

KEY DETERMINANTS OF SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG FORM SIX STUDENTS IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING CLASSES IN TERENGGANU

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Abstract. Language learners often experience anxiety when speaking English as a non-native language, which can severely impact their speaking performance if not addressed promptly. This is especially true for Form Six students who face significant challenges in speaking confidently and achieving high scores on the MUET Speaking paper. This study examines the factors determining speaking anxiety levels among Form Six students in Terengganu when using English in English-speaking classes. A quantitative research design, specifically a cross-sectional survey, was implemented to collect data. The study involved 226 respondents from three different schools in Besut, Terengganu, with data collected via an online questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 29, employing descriptive statistical methods to scrutinize the results comprehensively. The study revealed that the level of speaking anxiety among Form Six students was moderate, primarily attributed to the fear of negative evaluation. This finding underscores the need for targeted strategies to alleviate speaking anxiety effectively. By identifying these anxiety factors, the study aims to provide teachers with insights to address and mitigate speaking anxiety during English-speaking classes, fostering a more supportive and conducive learning environment. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of speaking anxiety among Form Six students and highlights the importance of addressing this issue to enhance their communication skills, foster confidence, and improve overall language learning outcomes.

Keywords: *speaking anxiety, English-speaking classes, form six students, MUET speaking, language learners*

Introduction

Speaking skills are regarded as one of the essential English language abilities (Marlia et al., 2023), yet they are also considered the most challenging to master. This complexity stems from the multifaceted nature of speaking, which requires vocabulary usage, grammar application and accurate pronunciation (Bashori et al., 2022; Tee et al., 2022). The interplay of these elements often creates a significant hurdle for language learners when they strive to use English proficiently. As learners grapple with these various aspects simultaneously, many find themselves experiencing heightened levels of speaking anxiety, which can further impede their progress and willingness to engage in English communication. Speaking anxiety, a specific form of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), has emerged as a challenge among English learners globally. To better understand this phenomenon, it is crucial to consider the broader concept of FLA. Horwitz et al. (1986) further highlighted that FLA is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviour linked to classroom language learning experience, arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. Speaking anxiety (SA), which specifically centres around the fear, nervousness, or discomfort individuals experience when speaking in English as a non-native language, parallels

with the broader definition of FLA. This speaking anxiety affects language learners in various ways, including fear of making mistakes, concerns about pronunciation, and apprehension about being judged by peers or instructors. These characteristics collectively contribute to creating a barrier that hinders effective speaking in class.

In the Malaysian context, the importance of English proficiency is undeniable. The Malaysian Ministry of Education has set a minimum Band 3 score on the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) as a compulsory requirement for students to enrol in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions, aiming to enhance overall English language proficiency among Malaysian students (Zulkflee et al., 2023). Despite ongoing efforts to improve English proficiency, many candidates still struggle to meet the minimum MUET score required for university admission in Malaysia. The challenge is particularly pronounced in the speaking components of the MUET, which research has identified as the most difficult to pass for many candidates. This highlights the gap between educational goals and student performance, especially in speaking skills. The situation becomes even more apparent when examining recent statistical data. Based on the MUET analysis in 2023 given by the Terengganu State Education Department, 42.06% of school candidates from across Malaysia in all three MUET sessions scored Band 1 to Band 2.5 in the MUET Speaking paper. Statistics underscore the importance of finding the root causes of their low proficiency level as it may contribute to anxiety-provoking factors. Additionally, the finding from Sukri et al. (2023) indicated that speaking anxiety was the significant factor impacting students' speaking skills in MUET. Rahmadani and Etfita (2022) research revealed that students experienced anxiety when speaking English, which often led to more passive behaviour during oral communication. Given the consistently unsatisfactory performance in the MUET speaking component among Form Six students, there is a pressing need for comprehensive research to delve deeper into this issue.

