low confidence often hesitate, avoid speaking opportunities, and become more vulnerable to anxiety in EFL classroom (Rindi, 2024). Importantly, confidence and FLCA are theoretically intertwined: learners with low confidence are more likely to experience anxiety, and prolonged exposure to anxiety may, in turn, weaken their confidence (Nuralika et al., 2023). A key problem, therefore, is whether higher confidence corresponds to lower FLCA among English Education students, a relationship that remains insufficiently understood, particularly in Indonesian university contexts.

Previous empirical studies have explored these affective variables, yet often in isolation. Research in Indonesia has shown that confidence is positively associated with speaking performance, with more confident students displaying higher fluency and participation (Kulsum, 2025; Novia & Ramayanti, 2023). Other studies have demonstrated that FLCA negatively affects students' speaking performance and classroom engagement (Fitri et al., 2021; Kulsum & Ridwan, 2025). International findings generally support this pattern, although results are not always consistent. For instance, Chen et al. (2017) reported a negative but non-significant correlation between speaking anxiety and performance, suggesting that contextual and individual factors may moderate this relationship. Studies such as Lestari et al. (2024) further indicate that confidence tends to vary across levels of speaking achievement, yet they do not directly examine how confidence and anxiety interact simultaneously.



Despite this growing body of research, a critical gap remains: few studies have explicitly examined the direct correlational relationship between confidence and FLCA simultaneously among English Education students at the university level in Indonesia. Most existing research focuses on secondary school learners, treats confidence and anxiety as separate predictors of performance, or relies solely on quantitative measures, thereby offering a fragmented understanding of how these affective factors interact in higher education EFL classrooms.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the relationship between students' confidence and FLCA among English Education students in an Indonesian university context. This study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. The quantitative phase measures students' confidence and FLCA levels and examines their relationship using Pearson correlation analysis. While the qualitative phase explores students' experiences in speaking classrooms to explain and enrich the quantitative results. This study hypothesizes that there is a significant negative relationship between confidence and FLCA, such that higher confidence is associated with lower levels of foreign language classroom anxiety. This study differs from previous research by simultaneously examining these two affective variables within a higher education context and integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a more comprehensive understanding of EFL learners' speaking anxiety.

METHOD

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design with quantitative priority (QUAN → qual) (Toyon, 2021). The design was used to first identify students' levels of speaking confidence and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) through quantitative descriptive analysis, followed by examining the relationship between the two variables using correlational analysis. The qualitative phase was subsequently conducted to support and explain the quantitative findings, particularly the categorized levels of confidence and FLCA. Given the relatively small sample size and the focus on affective variables within a specific institutional context, this study was framed as an exploratory (pilot) investigation.

The study was conducted at an English Education program in a university located in Bandung, Indonesia. The participants consisted of 24 undergraduate English Education students, selected using purposive sampling. The class was chosen as a naturally formed group based on feasibility and access, as all students had completed at least one speaking course and were actively engaged in English-speaking classroom activities. Although the sample size was relatively small, it was considered acceptable for correlational analysis (Roscoe in Sugiyono, 2018) and yielded useful preliminary insights.

Two questionnaires were used in the quantitative phase. The first instrument was a Speaking Confidence Questionnaire, adapted from Griffiee (1997). The adapted version consisted of 12 items measuring students' comfort, self-assurance, and willingness to speak in English classroom contexts. The second instrument was the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), consisting of 33 items measuring communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Both instruments employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



Prior studies have reported satisfactory validity and reliability for both instruments. For the current study, the questionnaires were translated into Indonesian and reviewed by two experts in English education to ensure content clarity. A small pilot test was conducted to check item comprehensibility. Reliability analysis based on the current data indicated acceptable internal consistency. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .704$; 33 items), while the confidence scale showed excellent reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .933 across 12 items. These results indicate that both instruments are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were first used to calculate mean scores and categorize students’ levels of FLCA and speaking confidence into high, moderate, and low categories. Prior to inferential analysis, a Shapiro–Wilk normality test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) was conducted, and the results indicated that both variables were normally distributed ($p > .05$). Subsequently, Pearson’s Product–Moment Correlation was employed to examine the relationship between students’ speaking confidence and FLCA, with the significance level set at $\alpha = .05$.

