

# Comparative Analysis of The Students' Speaking Anxiety Level at English Study Program of UKI Toraja

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## Abstract

This study investigates the speaking anxiety levels among students enrolled in the English Study Program at UKI Toraja, motivated by a noticeable reluctance among students to engage in speaking competitions and public speaking events. The research seeks to determine whether there are significant differences in speaking anxiety levels across students from different academic semesters. A quantitative approach was used to assess these levels, with participants comprising 15 first-semester students, 8 third-semester students, 15 fifth-semester students, and 23 seventh-semester students. The data were collected through an 18-item questionnaire designed to evaluate common indicators of speaking anxiety, including cognitive, emotional, and physiological symptoms that typically occur during speaking tasks. The analysis was conducted using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) through Microsoft Excel to identify whether the variations in anxiety across semesters were statistically significant. The findings revealed substantial differences in anxiety levels among the students. For the low level of anxiety, the analysis produced a p-value of 5.42E-14, indicating a statistically significant difference. Similarly, for the moderate level of speaking anxiety, the p-value was 4.19E-12, and for the high level, the p-value was 2.62E-14, both below the standard significance threshold of 0.05. These results confirm that students' speaking anxiety does indeed vary significantly across academic semesters, suggesting that anxiety may decrease or shift in nature as students progress through their studies. However, the persistence of high anxiety in some advanced students also suggests that academic experience alone may not be sufficient to eliminate anxiety without targeted support. In conclusion, this study contributes to the broader understanding of speaking anxiety in EFL contexts by highlighting its variation based on semester level, thus emphasizing the need for semester-specific pedagogical strategies, early intervention, and continuous support to help learners overcome their anxiety and enhance their oral communication competence throughout their academic journey.

**Keywords:** *Speaking Anxiety, English As A Foreign Language (EFL), Academic Semester, Comparative Analysis, Language Learning Motivation*

## Introduction

Speaking is a fundamental aspect of human communication that plays a crucial role in expressing ideas, fostering interpersonal relationships, and engaging actively in both academic and social contexts (Adella et al, 2022). Within the domain of language learning, speaking is widely recognized as one of the most complex skills to master, particularly in environments where the target language is not frequently used beyond the classroom setting (Kowas, 2020). This complexity arises from the need to coordinate a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic elements in real time. Speaking goes beyond the mere articulation of words; it requires the harmonious integration of components such as fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary

range, pronunciation, intonation, and pragmatic appropriateness (Taqwa et al, 2022). Equally important are nonverbal elements, including gestures, facial expressions, posture, and eye contact, which enhance the clarity and persuasiveness of the spoken message. Emphasize, effective speaking encompasses not only the verbal content but also the modulation of tone, variation in pitch, and purposeful use of body language, all of which work together to create coherent, engaging, and impactful communication. In language learning contexts, developing these multifaceted skills demands sustained practice, exposure to authentic speaking situations, and constructive feedback, making it a challenging yet essential component of communicative competence (Yadav et al., 2023).

However, many learners, particularly those studying English as a Foreign Language, encounter significant challenges when required to speak in public or academic contexts (Fitriah et al, 2019). One of the most prominent obstacles is speaking anxiety, a psychological condition characterized by feelings of fear, nervousness, or apprehension when an individual is expected to communicate verbally. This form of anxiety can manifest through a range of physical symptoms such as trembling, sweating, rapid heartbeat, and dry mouth, as well as cognitive disruptions including difficulty recalling vocabulary, loss of concentration, or an inability to structure sentences coherently (Christy, 2021). In academic settings, these symptoms can become more pronounced due to the perceived pressure of evaluation from peers and instructors. Over time, if speaking anxiety remains unaddressed, it can foster avoidance behaviors where learners deliberately withdraw from speaking opportunities, limit their participation in classroom activities, and rely heavily on passive language skills. Such patterns not only hinder immediate academic performance but also impede the long term development of communicative competence, ultimately reducing learners' confidence and motivation to engage in authentic language use (Downing et al, 2020; Febrikawat et al, 2021).