Hence, this study aims to accurately assess the level of speaking anxiety among Form Six students and identify the factors that contribute to this problem. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve two main objectives: to identify the overall speaking anxiety level among Form Six students in Terengganu when speaking the English language in English-speaking classes and to examine the factors that contribute to their speaking anxiety in this context. Correspondingly, the research is guided by two key questions: What is the overall speaking anxiety level among Form Six students in Terengganu when speaking the English language in English-speaking classes? Additionally, what are the factors that contribute to the speaking anxiety level among these students in English-speaking classes?

Review of literature

Theoretical framework

This research paper, which explores speaking anxiety in English language classes, draws its theoretical foundation from two key sources: Krashen (1992) for the Affective Filter Hypothesis as well as Horwitz (1986) for the Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety. The first theory developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualises foreign language anxiety as a unique combination of self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours that emerge during the language learning process. This theory introduced the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a tool designed to measure anxiety levels in language learners. The FLCAS aims to evaluate three primary factors

contributing to language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, introduced in 1985, forms the second theoretical pillar of this study. This hypothesis is fundamental in second language acquisition theory, revealing how emotional factors influence the language learning process. At its core, the hypothesis suggests that language acquisition is most effective when the learner's "affective filter" is low. The affective filter works as a mental barrier that filters and obstructs input from reaching the language acquisition device. In the context of this research, the hypothesis suggests that when language learners experience speaking anxiety, their affective filter rises. This elevated filter creates a significant obstacle to language acquisition and usage. Essentially, the higher anxiety levels result in a stronger mental barrier, making it more challenging for learners to process and internalize new language input. This mechanism explains why anxious students often struggle more with language acquisition and production, even when exposed to the same learning environment as their less anxious peers.

Malaysian University English Test (MUET)

The Malaysian Examination Council (MEC) introduced the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) in 1999 to evaluate English language proficiency among learners. This test is mandatory for Malaysian students seeking admission to public universities in the country for tertiary education. MUET evaluates four language skills through separate papers: Listening (800/1), Speaking (800/2), Reading (800/3), and Writing (800/4). The speaking component of MUET is designed to assess candidates' oral communication abilities in English. This part of the test focuses on two key areas: individual presentations and group discussions. During individual presentations, candidates are expected to articulate their ideas clearly and coherently on a given topic, demonstrating their ability to organise thoughts and express them fluently. In group discussions, the emphasis is on interactive communication skills, including the ability to contribute meaningfully to a conversation, respond to others' ideas, and collaborate effectively. These skills are particularly crucial for Form Six students, as they prepare for university education where effective communication in English is often necessary for academic success. The ability to speak English fluently can significantly impact a student's performance in lectures, seminars, presentations, and group projects at the tertiary level. Therefore, mastering speaking skills is not just about passing the MUET, but also about preparing for the linguistic demands of higher education and potentially future careers where English proficiency is valued.

Speaking anxiety

Speaking anxiety in language learning is a complex phenomenon characterized by a profound fear of verbal self-expression, as identified by Taly and Paramasivam (2020). This psychological state manifests through various physiological symptoms, including perspiration, muscle tension, elevated heart rate, trembling hands and dry mouth, as noted by Rajitha and Alamelu (2020). For many second language learners, the act of speaking English is often perceived as an invitation for critique, leading to a preference for silence over active participation in English-speaking classes. This apprehension significantly impacts oral presentation performance, making it a critical factor affecting second language learners' ability to communicate effectively. The factors such as communication apprehension, the fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety affect

speaking anxiety by creating a barrier that inhibits students from fully engaging in English-speaking classes, thereby hindering their language acquisition process and overall fluency development.

Communication apprehension

Communication apprehension factor refers to the fear or anxiety an individual experiences when communicating with others, particularly in a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986). It stems from the recognition that one will have difficulty understanding others and making oneself understood. In language learning contexts, communication apprehension can manifest as a reluctance to engage in conversations, participate in class discussions, or use the target language in real-world situations. Horwitz et al. (1986) noted that individuals with high communication apprehension might experience physical symptoms like increased heart rate, sweating, or even a "mental block" when trying to speak. This apprehension can significantly hinder language acquisition as it reduces the learner's willingness to practice and engage with the language, which is crucial for improvement.