The qualitative phase was conducted after the quantitative analysis to support and explain the categorized levels and correlational results. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with purposefully selected participants representing contrasting profiles (one student with high confidence-low anxiety, one student with high confidence-moderate anxiety, one student with moderate confidence-moderate anxiety, and two students with moderate confidence-high anxiety). The interviews explored students’ speaking experiences, focusing on how confidence and anxiety were manifested during classroom speaking activities. Interviews lasted approximately 20–30 minutes, were audio-recorded with participants’ consent, transcribed, and analyzed thematically to provide explanatory insights into the quantitative findings.

To ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation was achieved through the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students’ Speaking Confidence Levels

The first stage of analysis examined students’ levels of speaking confidence. Based on the speaking confidence questionnaire, participants were categorized into two levels: moderate and high confidence. As presented in Table 1, nine students (37.5%) were classified as having a moderate level of confidence, while the majority, fifteen students (62.5%), demonstrated a high level of confidence in speaking English.

Table 1. Students’ Confidence Levels

No	Level	Students	Percentage
1	Moderate	9	37,50%
2	High	15	62,50%

The mean score of the confidence scale indicates that, overall, students perceived themselves as capable and comfortable when engaging in English-speaking activities. This finding suggests that English Education students generally develop positive self-perceptions of their speaking ability through sustained exposure to English in academic contexts. This

result is consistent with previous studies suggesting that students with higher confidence are more willing to engage in academic challenges and communicative tasks (Hengki & Ratna, 2025). Confident learners tend to approach speaking activities with optimism, viewing challenges as opportunities for growth rather than as threats (Green et al., 2022). Such confidence facilitates active participation, openness to feedback, and sustained interaction, which are essential for the development of oral proficiency (Halilsoy, 2024). This pattern was also supported by the qualitative data. Students with high confidence described feeling capable and comfortable when speaking English in class, particularly during routine academic activities such as discussions and presentations. For instance, Student S1 (high confidence–low anxiety) stated, *“I feel comfortable speaking English in class. Even if my grammar is not perfect, I still try to speak because that’s how I learn.”* This excerpt reflects a positive self-perception of speaking ability developed through sustained exposure to English in academic contexts. The student’s willingness to speak despite making errors indicates an optimistic orientation toward challenges and a view of speaking tasks as opportunities for improvement rather than threats.

In contrast, students with moderate confidence may still experience hesitation, particularly in spontaneous or evaluative speaking situations. This tendency is reflected in earlier findings showing that moderately confident learners are more likely to avoid voluntary participation in speaking classes (Alifah et al., 2021; Kulsum, 2025). This pattern was also evident in the qualitative data. For instance, Student S3 (moderate confidence–moderate anxiety) stated, *“If only I don’t get a chance to speak in class, it will be good”.* This statement illustrates how limited confidence can lead to avoidance behavior, reinforcing passive participation despite adequate linguistic knowledge.

Students’ Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) Levels

The second analysis focused on students’ levels of foreign language classroom anxiety. Based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), participants were categorized into low, moderate, and high anxiety levels. As shown in Table 2, only one student (4.2%) reported low anxiety, while most students (18 students, 75%) experienced moderate anxiety. Five students (20.8%) were classified as having high anxiety.