Speaking anxiety is a widespread phenomenon among language learners (Foong et al, 2020). Their research indicates that thirty two percent of learners experience high levels of anxiety, forty three percent report moderate levels, and only twenty five percent feel comfortable when speaking English (Hutabarat, 2019). These findings suggest that the majority of learners are affected by some degree of anxiety, which can negatively influence both their academic performance and their overall language proficiency (Nuridzdzati et al, 2023). Furthermore, the study found that prolonged and consistent exposure to English tends to reduce anxiety levels, reinforcing the notion that regular practice and positive speaking experiences are essential in overcoming speaking anxiety. At Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja, speaking anxiety has emerged as a noticeable issue among students in the English Study Program.

Classroom observations and participation records from various events reveal that many students demonstrate reluctance and apprehension when required to speak. For example, during the 2023 English Expo debate competition, the number of participating teams from the English Department was notably low, with only three teams on the first day and a decline to two teams on the second day. This low level of engagement indicates more than just a lack of interest (Fauzi et al, 2023); it reflects a deeper challenge related to self-confidence and a fear of negative evaluation. A similar trend is evident in inter university activities, where students often hesitate to take part unless encouraged by lecturers. Even in prestigious events such as the National University Debate Competition, only two students attended the coaching sessions, suggesting an ongoing pattern of avoiding situations that require active speaking (Creswell, 2014)

This form of avoidance behavior aligns with the framework proposed by researcher, who categorized foreign language anxiety into three main components: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Abdillah, 2016). In the context of students at UKI Toraja, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are the most prominent. Many students express concern about making grammatical or pronunciation mistakes, being laughed at by their peers, or receiving unfavorable judgments from their instructors. These apprehensions often cause them to refrain from participating in class discussions, answering questions, or engaging in spontaneous conversations in English (Maritu et al, 2023). Such psychological barriers affect not only their immediate classroom performance but also reduce valuable opportunities to practice speaking, which is essential for improving language skills. Over time, this situation creates a cycle in which limited speaking practice leads to slower improvement in proficiency, which in turn increases anxiety and strengthens avoidance behavior. If these psychological aspects are not addressed, they can significantly hinder the development of students' communicative competence and confidence.

Given these observations, this study aims to investigate whether there are significant differences in speaking anxiety levels among students at different academic stages, specifically those in the first, third, fifth, and seventh semesters. The comparative analysis across these levels will provide insights into how speaking anxiety evolves over the course of an undergraduate program, potentially revealing whether prolonged exposure to English instruction reduces anxiety or whether it persists despite academic advancement. By examining these patterns, the research seeks to generate data-driven recommendations for targeted pedagogical approaches and intervention strategies that address the specific needs of students at each academic stage. The significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge the gap between theoretical perspectives on language anxiety and practical classroom strategies for mitigating it in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. While previous studies have widely examined language learning anxiety in general, only a limited number have focused on the nuanced differences that emerge across various points of academic progression within the same institutional context. This research therefore offers both theoretical contributions to the understanding of speaking anxiety and practical implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and student support initiatives (Fitriana, 2021).

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to correlate students' academic experience with their levels of speaking anxiety. It raises critical questions about whether advanced students, with more exposure and language input, experience lower anxiety, or whether anxiety remains constant due to factors like personality, peer dynamics, or teaching style. This investigation is expected to yield practical insights for educators, curriculum designers, and academic advisors in designing programs that foster speaking confidence and reduce anxiety progressively throughout students' academic journey.

## **Method**

This study employed a quantitative research design with a comparative approach to examine differences in speaking anxiety levels among students from various academic semesters in the English Study Program at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for the collection of measurable data that can be analyzed statistically, ensuring objectivity and accuracy in identifying patterns and differences (Johnston, 2009). The comparative approach enabled the researcher to explore variations in speaking anxiety across four distinct academic stages, namely first, third, fifth, and seventh semesters, providing a comprehensive understanding of how speaking anxiety develops throughout the students'

