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# Speaking Anxiety Among Management Students: A Case Study on Causes and Effective Solutions

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#### **Abstract**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to investigate the causes, impact, and possible solutions for speaking anxiety among Management students. Using descriptive and explanatory methods, the research aims to provide a clear understanding of the phenomenon by analyzing numerical data from students experiencing speaking anxiety. The study focuses on Management students learning English as a foreign language, as they are required to develop strong communication skills for both academic and professional success. Data was collected from 36 Management students at Institut Bisnis dan Informatika Kwik Kian Gie in 2023-2024, through structured questionnaires. These questionnaires measured students' anxiety levels, attitudes toward speaking English, and perceived challenges using Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice, and open-ended responses. The findings indicate that fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence in grammar, and fear of negative evaluation are the primary causes of speaking anxiety. The results highlight the importance of creating a supportive learning environment and implementing interactive strategies such as conversation clubs, role-playing, and structured feedback sessions to help students develop confidence. This study provides practical recommendations for reducing speaking anxiety and enhancing students' English-speaking skills, ultimately improving their academic and professional communication abilities.

**Keywords**: anxiety; communication; confidence; speaking

## Cite this paper:

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## INTRODUCTION

Many students studying management need strong communication skills, but speaking in English can be difficult for them. Speaking anxiety is a common problem, especially when they are afraid of making mistakes or being judged by others. This fear can make them nervous, causing them to forget words or speak less confidently. Sometimes, students avoid speaking in



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English because they feel embarrassed or unsure of their grammar and pronunciation. speaking anxiety can be a barrier to learning English, especially for students who are studying it as a foreign language. The fear of making mistakes or receiving negative judgment from others can affect their confidence when speaking. As a result, they may hesitate to participate in discussions, speak in a low voice, or even avoid speaking altogether. This can slow down their progress in developing speaking skills and make it difficult for them in academic or professional situations.

Several factors contribute to speaking anxiety, including lack of practice, limited vocabulary, concerns about grammar and pronunciation, and fear of being judged by peers or instructors. Additionally, cultural differences and students' previous learning experiences can influence their confidence in speaking English. In some cases, traditional classroom environments that emphasize correctness over communication may further increase students' fear of making mistakes. As a result, many students prefer to remain silent rather than risk speaking incorrectly. The impact of speaking anxiety extends beyond the classroom. Based on the research, three main causes of speaking anxiety have been identified: fear of committing grammatical errors, low English proficiency, and fear of receiving negative evaluation. These factors contribute to three key consequences: physical symptoms of anxiety, reluctance to speak English, and reduced self-confidence, particularly among Chinese college students (Zhang & Zhao, 2024).

Speaking anxiety in foreign language learning can be considered a phenomenon, especially in the acquisition and practice of speaking. This phenomenon is common because speaking requires spontaneity, confidence, and direct interaction with listeners, which can create pressure for learners (Kadwa & Alshenqeeti, 2020). Compared to other language skills such as reading or writing, speaking demands rapid processing to select appropriate words, form grammatically correct sentences, and pronounce them accurately. Factors such as fear of grammatical mistakes, limited vocabulary, and social anxiety can further intensify nervousness when speaking (Fenyi et al., 2023). In professional settings, management students are expected to engage in discussions, presentations, and negotiations in English. If lack confidence in speaking, they may struggle to communicate effectively, which can limit their career opportunities (Rifiyanti & Hardianti, 2023b). Therefore, overcoming speaking anxiety is crucial not only for academic success but also for professional development.

Speaking anxiety is a significant challenge for students in management programs, affecting their ability to communicate effectively in academic and professional settings. Many students struggle with fear of making mistakes, low proficiency, and anxiety about negative evaluation, which can lead to hesitation and avoidance of speaking opportunities. This study aims to identify the key causes of speaking anxiety and analyze its impact on students' communication skills and academic performance. Additionally, it explores strategies that can help students overcome their anxiety and build confidence in speaking. To support long-term improvement, the study also provides recommendations for educators to create a more encouraging and interactive learning environment. Furthermore, it examines how speaking anxiety influences students' career readiness, particularly in roles that require strong



communication skills. By addressing these issues, the study seeks to contribute to more effective language learning approaches and better professional preparation for students. Therefore, Speaking anxiety has been widely observed in language learning, particularly in speaking tasks that require real-time processing and interaction. Various linguistic and psychological theories, such as the Affective Filter Hypothesis and Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, provide insights into how emotional factors influence language acquisition and communication performance.