Fear of negative evaluation

This factor encompasses the apprehension about others' evaluations and the expectation that these evaluations will be negative (Horwitz et al., 1986). In language learning and speaking contexts, this fear can be particularly pronounced. Learners may worry about making mistakes, being judged for their accent or lack of fluency, or appear less intelligent or competent due to their language skills. Horwitz et al. (1986) observed that this fear can lead to perfectionism, where learners are reluctant to speak unless they are certain they can do so without errors. It can also cause individuals to be overly self-conscious when speaking, focusing more on how they might be perceived than on the content of their communication. The fear of negative evaluation can be especially challenging in English-speaking classes, where learners may feel they are constantly being judged by their peers and teachers.

Test anxiety

While often associated with written exams, test anxiety in the context of language learning and speaking anxiety refers to the fear experienced in evaluative situations (Horwitz et al., 1986). This includes oral exams, presentations, or any scenario where the learner's language skills are being assessed. Test anxiety arises from the fear of failure and can be particularly intense in language learning because language proficiency is often closely tied to one's self-image and perceived intelligence. In speaking situations, test anxiety can cause learners to "freeze up," forget vocabulary they normally know or struggle with pronunciation and grammar they usually handle well (Horwitz et al., 1986). This anxiety can lead to underperformance, reinforcing the learner's fears and potentially creating a cycle of anxiety and poor performance in speaking tasks.

Recent studies on speaking anxiety

Speaking anxiety is a prevalent issue among English language learners, with recent studies consistently reporting moderate to high levels of anxiety across various

educational contexts and geographical locations. Budayanti et al. (2023) found that in a classroom setting, 85% of students experienced some level of anxiety during speaking activities, with 20% feeling very anxious, 42% feeling anxious, and 23% feeling mildly anxious. Even higher rates were reported by Moafa (2024) among Saudi EFL learners, with 73.43% experiencing varying degrees of anxiety when speaking English, including 14.06% reporting high anxiety levels and 39.06% experiencing moderate anxiety. These findings are further documented by studies in diverse contexts, such as Idrus et al. (2021), who revealed moderate to high anxiety levels among rural secondary school students in Malaysia, and Abadi et al. (2022), who found medium foreign language learning anxiety among refugee children in Malaysian alternative schools. Similarly, Binti Mohamad (2020) reported that the majority of polytechnic students experienced a moderate level of English language anxiety, with a mean score indicating moderately high anxiety levels. While various factors contribute to speaking anxiety, three primary components emerge consistently in the literature: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension refers to the fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others. In the context of English speaking, it displays as a reluctance to engage in speaking activities. Ismail et al. (2022) found that 58% of participants experienced anxiety related to communicative apprehension in foreign language classrooms, while Mari et al. (2024) identified it as one of the three primary sub-anxieties contributing to overall speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Yuliawati and Susilawati (2019) reported similar findings, with 58% of students feeling anxious due to communicative apprehension. The high prevalence of communication apprehension can lead to reluctance to engage in speaking activities, potentially hindering students' language development and classroom participation.

Fear of negative evaluation is consistently reported as one of the most significant factors contributing to speaking anxiety. It refers to the apprehension about others' evaluations and the expectation that these evaluations will be negative. Alfiani et al. (2022) identified fear of negative evaluation as the primary factor influencing freshmen's speaking anxiety in Foreign Language for Specific Purpose (FLSP) classes, with an average rate of 71 and 90% of freshmen often thinking that their classmates were better at speaking English. Budayanti et al. (2023) highlighted this fear as a major cause of students' anxiety in speaking English, revealing that students often felt insecure and feared ridicule or mockery from their peers. Other studies, including Salameh (2022), Binti Mohamad (2020) as well as Yuliawati and Susilawati (2019), consistently rank fear of negative evaluation as a top contributor to speaking anxiety among EFL learners. The pervasive nature of this fear significantly impacts students' confidence and willingness to participate in speaking activities. Test anxiety is the third key factor frequently mentioned in the literature as contributing to speaking anxiety. It refers to the fear of poor performance in evaluative situations. Alfiani et al. (2022) listed test anxiety as the second most important factor after fear of negative evaluation in their study of FLSP freshmen. Ismail et al. (2022) included it as one of the significant factors causing anxiety among learners in their study of foreign language classroom anxiety. Yuliawati and Susilawati (2019) reported that 56% of students experienced test anxiety, while Mari et al. (2024) identified it as one of the three main domains contributing to anxiety in their study of university-level EFL learners. Khreisat (2022) found that test anxiety was a primary source of anxiety among Saudi tertiary students, with female students considering it to be the most significant factor. Test anxiety can be particularly