academic journey. The population of this study consisted of all active students in the English Study Program at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja during the academic year 2023/2023. The sample consisted of 61 participants who were selected through purposive sampling to ensure proportional representation from each semester while also considering practical constraints such as time and accessibility. Specifically, the sample included 15 students from the first semester, 8 students from the third semester, 15 students from the fifth semester, and 23 students from the seventh semester. The purposive sampling technique was appropriate for this research because it focused on participants who met the inclusion criteria, such as being actively enrolled and having sufficient exposure to English language learning, particularly in speaking activities.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing 18 items that measured various aspects of speaking anxiety. The questionnaire was designed to assess physiological symptoms such as trembling, sweating, and increased heart rate, cognitive factors such as fear of negative evaluation and difficulty recalling vocabulary, as well as behavioral indicators such as avoidance of speaking activities and reluctance to participate in class discussions (Sugiyati et al, 2021). Each item was rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from one for strongly disagree to five for strongly agree, allowing a more detailed assessment of the intensity of anxiety symptoms. The questionnaire was adapted from established and validated instruments used in previous studies on foreign language anxiety, particularly those developed by researcher, and was reviewed by two experts in the field of English language education to ensure clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness (Yoskapela et al, 2022). Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of students outside the sample to confirm the reliability of the instrument and to refine the wording of any items that were found to be unclear.

After the data collection process, responses from all participants were compiled and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The total scores for each participant were calculated and categorized into three levels of anxiety, namely low, moderate, and high, based on predetermined score ranges derived from the total possible score. This categorization allowed for a clearer understanding of the distribution of anxiety levels both within each semester group and across the different semester levels (Erdiana et al, 2022). Statistical analysis, a One Way Analysis of Variance or ANOVA was used to determine whether there were significant differences in speaking anxiety between the four semester groups (Hu et al, 2023). ANOVA was considered appropriate for this research because it is designed to compare the means of more than two independent groups. The level of statistical significance was set at 0.05. In the event that the ANOVA results indicated significant differences, post hoc tests such as Tukey's HSD were planned to identify which specific semester groups differed significantly from one another (Daud et al, 2021).

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research, assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous, and given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the questionnaires were distributed, ensuring compliance with ethical standards in educational research. The methodology was designed to ensure validity, reliability, and replicability of the findings. By combining a carefully selected sample, a validated data collection instrument, and rigorous statistical analysis, this research was able to provide a clear and objective picture of how speaking anxiety varies across different stages of academic progression in an English as a Foreign Language learning context (Khairani, 2019; Annisa et al, 2016).

## Results

This section presents the results of the analysis conducted using the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the questionnaire data regarding students' speaking anxiety levels (Öztürk et al, 2014). The results are categorized into three levels of speaking anxiety: Low, Moderate, and High. The following are the findings from the 61 participating students in the English Education Department of UKI Toraja.

### *Low Level of Speaking Anxiety*

The first analysis focused on the low level of speaking anxiety, which indicates minimal fear or apprehension when speaking in front of an audience. The data for the low anxiety level showed significant differences between the groups.

**Table 1. Low Level of Speaking Anxiety Summary**

| Groups       | Count     | Sum         | Average | Variance |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|---------|----------|
| 1st Semester | 6         | 268         | 44.67   | 11.87    |
| 3rd Semester | 6         | 138         | 23.00   | 12.80    |
| 5th Semester | 6         | 277         | 46.17   | 2.97     |
| 7th Semester | 6         | 448         | 74.67   | 42.27    |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>1131</b> |         |          |

This table 1 presents a statistical summary of speaking anxiety at the low anxiety level, based on data collected from students in the English Study Program at UKI Toraja. The data are categorized according to academic semester: 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th. Each group consisted of 6 respondents, making a total of 24 participants analyzed in this table. Based on the data, 7th-semester students recorded the highest average score for low-level speaking anxiety at 74.67, with a total score of 448 and a variance of 42.27. This indicates that a majority of students in their final semester experience lower levels of speaking anxiety. In contrast, 3rd-semester students had the lowest average score at 23.00, with a total score of 138 and a variance of 12.80, suggesting that this group is less frequently categorized under low speaking anxiety compared to others. The average scores for 1st- and 5th-semester students were relatively close, at 44.67 and 46.17 respectively, with variances of 11.87 and 2.97. The lower variance observed in the 5th semester suggests that the distribution of low anxiety levels among these students was more consistent and homogeneous. Overall, the combined total score across all semesters was 1,131 points, and the distribution of scores reflects noticeable variation between semesters. These findings suggest that there are genuine differences in low-level speaking anxiety among students from different academic levels, which were further analyzed using ANOVA to determine their statistical significance.