Previous studies have identified key causes of speaking anxiety, including fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and negative evaluation, as well as its consequences, such as reduced participation and hindered academic and professional development (Altun, 2023). It is now widely recognized that emotions such as anxiety, motivation, and confidence significantly influence a learner's ability to acquire and use a foreign language effectively. Speaking anxiety, in particular, has become a key area of investigation, as it directly affects students' willingness to participate in communication and their overall language proficiency (Forum, 2024). Studies have shown that emotional barriers can hinder fluency, limit vocabulary use, and create a negative learning experience. As a result, researchers and educators are increasingly exploring strategies to manage these emotional factors, emphasizing the importance of a supportive and encouraging learning environment to enhance students' speaking skills and confidence (Kiruthiga & Christopher, 2022).

Motivation is closely related to the discussion above about emotional factors in language learning, particularly speaking anxiety. Motivation influences learners' attitudes and behaviors, determining their willingness to engage in speaking activities despite the fear of making mistakes. Highly motivated students are more likely to take risks, participate actively in conversations, and persist in improving their speaking skills, even when facing challenges (Kiruthiga & Christopher, 2024). One example way to expand vocabulary related to speaking anxiety is through animation. Animation enhances engagement and comprehension by visually representing concepts, making abstract ideas such as anxiety, confidence, and communication strategies more tangible and easier to understand (Tielman, 2021). On the other hand, low motivation can intensify speaking anxiety, leading to hesitation, avoidance, and slower progress in language acquisition. Therefore, addressing emotional factors such as anxiety while fostering motivation is essential for creating a positive and effective language learning experience. By synthesizing existing research and theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety and explore effective strategies for overcoming it in educational and professional contexts.

#### **METHOD**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to investigate the causes, impact, and possible solutions for speaking anxiety among management students. Using descriptive and explanatory methods, the research aims to provide a clear understanding of the phenomenon by collecting and analyzing numerical data from students experiencing speaking anxiety. The study focuses on management students learning English as a foreign language, as



they are required to develop strong communication skills for academic and professional success, making them an ideal group for examining speaking anxiety. The primary source of data consists of responses from 36 management students at Institut Bisnis dan Informatika Kwik Kian Gie in 2023–2024, collected through structured questionnaires. These responses help identify key causes of anxiety, it is effects on communication abilities and academic performance, and possible strategies to overcome it.

Data collection was conducted through designed questionnaires to measure students' anxiety levels, attitudes toward speaking in English, and perceived challenges. The questionnaire includes Likert-scale questions to quantify anxiety levels and multiple-choice or open-ended questions to gather additional insights. The questionnaires are distributed electronically or in print to ensure broad participation. The collected data is then analyzed using statistical methods, including descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage) to summarize overall trends, correlation analysis to examine relationships between speaking anxiety and factors such as language proficiency, fear of mistakes, and confidence levels, and, if applicable, inferential analysis to determine the significance of specific variables influencing speaking anxiety. Through this structured approach, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the issue and offer recommendations to improve students' speaking confidence and communication skills.

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Speaking anxiety in English is a common issue among university students, particularly those in non-English-speaking environments. This study investigates the causes of speaking anxiety in English among management students and explores potential solutions to mitigate its effects. The study involved 36 students from the Management program, with a gender distribution of 55.6% male and 44.4% female. Regarding age groups, 55.6% of students were aged 17-19 years, while 44.4% were aged 20-22 years.

#### English Proficiency Level

The results of the English Proficiency Level assessment indicate that out of 36 respondents, 44.4% were classified as Beginner, while 47.2% fell into the Intermediate category. The remaining respondents were identified as Advanced.

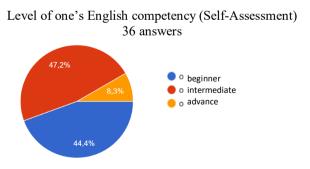


Figure 1. English proficiency level distribution



These findings show that the most have a bacic to intermediate understanding of English. According to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), this suggests many students are at the A2 to B1 level, meaning they can manage everyday communication but may find it difficult to speak fluently or handle complex topics. Only a few students appear to reach the B2 or above level, where speakers are expected to communicate more naturally, argue their opinions, and participate actively in discussions. This highlights the need for targeted speaking activities that focus on fluency, vocabulary use, and confidence-building—skills emphasized in CEFR levels B2 and C1. Integrating CEFR descriptors into classroom goals can help teachers better support students' progress and speaking performance in both academic and professional contexts.

Meanwhile, the results of the question "How often do you speak English outside the classroom?" reveal that 8.3% of respondents never use English, while 36.1% rarely do, and another 36.1% use it occasionally. The remaining respondents reported speaking English frequently.