pronounced in speaking contexts due to the immediate and public nature of oral assessments.

In summary, the research consistently shows that English learners experience moderate to high levels of speaking anxiety across various educational contexts. Communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety emerge as the primary factors contributing to speaking anxiety. It is important to note that these three factors-communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety-are often interconnected and can exacerbate each other. For instance, the fear of negative evaluation may intensify communication apprehension, as students become more reluctant to speak due to concerns about how their peers or teachers might judge their performance. Similarly, test anxiety can amplify both communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation, particularly in situations where speaking skills are being formally assessed.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a fully quantitative approach that involved five phases: population and sampling, instruments, research ethics, data collection and data analysis. The research process is illustrated in *Figure 1*, which outlines the key steps undertaken to conduct the study.



Figure 1. Five phases in the research design.

This study focused on Form Six students from the Besut district in Terengganu who took the MUET exam in June 2023. *Table 1* shows the number of Semester 2 Form Six Students in Besut. Based on data from the Terengganu State Education Department, 9 schools in Besut offer Form Six education, and the total number of Semester 2 Form Six students was 510. Three schools in the district were selected for the study: SMK Nasiruddin, SMK Tengku Mahmud and SMK Maarif. Semester 2 Form Six students were selected for this study due to their recent experience with MUET. This comprehensive exam consists of four components, including a Speaking Paper (800/2). The timing of the study was particularly advantageous as these students have not only completed all sections of the MUET, including the crucial speaking assessment, but have also received their results. This approach ensures that participants have fresh, relevant experience with the speaking component of the test, enabling them to provide valuable insights for the research. Their recent involvement allows for pertinent feedback on the speaking anxiety they encountered in both the actual exam setting and their regular English classes. The research employed a stratified random sampling technique, ensuring each Form Six student in Besut had an equal chance of selection. To determine the appropriate sample size, the researchers utilized the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. While the table did not list the exact population size of 510, applying their formula generated a required sample size of 219 students. This calculation method enhances the study's methodological accuracy and potential for generating reliable results. However, the researcher provided questionnaires to 226 students from three schools: SMK Tengku Mahmud (66), SMK Nasiruddin Shah (116), and SMA Maarif

(44). This larger sample size was chosen to address two needs: it helps cover any missing responses and ensures enough data for the analysis.

Table 1. Number of semester 2 form six students in Besut.

School name	Number of students
SMK Nasiruddin Shah	116
SMK Seri Nering	78
SMK Renek	68
SMK Tengku Mahmud	66
SMK Kuala Besut	54
SMA Maarif	44
SMK Bukit Payong	41
SMK Putra	28
SMKA Nurul Ittifaq	15
Total	510

The study employed a questionnaire designed to address its research questions. This survey instrument was divided into two parts: Section A (Demographic Data) and Section B (Speaking Anxiety). *Table 2* shows the instrument in the questionnaire. To enhance comprehension and accessibility for participants, all questionnaire items were translated into Malay using a back-translation method. Participants accessed and completed the questionnaire through a Google Form link, which was sent exclusively to their Ministry of Education (MOE) email addresses. This approach ensured that only the intended recipients could access and respond to the survey. Based on *Table 2*, Section A of the questionnaire gathered demographic information from respondents, including their school's name, gender and MUET result. All the items in section B were adopted and adapted from the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The instrument consisted of 25 closed-ended questions divided into three categories: communication apprehension (8 items), fear of negative evaluation (7 items), and test anxiety (10 items). Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In the original version of the questionnaire, every item for the three categories was dispersed. However, for this study, the items were reorganized and grouped by category. This restructuring was done to simplify future data analysis for the researcher and to reduce potential confusion. Additionally, the researcher applied the pre-coding method, assigning numerical values to all question items, including both positive and negative statements, to ensure a balanced assessment of perspectives and facilitate systematic data processing.