**Table 2. ANOVA for Low Level**

| Source of Variation | SS             | df        | MS     | F      | P-value  | F-crit |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------|--------|--------|----------|--------|
| Between Groups      | 4624.2         | 3         | 1541.4 | 154.22 | 5.42E-14 | 3.098  |
| Within Groups       | 316.17         | 20        | 15.81  |        |          |        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>4940.37</b> | <b>23</b> |        |        |          |        |

This table 2 presents the results of a One-Way ANOVA analysis conducted to examine whether there are significant differences in low-level speaking anxiety among students from different academic semesters. The test compares four groups based on their semester level (1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters). The analysis shows that the F-value is 154.22, which is substantially higher than the F-critical value of 3.098 at the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that the variation between groups is much greater than the variation within groups. Furthermore,

the p-value is 5.42E-14 (or 0.0000000000000542), which is far below the significance threshold of 0.05. Thus, the result is highly statistically significant, confirming that there are real differences in the levels of low speaking anxiety among students in different semesters. The Between Groups component has a Sum of Squares (SS) of 4624.2 with 3 degrees of freedom (df), resulting in a Mean Square (MS) of 1541.4. In comparison, the Within Groups component shows an SS of 316.17, with 20 degrees of freedom, and an MS of 15.81. The total variation (Total SS) is 4940.37, with a total df of 23. Overall, these results indicate that academic semester has a significant influence on students' low-level speaking anxiety. In other words, low speaking anxiety is not evenly distributed among students, and statistically, the semester in which students are enrolled plays a key role in shaping these differences (Helmold, 2019).

### **Moderate Level of Speaking Anxiety**

The moderate level of speaking anxiety involves some nervousness or tension before or during a speech. A similar statistical process was applied to analyze the moderate level of anxiety.

*Table 3. Moderate Level of Speaking Anxiety Summary*

| Groups       | Count | Sum | Average | Variance |
|--------------|-------|-----|---------|----------|
| 1st Semester | 6     | 148 | 24.67   | 9.00     |
| 3rd Semester | 6     | 162 | 27.00   | 7.50     |
| 5th Semester | 6     | 168 | 28.00   | 6.80     |
| 7th Semester | 6     | 420 | 70.00   | 40.67    |
| <b>Total</b> | 24    | 898 |         |          |

This table 3 presents descriptive statistical data on the moderate level of speaking anxiety experienced by students in the English Study Program at UKI Toraja. The data are divided into four groups based on academic semester: 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters. Each group consists of 6 students, bringing the total number of respondents in this table to 24. According to the summarized results, 7th-semester students recorded the highest average score for moderate speaking anxiety at 70.00, with a total score of 420 and a variance of 40.67. This indicates that most final-semester students continue to experience speaking anxiety at a moderate level, and the high variance suggests a wide range of anxiety experiences within this group. Meanwhile, 1st-, 3rd-, and 5th-semester students reported lower and closely aligned average scores, namely 24.67, 27.00, and 28.00, respectively. These groups also had lower variances of 9.00, 7.50, and 6.80, suggesting that moderate anxiety levels among early- to mid-semester students are more stable and homogeneous compared to those in the final semester. Overall, the combined total score across all groups is 898 points, which reflects an uneven distribution of moderate-level speaking anxiety. These data serve as an initial indication of significant differences in speaking anxiety across academic semesters—differences that were subsequently tested through ANOVA to determine their statistical significance.