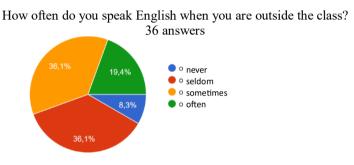


Figure 2. Frequency of english usage outside the classroom

These findings suggest that a significant number of students have limited exposure to English in real-life situations outside the classroom. This could indicate a lack of opportunities or motivation to practice English beyond academic settings. The fact that only a small percentage use English frequently highlights the need for more engaging and immersive activities that encourage students to use English in daily communication, such as conversation clubs, online discussions, or real-world interactions.

It is evident that opportunities for practical language use outside the classroom are scarce. This suggests that while students may learn English in a formal setting, they do not actively apply it in daily interactions. The lack of frequent exposure could hinder their language fluency and confidence. To enhance their speaking skills, students may benefit from structured activities such as conversation groups, language exchange programs, or digital platforms that encourage more consistent English use in everyday communication. The reason why many students do not use English outside the classroom can be explained by the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Theory and the idea of motivation in language learning. According to Darasawang and Reinders, students are more likely to speak English when they feel confident and ready. But if they are afraid of making mistakes or feel nervous, they will avoid speaking (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021). This matches the result of the study, where many students



said they rarely or never speak English outside class. Kiruthiga and Christopher also explain that motivation is very important in language learning. Motivated students are more willing to try, speak more often, and keep improving their English. On the other hand, students with low motivation may avoid speaking and feel more anxious (Kiruthiga & Christopher, 2024). These ideas show that students need more confidence and motivation to use English in daily life, not just in the classroom.

#### Causes of Speaking Anxiety

The responses to the question "I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English" reveal a common phenomenon in language learning: fear of making mistakes as a barrier to developing speaking skills. Many students hesitate to speak English due to anxiety about errors, which can lead to reduced participation, lack of fluency, and slower progress in communication skills. This fear often arises from low confidence, negative past experiences, or a learning environment that prioritizes accuracy over communication.

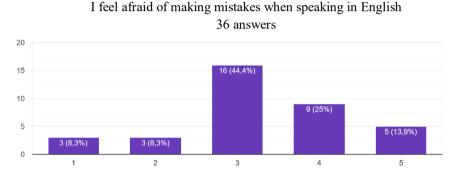


Figure 3. Fear of making mistakes when speaking english

If not addressed, it may cause students to avoid speaking opportunities, reinforcing their fear and limiting their language development. To enhance speaking proficiency, it is essential to create a supportive atmosphere where mistakes are viewed as a natural part of learning (Ngoc & Dung, 2020). Encouraging students to take risks, providing positive feedback, and incorporating interactive speaking activities can help them overcome their fear and build confidence in using English. The next survey of the responses to the statement "I feel anxious when speaking in front of my classmates" on a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) show varying levels of anxiety among the 36 respondents. The most common response was Neutral (3), chosen by 13 students (36.1%), indicating a moderate level of anxiety. A total of 13 students reported low anxiety, with 5 selecting Strongly Disagree (1) and 8 selecting Disagree (2), making up 36.1% of the responses. Meanwhile, 10 students experienced high anxiety, with 4 selecting Agree (4) and 6 selecting Strongly Agree (5), representing 27.8% of the total.



# I feel anxious when speaking in front of my classmates 36 answers

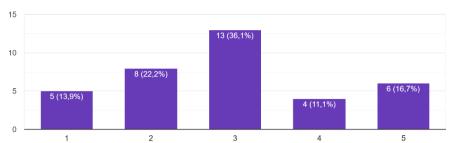


Figure 4. Responses to speaking anxiety in front of classmates

These results suggest that while many students do not experience extreme anxiety, a notable percentage still feel anxious when speaking in front of their peers. This finding highlights the importance of implementing supportive speaking activities to boost students' confidence and reduce anxiety in classroom settings.

The fear of negative judgment happens when students worry about being criticized or making mistakes while speaking. This can make them hesitate, leading to frequent pauses, a shaky voice, or difficulty finding the right words (Strategies, 2024). Some students may try to avoid speaking altogether by staying quiet in class, avoiding presentations, or not volunteering to answer questions. Others may become too self-conscious, focusing too much on their pronunciation or grammar, which makes them nervous and less fluent. If this fear continues, students may lose confidence in their speaking abilities. To help, teachers can create a supportive environment with positive feedback, low pressure, and more practice to build confidence.

The statement "I am afraid of receiving negative evaluation from my lecturer or classmates" was rated by 36 respondents on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The results show that 16 respondents (44.4%) selected Neutral (3), indicating that many students are unsure or do not strongly feel fear of negative evaluation. Additionally, 8 students (22.2%) expressed low concern, with 3 choosing Strongly Disagree (1) and 5 choosing Disagree (2). However, 12 respondents (33.3%) showed some level of concern, with 9 selecting Agree (4) and 3 selecting Strongly Agree (5).