Table 2. Questionnaire instrument.

Section	Construct	Category	Scale	No. of items	Source
Section A	Demographic	-	Nominal Scale	3	-
Section B	Speaking Anxiety	Communication	Likert Scale	8	(Horwitz et al., 1986)
		Fear of Negative Evaluation	Likert Scale	7	(Horwitz et al., 1986)
		Test Anxiety	Likert Scale	10	(Horwitz et al., 1986)
		Total		25	

The questionnaire, originally derived from various English sources, underwent a back-translation process, as recommended by Brislin (1970). This method was chosen

to maintain the original meanings in the translated version. The translation process involved six language experts: three teachers and three lecturers specializing in English. This approach was implemented to ensure the content validity of the translated instrument, verifying that the Malay version accurately reflected the intended content and preserved its validity across both languages. The questionnaire's reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Cronbach's alpha for speaking anxiety was calculated at 0.896, which exceeds the minimum value of 0.70 (Hair Jr et al., 2019; Sekaran, 2016). This result demonstrates that the variable exhibits strong internal consistency, confirming the reliability of the measurement instrument for speaking anxiety. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researcher adhered to several ethical protocols. First, approval was obtained from the Educational Research Application System (eRAS 2.0), under the Ministry of Education, on November 19, 2023. Following this, the researcher received permission from the Terengganu State Education Department on December 3, 2023. This authorization allowed for the distribution of the questionnaire to schools within the state via Google Forms. With these approvals in place, the researcher contacted MUET teachers from three selected schools in the Besut district: SMK Tengku Mahmud, SMK Nasiruddin Shah, and SMA Maarif. These teachers played a crucial role in facilitating the questionnaire distribution and ensuring it was completed by the target participants through Google Forms. The data collection phase concluded by the end of February, with all respondents having completed the questionnaire within this timeframe.

The study employed mean interpretation to analyze the collected data. To facilitate discussions and explanations of the levels in this research, a guideline for mean scores was established based on previous work by Bin Darusalam and Hussin (2016) and Jamil (2002). This guideline categorizes the scores into three levels: low (1.00 to 2.33), moderate (2.34 to 3.67), and high (3.68 to 5.00). The mean scores for each item are compared to these ranges to determine their corresponding level. *Table 3* in the study serves as a reference guide for this mean score interpretation, helping to classify each item's score into the appropriate category. This approach provides a standardized method for assessing the level of speaking anxiety, allowing for more meaningful interpretation and discussion of the results.

Table 3. *The level of mean score.*

Mean score	Level
1.00 to 2.33	Low
2.34 to 3.67	Moderate
3.68 to 5.00	High

Source: Bin Darusalam and Hussin (2016); Jamil (2002)

Results and Discussion

Participants' overall speaking anxiety level in English-speaking classes

The first research question seeks to identify the overall speaking anxiety level among Form Six students in Terengganu when speaking the English language in English-speaking classes. *Table 4* presents the overall speaking anxiety level of the participants in English-speaking classes. The levels are based on mean interpretation (Bin Darusalam and Hussin, 2016; Jamil, 2002) and divided into three categories: low (1.00 to 2.33), moderate (2.34 to 3.67) and high (3.68 to 5.00). The research findings

presented in *Table 4* reveal that Form Six students in Terengganu generally experience moderate levels of anxiety when speaking English in English-speaking classes. This indicates that respondents who were teenagers perceived themselves as having moderate speaking anxiety, as reported by previous studies from Zulkflee et al. (2023), Abadi et al. (2022), Anzanni and Dewi (2022) as well as Binti Mohamad (2020). Out of 25 items measuring speaking anxiety, 20 were found to be at a moderate level, while only 5 were classified as low level.