Table 2. The Percentages of Students Anxiety Level

No	Level	Students	Percentage
1	Low	1	4,2%
2	Moderate	18	75%
3	High	5	20,8%

These results indicate that moderate anxiety is the dominant emotional state among English Education students during speaking activities. Despite being English majors who regularly use English in classroom interactions, many students still experienced moderate anxiety. This pattern was further corroborated by the qualitative findings, for example, Student S4 (high confidence–moderate anxiety) stated, *“I use English almost every day in class, but I still feel nervous when I have to speak in front of others, especially when the lecturer is listening.”* This excerpt indicates that regular exposure to English does not automatically eliminate anxiety, particularly when students perceive speaking as being

evaluated. This finding confirms that frequent exposure to English does not necessarily reduce anxiety levels. Similar patterns have been reported in previous studies conducted in various EFL contexts, including Cambodia (Sam et al., 2024), China (Liu, 2006), Iran (Hassani & Rajab, 2012), and Turkey (Subaşı, 2010). These studies suggest that FLCA is a widespread phenomenon that persists even among learners with substantial language exposure.

The fact that only one student reported low anxiety indicates that complete emotional comfort in foreign language communication is relatively rare. This finding reinforces the view that anxiety in language learning is highly individual and context-dependent (Fauzi & Asi, 2023). The persistence of anxiety was also evident in the qualitative data, for instance, Student S1 (high confidence–low anxiety) noted, *“I only feel nervous in certain situations, like formal presentations, but in discussions I’m fine.”* This statement illustrates how anxiety fluctuates across speaking contexts, even among students with relatively low anxiety levels. The persistence of anxiety can be explained by multiple psychological and contextual factors, such as fear of negative evaluation (Rahmat et al., 2022), lack of self-confidence (Nadila et al., 2020), and the pressure to perform well in academic settings (Hussain et al., 2025). Supporting this view, Erdiana et al. (2020) further emphasized that foreign language anxiety varies across individuals and situations, depending on both internal dispositions and external classroom conditions. Overall, the qualitative findings align with the quantitative results, confirming that sustained emotional comfort in foreign language communication is uncommon.

Cross-Tabulation between Speaking Confidence and FLCA

The next finding is to examine the interaction between confidence and anxiety, a cross-tabulation analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation between Confidence and Anxiety

Confidence	Low Anxiety	Moderate Anxiety	High Anxiety	Total
Moderate	0	7	2	9
High	1	11	3	15
Total	1	18	5	24

The cross-tabulation results reveal that most students with high confidence (11 out of 15) experienced a moderate level of anxiety, and only three reported high anxiety. Meanwhile, among students with moderate confidence, seven were classified as moderately anxious and two as highly anxious. Interestingly, the only student with low anxiety also possessed high confidence, implying that students with stronger self-assurance tend to manage anxiety more effectively. This pattern aligns with Pebriyana (2018) findings which describes confidence and anxiety as related constructs within the dimension of language learning. The qualitative data further illustrate how moderate confidence may coexist with high anxiety. For example, Student S2 (moderate confidence–high anxiety) stated, *“I know I can speak English, but when I have to speak in front of the class, I feel very nervous and worry that I will make mistakes”*. This excerpt demonstrates that although the student possesses adequate self-belief in their speaking ability, anxiety continues to inhibit oral performance. While anxiety may inhibit communication by fostering self-doubt and avoidance, confidence enhances learners’ willingness to speak and their ability to sustain communicative performance. Nonetheless, the presence of highly confident students who

still experience anxiety suggests that situational variables such as test anxiety in academic evaluation (Yilmaz & De Jong, 2024) also influence emotional states in classroom communication.

Correlation between Speaking Confidence and FLCA

The last finding refers to the statistical analysis using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation which revealed a strong negative correlation ($r = -.657$, $p < .05$) between students' speaking confidence and their anxiety levels, as presented below.

Table 4. Correlation between Speaking Confidence and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

		Confidence	Anxiety
Confidence	Pearson Correlation	1	-.657**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	24	24
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.657**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	24	24

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The negative direction of the correlation means that as confidence increases, anxiety tends to decrease. Based on Sugiyono's interpretation scale (Sugiyono, 2018), this coefficient indicates a strong relationship, suggesting that students' confidence substantially influences their level of language anxiety. This finding corroborates the results of previous studies by Durdevic (2022) and Ismayilli (2025), saying that self-confidence, as a form of positive emotional state, functions as an important emotional buffer in the process of foreign language learning.