*Tabel 4. ANOVA for Moderate Level*

| Source of Variation | SS     | df | MS     | F     | P-value  | F-crit |
|---------------------|--------|----|--------|-------|----------|--------|
| Between Groups      | 2924.3 | 3  | 974.77 | 97.37 | 4.19E-12 | 3.098  |
| Within Groups       | 162.80 | 20 | 8.14   |       |          |        |
| <b>Total</b>        | 3087.1 | 23 |        |       |          |        |

Table 4 presents the results of a One-Way ANOVA analysis conducted to examine whether there are statistically significant differences in the moderate level of speaking anxiety among students in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters of the English Study Program at UKI Toraja. The analysis revealed that the F-value is 97.37, which is substantially higher than the F-critical value of 3.098 at the 0.05 significance level. Additionally, the p-value obtained is 4.19E-12 (or

0.00000000000419), which is far below the 0.05 threshold. These results indicate that the differences in moderate-level speaking anxiety between semester groups are highly statistically significant. In detail, the Between Groups source of variation has a Sum of Squares (SS) of 2924.3 with 3 degrees of freedom (df), resulting in a Mean Square (MS) of 974.77. Meanwhile, the Within Groups variation has an SS of 162.80, with 20 degrees of freedom, and an MS of 8.14. The Total variation accounts for an SS of 3087.1 with 23 degrees of freedom. These findings confirm the earlier descriptive data, which showed that 7th-semester students reported substantially higher moderate anxiety scores than students in other semesters. With the ANOVA results demonstrating strong significance, it can be concluded that academic level significantly influences moderate speaking anxiety, suggesting that factors associated with semester progression may contribute to increased or varied anxiety experiences among students.

### **High Level of Speaking Anxiety**

The high level of speaking anxiety represents intense fear and nervousness that significantly impairs performance. The analysis for high anxiety levels showed similarly significant results.

**Table 5. High Level of Speaking Anxiety Summary**

| Groups       | Count | Sum | Average | Variance |
|--------------|-------|-----|---------|----------|
| 1st Semester | 6     | 42  | 7.00    | 3.50     |
| 3rd Semester | 6     | 0   | 0.00    | 0.00     |
| 5th Semester | 6     | 0   | 0.00    | 0.00     |
| 7th Semester | 6     | 24  | 4.00    | 4.00     |
| <b>Total</b> | 24    | 66  |         |          |

Table 5 provides a summary of descriptive statistics related to the high level of speaking anxiety among students from different academic semesters in the English Study Program at UKI Toraja. The data are divided into four groups based on semester level: 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th. Each group consists of six students, making a total of 24 participants analyzed in this table. The results show that 1st-semester students reported the highest average score for high speaking anxiety, with a mean of 7.00, a total score of 42, and a variance of 3.50. This suggests that beginners in the program are more likely to experience intense levels of anxiety when speaking. Interestingly, 3rd- and 5th-semester students recorded zero scores, indicating that none of the participants in these groups exhibited symptoms severe enough to be classified under high anxiety. This could imply a reduction in speaking anxiety during these middle academic stages, possibly due to growing familiarity with the learning environment and increased exposure to English use.

Meanwhile, 7th-semester students had a moderate presence of high anxiety, with an average of 4.00, a total score of 24, and a variance of 4.00. Although not as high as the 1st semester, the presence of high anxiety in this senior group may point to performance pressure, such as preparing for final presentations or academic evaluations. In total, the combined score across all groups was 66 points, showing that high-level speaking anxiety was not evenly distributed and was concentrated primarily in the early and final semesters. These findings indicate variability in anxiety severity across academic levels, which was further examined through ANOVA to determine statistical significance.

**Tabel 6. ANOVA for High Level**

| Source of Variation | SS      | df | MS      | F      | P-value  | F-crit |
|---------------------|---------|----|---------|--------|----------|--------|
| Between Groups      | 7890.46 | 3  | 2630.15 | 166.38 | 2.62E-14 | 3.098  |
| Within Groups       | 316.17  | 20 | 15.81   |        |          |        |
| <b>Total</b>        | 8206.63 | 23 |         |        |          |        |

Table 6 presents the results of a One-Way ANOVA conducted to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the high level of speaking anxiety among students from different academic semesters in the English Study Program at UKI Toraja. The analysis compares four groups: 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters. The results indicate that the F-value is 166.38, which is significantly higher than the F-critical value of 3.098, based on a 0.05 significance level. Moreover, the p-value is  $2.62E-14$  (or 0.0000000000000262), which is far below the standard significance threshold of 0.05. These findings strongly suggest that there is a highly significant difference in high-level speaking anxiety between students from different semesters.