Table 4. *The level of speaking anxiety.*

Criteria	Item	Category	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level	
Low	8	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English in my MUET speaking class.	1.92	0.958	Low	
	12	I am afraid that my MUET teacher is ready to correct every language mistake I make during MUET speaking class.	1.98	1.006	Low	
	17	During my MUET speaking class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the MUET subject.	2.18	1.085	Low	
	20	The more I study for my MUET speaking test, the more confused I get.	1.93	1.079	Low	
	25	I often feel like not going to my MUET speaking class.	1.71	0.990	Low	
Moderate	5	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students during my MUET speaking class.	2.40	1.144	Moderate	
	6	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my MUET speaking class.	2.62	1.082	Moderate	
	7	I get nervous when I do not understand every word my MUET teacher says.	2.54	1.166	Moderate	
	9	I do not worry about making mistakes in my MUET speaking class.	2.96	1.248	Moderate	
	10	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	3.54	1.222	Moderate	
	11	I am not ashamed to volunteer to answer in English during my MUET speaking class.	3.38	1.153	Moderate	
	13	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do during my MUET speaking class.	3.54	1.159	Moderate	
	14	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak in English during my MUET speaking class.	2.61	1.181	Moderate	
	15	I get nervous when my MUET teacher asks questions which I have not prepared in advance.	3.04	1.091	Moderate	
	16	I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in my MUET speaking class.	2.64	1.095	Moderate	
	18	I worry about the consequences of failing my MUET speaking class.	3.54	1.251	Moderate	
	19	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in MUET speaking class.	2.99	1.145	Moderate	
	21	I forget things I know when I am nervous in my MUET speaking class.	3.03	1.209	Moderate	
	22	MUET speaking class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.	2.40	1.112	Moderate	
	23	I feel more tense and nervous in my MUET speaking class than in my other classes.	2.52	1.175	Moderate	
	24	Even if I am well prepared for my MUET speaking class, I feel anxious about it.	3.06	1.140	Moderate	
	Overall mean score			2.0	0.609	Moderate

Three statements emerged with the highest scores among the medium-level items, all sharing a mean of 3.54. These statements were: "I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am" (SD=1.222), "I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do during my MUET speaking class" (SD=1.159), and "I worry about the consequences of failing my MUET speaking class" (SD=1.251). These responses clearly illustrate two key factors of speaking anxiety: fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). The first two statements directly relate to the fear of negative evaluation, as students express concern about their English-speaking abilities compared to their peers. This fear stems from the belief that others

might judge their language skills unfavorably, leading to heightened anxiety in speaking situations. The third statement, focusing on the worry about failing the MUET speaking class, clearly indicates test anxiety. This anxiety is particularly evident in situations like the MUET speaking assessment, where the consequences of poor performance can be significant. Speaking anxiety increased as students prepared for the actual MUET speaking test, with a growing fear of failing. This finding parallels with research by Razawi et al. (2019), which indicated that students tend to worry about oral assessments even when they are well prepared. The students' perceptions of their abilities related to their peers and the pressure of formal assessments contribute significantly to their speaking anxiety level in English-speaking classes. The results of this study highlight how speaking anxiety can significantly impede Form Six students' progress in developing their speaking skills. Given this impact, it becomes essential to pinpoint the factors contributing to speaking anxiety among them.

Factors contributing to speaking anxiety levels in English-speaking classes

The second research question deals with the factors that contribute to speaking anxiety levels among Form Six students in Terengganu when speaking the English language in English-speaking classes. The research findings presented in *Table 5* reveal that among Form Six students in Terengganu, fear of negative evaluation is the primary contributor to speaking anxiety, with a mean score of 2.54 (SD=0.777). This is closely followed by test anxiety (M=2.60, SD=0.702) and communication apprehension (M=3.01, SD=0.630). The data suggests that students were more concerned about being judged negatively and anxious about test performance rather than communication challenges. However, the relatively small differences in mean scores indicate that all three factors - fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension - play significant roles in contributing to students' speaking anxiety during English-speaking classes.