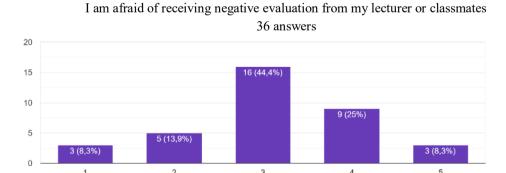


Figure 5. Responses to fear of negative evaluation



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Overall, this is a relatively positive result, as most students do not experience extreme fear of negative evaluation. The fact that only a small percentage of students strongly agree with the statement suggests that fear of evaluation may not be a major cause of speaking anxiety for most of them. However, since a significant portion still feels some level of concern, it is important to create a supportive learning environment where students feel safe to express themselves without fear of harsh criticism. Encouraging constructive feedback and fostering a positive classroom atmosphere can help reduce anxiety and improve students' confidence in speaking.

The statement "I am not confident in the grammar I use" was rated by 36 respondents on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The results indicate that 17 students (47.2%) expressed concern about their grammar, with 14 selecting Agree (4) and 3 selecting Strongly Agree (5). Meanwhile, 12 students (33.3%) chose Neutral (3), suggesting uncertainty or moderate concern. On the other hand, 7 students (19.4%) reported low concern, with 6 selecting Disagree (2) and only 1 selecting Strongly Disagree (1).

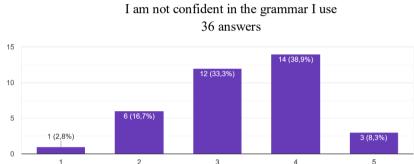


Figure 6. Responses to lack of confidence in grammar

These findings suggest that lack of confidence in grammar is a significant factor contributing to speaking anxiety. Since nearly half of the students feel unsure about their grammar, this may cause hesitation and fear of making mistakes while speaking. Addressing this issue through targeted grammar instruction, speaking practice with a focus on fluency rather than accuracy, and encouraging a non-judgmental learning environment can help students gain confidence and reduce their speaking anxiety. To improve this situation, more targeted grammar support, practical speaking exercises, and a focus on fluency over perfection can help students build confidence (Fitriani, 2022). Encouraging a supportive environment where mistakes are seen as part of learning, rather than something to fear, can also reduce their anxiety and improve their speaking skills over time. Meanwhile, the statement "I feel more comfortable speaking in Indonesian than in English" received responses from 36 participants on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The results show that 18 students (50%) agreed with the statement, with 10 selecting Agree (4) and 8 selecting Strongly Agree (5). Meanwhile, 10 students (27.8%) were Neutral (3), indicating that they feel somewhat comfortable with both languages but may still prefer Indonesian in some situations.



On the other hand, 8 students (22.2%) disagreed (5 selecting Disagree (2) and 3 selecting Strongly Disagree (1)), suggesting that they do not strongly prefer Indonesian over English.

# I feel more comfortable speaking in Indonesian than in English 36 answers

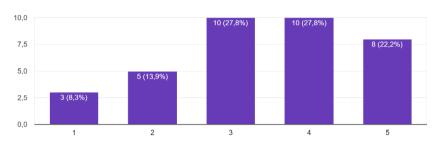
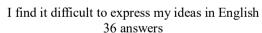


Figure 7. Responses to language comfort in speaking

These findings suggest that half of the students feel more comfortable speaking in Indonesian than in English, which is expected in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. This preference could be due to limited exposure to English in daily communication, fear of making mistakes, or lack of confidence in vocabulary and grammar. The fact that only a small percentage of students strongly disagree indicates that most students still have some level of preference for using Indonesian over English. While this is not necessarily a negative result, it does highlight the need to increase students' confidence and practice in speaking English. Encouraging more interactive and engaging speaking activities, creating an immersive English-speaking environment, and promoting the use of English in real-life contexts can help students become more comfortable and reduce their reliance on Indonesian.

A learner's willingness to speak in a second language depends on how confident they feel, how motivated they are, and how skilled they think they are in using the language. If a student believes they can communicate well, they will be more likely to speak (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021). However, if they lack confidence, feel unmotivated, or think their language skills are weak, they may avoid speaking. Encouraging practice, creating a supportive environment, and focusing on fluency rather than perfection can help learners feel more comfortable and willing to use the language.