The Between Groups source of variation has a Sum of Squares (SS) of 7890.46, with 3 degrees of freedom (df), resulting in a Mean Square (MS) of 2630.15. The Within Groups component shows an SS of 316.17, with 20 degrees of freedom, and an MS of 15.81. The total variation (Total SS) is 8206.63, with 23 degrees of freedom overall. In summary, this analysis reveals that academic semester level significantly affects students' high speaking anxiety. The extreme F-value and minimal p-value confirm that the differences observed across semesters are not due to random chance. These results align with earlier descriptive statistics, where high anxiety was concentrated primarily in 1st and 7th semester students, suggesting that anxiety may be particularly elevated during the transition into and out of the program.

## Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the significant levels of speaking anxiety among students enrolled in the English Study Program at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja, focusing on differences across academic semesters. The results revealed clear and statistically significant variations in speaking anxiety levels among students from the first, third, fifth, and seventh semesters. The data were analyzed using the One Way Analysis of Variance or ANOVA, which is a statistical method suitable for comparing the means of more than two independent groups (Istoriana et al, 2023). The findings confirmed that speaking anxiety levels differed significantly not only in general but also when categorized into specific levels of low, moderate, and high anxiety. At the low level of speaking anxiety, the statistical analysis produced a P value of  $5.42E-14$ , which is considerably smaller than the predetermined alpha level of 0.05. This result indicates that the differences observed between the groups are unlikely to have occurred by chance and therefore reflect real differences in anxiety levels. Such a finding suggests that even among students who generally report low levels of speaking anxiety, the degree of anxiety can vary substantially depending on their academic stage. This could be influenced by factors such as the amount of exposure to speaking tasks, familiarity with the academic environment, and the development of coping strategies over time (Ramadhany et al, 2023).

The moderate level of speaking anxiety, the P value obtained was  $4.19E-12$ , which is also smaller than the significance threshold of 0.05. This finding demonstrates that differences in moderate anxiety levels between the semester groups are statistically significant. Students in the earlier semesters may experience moderate anxiety due to limited confidence in language proficiency and less experience in academic speaking tasks, while those in the later semesters may face different sources of moderate anxiety, such as higher expectations from lecturers, the need for more complex presentations, or the pressure of preparing for final academic requirements. The analysis of the high level of speaking anxiety revealed a P value of  $2.62E-14$ , once again smaller than the alpha level of 0.05, confirming significant differences between the groups. This result is particularly important because high levels of anxiety are often associated with strong physiological symptoms, avoidance of speaking opportunities, and potential negative

impacts on academic performance. The differences across semesters may reflect variations in individual resilience, adaptation to academic demands, or changes in the type and frequency of speaking activities encountered in each stage of the program.

Overall, these findings provide strong empirical support for the research hypothesis that speaking anxiety levels vary significantly among students at different stages of their academic journey. The results highlight that speaking anxiety is not a uniform phenomenon but rather one that evolves and changes over time, influenced by a combination of personal, academic, and contextual factors. From a pedagogical perspective, these differences underline the need for targeted instructional strategies and intervention programs that address the specific anxiety profiles of students at different academic stages. By tailoring support to the needs of each group, educators can help reduce anxiety and foster a more positive and effective language learning experience. The results align with the expectation that students' speaking anxiety varies depending on their academic progression. As students advance through their studies, they are expected to gain more confidence in their speaking abilities, which could potentially lower their anxiety. However, the findings also highlight the complexity of speaking anxiety and its persistence across semesters. This suggests that, despite increased experience, certain students continue to experience significant anxiety, which could be attributed to factors beyond academic progression alone, such as individual personality traits, prior experiences with public speaking, or the classroom environment.