Table 5. Speaking anxiety factors based on components.

Components	Mean	SD	Rank
Fear of negative evaluation	3.01	0.630	1
Test anxiety	2.60	0.702	2
Communication Apprehension	2.54	0.777	3

Fear of negative evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation was the dominant factor that affected speaking anxiety among Form Six students in Terengganu when speaking the English language in English-speaking classes. The findings of the study are similar to the research from Badriyah and Novita (2023). *Table 6* shows the mean scores for the fear of negative evaluation factor and its statements. The analysis of the fear of negative evaluation factor reveals a mixed picture of student attitudes in English-speaking classes. The overall mean score for this factor is 3.01, indicating a moderate level of concern among students. In this study, the fear of negative evaluation is displayed most prominently in students' perceptions of their peers' abilities. Two statements, both with a mean score of 3.54, highlight this: "I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am" and "I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do during my MUET speaking class." The findings in this study share the same findings with previous

research from previous study revealed that students were concerned about negative judgments from their peers.

Table 6. *Fear of negative evaluation factor.*

No	Statements	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
9	I do not worry about making mistakes in my MUET speaking class.	1	5	2.96	1.248
10	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	1	5	3.54	1.222
11	I am not ashamed to volunteer to answer in English during my MUET speaking class.	1	5	3.38	1.153
12	I am afraid that my MUET teacher is ready to correct every language mistake I make during MUET speaking class.	1	5	1.98	1.006
13	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do during my MUET speaking class.	1	5	3.54	1.159
14	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak in English during my MUET speaking class.	1	5	2.61	1.181
15	I get nervous when my MUET teacher asks questions which I have not prepared in advance.	1	5	3.04	1.091
Mean total				3.01	0630

However, there are also signs of confidence. Nearly half of the students (“I am not ashamed to volunteer to answer in English during my MUET speaking class”- 44.7%) reported not feeling ashamed to volunteer answers in English during MUET speaking classes. This indicates that despite of speaking anxiety, many students were willing to participate actively. However, unprepared situations contributed to the fear of negative evaluation among Form Six students because they created uncertainty and increased the risk of making mistakes, potentially leading to perceived judgment from peers or the teacher. This is evidenced by the statement "I get nervous when the MUET teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance," which received the second-highest mean score (3.38), with 33.6% of students reporting nervousness in such situations. These findings support with Alfiani et al. (2022) study of Indonesian EFL students, which similarly observed a reluctance to participate in unplanned speaking activities, highlighting that impromptu speaking tasks are a considerable and common source of speaking anxiety across different cultural contexts in English language learning environments. On the positive side, students showed less worry about certain aspects. They indicated less concern about making mistakes in MUET speaking classes (M=2.96) and had a relatively low fear of peer ridicule (M=2.61). Most notably, majority (71.2%) disagreed that they were afraid of their MUET teacher correcting every language mistake (M=1.98). These findings suggest that while students were fear of negative evaluation, they also showed resilience in other areas. They appeared less concerned about teacher correction and were generally willing to participate. This complex picture indicates that students have varying levels of speaking anxiety across different aspects of their speaking performance in English-speaking classes.

The anxiety

The analysis of the test anxiety factor among Form Six students in Terengganu, as shown in *Table 7*, reveals important insights into students' experiences with the oral presentation in English-speaking classes and in the MUET actual speaking test. The overall mean score of 2.60 indicates a moderate level of test anxiety factor specifically related to English-speaking assessment. The highest anxiety was reported for the statement "I worry about the consequences of failing my MUET speaking class" (M=3.54, 55.7% agreement). The finding directly reflects that test anxiety can lead

students to develop unrealistic expectations and misconceptions about language learning, expecting too much from themselves and feeling bad if they do not do it perfectly (Horwitz et al.,1986). Highlighting the pressure students feel due to the significant role MUET plays in their academic and future career prospects. Students were aware that their performance in the speaking component significantly impacted on their chances of achieving a good overall MUET score. Consequently, if they cannot secure a good band in the MUET speaking section, it may diminish their opportunities to pursue their desired course of study.