The statement "I find it difficult to express my ideas in English" received responses from 36 participants as follows:



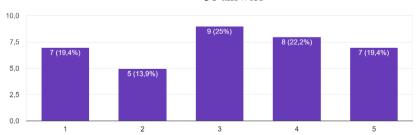


Figure 8. Responses to difficulty in expressing ideas in english



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The responses are quite evenly distributed, showing that while some students feel confident, a significant number still struggle with expressing their ideas in English. The fact that 41.7% of students agree that it is difficult suggests that this is a common challenge that needs attention. This difficulty may stem from limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, fear of making mistakes, or lack of practice. To address this issue, teachers can encourage structured speaking activities, vocabulary-building exercises, and confidence-boosting strategies to help students express their ideas more effectively. Creating a supportive environment where students feel safe to speak without fear of judgment can also help reduce this difficulty over time.

The statement "I feel more comfortable speaking in a small group than in front of the class" was rated by 36 respondents. The results show as follows:

I feel more comfortable speaking in a small group than in front of the class

# 36 answers 20 15 10 1 (2,8%) 3 (8,3%) 8 (22,2%) 8 (22,2%)

Figure 9. Responses to comfort level in small groups vs. whole class

The results show that most students feel more comfortable speaking in small groups than in front of the whole class. 66.7% of students agree or strongly agree that they prefer small-group discussions, while only a few feel equally comfortable in both settings. This suggests that many students experience public speaking anxiety. They may feel nervous about being judged, under pressure to speak perfectly, or uncomfortable speaking in front of many people. In small groups, they feel more relaxed, supported, and able to express themselves without fear. To help students gain confidence, teachers can use more small-group discussions before asking them to speak in front of the class (Listyani & Kristie, 2018). Gradually increasing speaking activities in a supportive way can reduce anxiety and improve their public speaking skills (Rifiyanti & Hardianti, 2023a).

This study reveals that speaking anxiety is a significant issue among Management students, mainly caused by fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence in grammar, and fear of negative evaluation from lecturers and classmates. Many students hesitate to speak in English due to the pressure of using correct grammar and pronunciation, which leads to lower participation and reduced fluency. Additionally, the findings show that students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, with many rarely practicing it in real-life situations. This lack of practice further contributes to their anxiety and difficulty in expressing ideas fluently.



Furthermore, the study highlights that students generally feel more comfortable speaking in small groups rather than in front of the whole class. Public speaking tends to make them nervous, while smaller discussions provide a more relaxed environment for expressing themselves (Gebre, 2024). Another key challenge is limited vocabulary, which prevents students from conveying their thoughts clearly, leading to hesitation and self-doubt. The preference for speaking in Indonesian over English also suggests that students need more opportunities for immersive English communication to build confidence and fluency.

To address these challenges, lecturers should implement a supportive and encouraging learning environment where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process rather than failures. Encouraging more speaking activities such as group discussions, role plays, and debate sessions can help students gradually build their confidence. Additionally, providing positive and constructive feedback can help reduce students' fear of negative evaluation and boost their motivation to improve. To enhance real-world English practice, lecturers can introduce interactive activities, conversation clubs, and language exchange programs, which allow students to use English more naturally outside the classroom.

In conclusion, speaking anxiety among students is a common but manageable issue. With the right teaching strategies, including a focus on fluency over perfection, engaging learning activities, and more opportunities for English practice, students can gradually overcome their fears and develop stronger communication skills. Creating a learning environment that promotes confidence, motivation, and practical language use will significantly help students improve their English-speaking abilities and reduce anxiety over time.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The study highlights that speaking anxiety is a prevalent issue among Management students, primarily caused by fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence in grammar, and fear of negative evaluation. The findings indicate that a significant number of students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, which affects their fluency and confidence in speaking. Many students also prefer speaking in small groups rather than in front of the class, as they feel more comfortable in less pressured environments. Additionally, the results reveal that students with lower proficiency levels experience higher anxiety, emphasizing the need for targeted language support. These findings suggest that improving students' speaking skills requires both structured practice and a positive learning environment that reduces fear and encourages participation.

The implications of this research extend beyond classroom settings, introducing new strategies for language learning that prioritize fluency over accuracy and confidence over correctness. To effectively reduce speaking anxiety, educators should integrate interactive and immersive activities, such as role-playing, debate sessions, and conversation clubs, into their teaching methods. Furthermore, creating a supportive feedback culture where mistakes are treated as learning opportunities can help students develop a growth mindset toward language learning. This study underscores the importance of encouraging real-life language use,



suggesting that universities and language programs should provide students with more opportunities to practice English in natural, communicative settings. By shifting the focus from error avoidance to meaningful communication, students can build the confidence needed to express themselves fluently and effectively in English.

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