Interestingly, the findings of this study somewhat contradict the results of, who found that speaking anxiety levels were influenced by gender (Karatas et al., 2016). In their study, gender was found to be a significant factor in determining anxiety levels, with female students experiencing higher levels of anxiety. However, this study did not include gender as a variable, focusing solely on academic semester groups. The difference in results could be attributed to the scope and focus of the studies. Focused on a broader sample of students, this study specifically looked at the progression of anxiety levels across different academic years in the same cohort. Furthermore, this study did not analyze gender as a potential factor, which may explain the contrasting findings (Damayanti et al, 2020). Additionally, the results of this study emphasize the importance of classroom strategies and teacher approaches in addressing speaking anxiety. Observations conducted during the study indicated that students' anxiety levels could be influenced by the teaching and learning environment, including teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, and teacher-student interactions. As suggested by earlier research, supportive teaching strategies and a positive classroom climate can play a crucial role in reducing anxiety and encouraging active participation among students. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies that suggest a link between the learning environment and the reduction of speaking anxiety.

While this study has provided valuable insights into the differentiation of speaking anxiety levels across various academic semesters, it is essential to recognize that the phenomenon of speaking anxiety is complex and can be influenced by multiple interrelated factors. Beyond the academic stage, individual differences such as personality traits, self-confidence, and resilience may significantly shape a student's anxiety response. Past experiences, including previous successes or failures in oral communication, can also play a critical role in determining how comfortable a student feels when speaking in front of others. Furthermore, the influence of peers, whether in the form of support, competition, or perceived judgment, can either alleviate or exacerbate speaking anxiety. These dimensions highlight that the observed differences in anxiety levels may not be solely attributed to the semester of study but also to a broader network of personal and social variables. Future research could benefit from incorporating these

additional factors into the analysis to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety in English as a Foreign Language contexts. Mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative measurement with qualitative interviews or observations could offer richer insights into the lived experiences of students. Moreover, longitudinal studies tracking individual students over multiple semesters may reveal patterns of change in anxiety levels and shed light on the processes through which anxiety is either mitigated or intensified over time.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study clearly demonstrate that speaking anxiety levels vary significantly among students at different academic stages within the English Education Study Program at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja. This research not only confirms the initial hypothesis of significant differentiation in speaking anxiety but also contributes to the broader academic discourse on the relationship between language learning and emotional factors. By acknowledging the role of academic progression in shaping anxiety levels, the study offers practical implications for educators and curriculum designers. Interventions aimed at reducing speaking anxiety should be tailored to address the distinct needs, challenges, and experiences of students at each stage of their academic journey. Such targeted efforts have the potential to create a more supportive learning environment, foster greater participation in oral communication, and ultimately enhance the overall effectiveness of English language education.

## **Conclusion**

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate differences in speaking anxiety levels among students of the English Study Program at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja across various academic semesters. The results demonstrated statistically significant differences, indicating that speaking anxiety is dynamic and may change as students advance in their studies. While some students appeared to gain confidence over time, others continued to experience high levels of anxiety, highlighting the need for targeted, semester-specific interventions. These findings have important pedagogical implications. Addressing speaking anxiety requires strategies tailored to the unique challenges faced at different academic stages. Educators can incorporate confidence-building activities, supportive classroom environments, and varied instructional approaches to help students reduce anxiety and enhance oral communication skills in English as a Foreign Language contexts.

However, this study has several limitations. The small sample size may restrict the generalizability of the results. Moreover, factors such as gender, personality traits, previous language learning experiences, and teaching methods were not examined. The exclusive reliance on self-reported questionnaire data also poses the possibility of response bias. Future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample, integrate demographic, cognitive, and socio-affective variables, and explore the impact of instructional practices, classroom dynamics, and peer interaction. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to track the development of speaking anxiety over time and its relationship with academic performance and language proficiency. Addressing these areas will contribute to a deeper understanding of speaking anxiety and support the creation of more effective strategies to build students' confidence and communicative competence.

## **Acknowledgment**

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