The findings of this study demonstrate that English Education students tend to exhibit high speaking confidence alongside moderate levels of foreign language classroom anxiety. This pattern aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that anxiety does not completely block language learning but can fluctuate depending on psychological readiness and contextual demands.

The strong negative correlation between confidence and FLCA confirms that confidence reduces the intensity of anxiety, supporting earlier findings (Durdevic, 2022; Ismayilli, 2025). Confident students are more likely to perceive speaking tasks as opportunities for practice rather than as threats. This perspective was clearly reflected in the qualitative data. For example, Student S5 (high confidence–moderate anxiety) stated, *"For me, speaking class is a place to practice... we have group discussion, discuss many topics, and I like it."* This excerpt illustrates how confidence reframes anxiety into a manageable and even motivating experience.

At the same time, the presence of anxiety among confident students highlights the role of contextual and cultural factors. In Indonesian academic settings, speaking performance is often associated with assessment, accuracy, and public exposure, which may heighten anxiety regardless of confidence level. Student S1 (high confidence–low anxiety) explained, *"I get nervous, but I just try my best, like practicing before the speaking class and it helps me."* This response suggests that moderate anxiety can function as a facilitative force, encouraging preparation and focus.



These findings support the argument that anxiety is not inherently detrimental. When accompanied by sufficient confidence, moderate anxiety may enhance concentration and readiness, consistent with the notion of facilitative anxiety in language learning. However, without adequate confidence, anxiety may become debilitating, leading to avoidance and reduced participation.

The findings of this study carry important implications for English language teaching in the Indonesian EFL context. First, the strong relationship between speaking confidence and anxiety highlights the need for teachers to integrate affective support into their instructional practices. Confidence building should be viewed as an essential pedagogical objective. However, creating a supportive classroom climate where students feel safe to take risks and make mistakes can lower anxiety and foster a sense of self confidence. This approach is expected to reinforce students' confidence and reduce their speaking anxiety.

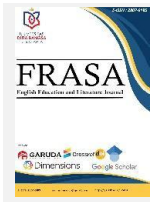
CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that English Education students at an Indonesian university generally exhibit relatively high speaking confidence alongside moderate levels of foreign language classroom anxiety. Rather than presenting as mutually exclusive, confidence and anxiety coexist, indicating that being confident does not necessarily eliminate anxiety in speaking contexts. Instead, confidence appears to help students manage and regulate their anxiety during classroom interaction.

The correlational analysis revealed a strong and significant negative relationship between speaking confidence and foreign language classroom anxiety, suggesting that students who perceive themselves as more confident tend to experience lower anxiety when using English. This finding contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical support, within a university EFL context, for the role of confidence as an affective factor that lowers the affective filter and facilitates oral communication. Importantly, the strength of the correlation observed in this small-scale exploratory study highlights the salience of affective variables even among English majors who regularly use English.

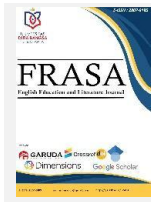
From a pedagogical perspective, these results indicate that EFL instruction should move beyond a sole focus on linguistic accuracy and incorporate systematic confidence-building practices. Such practices may include low-stakes speaking tasks, collaborative discussion formats, scaffolded presentations, reflective speaking journals, and formative feedback that emphasizes progress rather than error. Teacher training programs may also integrate affective-awareness modules to help instructors recognize and respond to students' anxiety while fostering communicative confidence.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a small sample size, was conducted in a single institution, and relied on self-report questionnaires, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is therefore recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, multiple institutional settings, and longitudinal or experimental designs to examine causal relationships between confidence and anxiety over time. In conclusion, this study underscores that supporting learners' affective readiness, particularly confidence, is central to reducing speaking anxiety and promoting meaningful communication in EFL classrooms.

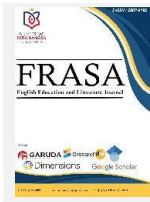


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