Table 7. Test anxiety factor.

No	Statements	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
16	I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in my MUET speaking class.	1	5	2.64	1.095
17	During my MUET speaking class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the MUET subject.	1	5	2.18	1.085
18	I worry about the consequences of failing my MUET speaking class.	1	5	3.54	1.251
19	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in MUET speaking class.	1	5	2.99	1.145
20	The more I study for my MUET speaking test, the more confused I get.	1	5	1.93	1.079
21	I forget things I know when I am nervous in my MUET speaking class.	1	5	3.03	1.209
22	MUET speaking class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.	1	5	2.40	1.112
23	I feel more tense and nervous in my MUET speaking class than in my other classes.	1	5	2.52	1.175
24	Even if I am well prepared for my MUET speaking class, I feel anxious about it.	1	5	3.06	1.140
25	I often feel like not going to my MUET speaking class.	1	5	1.71	0.990
Mean total				2.60	0.702

Students also reported test anxiety even when prepared for the MUET speaking class (M=3.06, 35.8% agreement) and forgetting information due to nervousness (M=3.03, 34.1% agreement). These responses illustrate classic symptoms of test anxiety, particularly in the context of oral assessments like the MUET speaking test, where students are given 2 minutes only before presenting their ideas. Physical symptoms of anxiety, such as a pounding heart when called upon in MUET speaking class (M=2.99), further underscore the stress associated with this test. However, fewer students reported more severe symptoms like trembling (M=2.64, 41.6% disagreement), suggesting varying degrees of test anxiety among the population. Interestingly, students showed resilience in certain areas. Most disagreed that the MUET speaking class moved too quickly (M=2.40, 53.6% disagreement) or that more studying led to confusion (M=1.93, 72.2% disagreement). This suggests that while test anxiety was present, many students felt capable of managing the course content, which is crucial for MUET speaking test preparation. The low agreement with statements about wanting to skip class (M=1.71) and getting easily distracted during MUET speaking class (M=2.18) indicates that despite their anxieties, students remained committed to their MUET preparation. This commitment is crucial because the MUET examination plays a big role in the Malaysian Education System. These findings highlight the complex nature of test anxiety in relation to the MUET speaking test and oral presentation in English-speaking classes. While students experienced significant worry about performance and consequences, they also demonstrated resilience and commitment to their preparation. This suggests that interventions to reduce test anxiety for the MUET speaking test should focus on

managing performance pressure and fear of failure while building on students' existing commitment and perceived ability to handle course content.

Communication apprehension

While communication apprehension ranked as the least influential factor in speaking anxiety among Form Six students in English-speaking classes, this finding contrasts with Abadi et al. (2022), which identified it as the most impactful factor in speaking anxiety. *Table 8* shows the results that indicate a moderate level of communication apprehension among the students, with an overall mean of 2.54 on a 5-point scale. The highest mean score of 2.91 is associated with the statement "I get upset when I do not understand what my MUET teacher is telling me to fix when I am talking." This suggests that students felt particularly anxious when receiving feedback or corrections during speaking activities, possibly due to fear of making mistakes or misunderstanding instructions. The second-highest mean score of 2.86 corresponds to the statement "I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in my MUET speaking class," indicating that impromptu speaking tasks were a significant source of speaking anxiety for these students. Additionally, the results support Krashen (1992) Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggests that anxiety over teacher feedback and impromptu speaking may raise students' affective filters, potentially hindering their language acquisition in English-speaking classes. Secondly, while all statements show some degree of speaking anxiety, the lowest mean score of 1.92 must be associated with the statement "I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English in my MUET speaking class." This suggests that grammar rules and language structures were not the primary source of speaking anxiety for these students. The statements like "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my MUET speaking class" (mean 2.46) and "I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students during my MUET speaking class" (mean 2.40) highlight that students' lack of confidence and self-consciousness when speaking in English-speaking classes. These are the classic signs of this type of anxiety, showing how Form Six students can feel uncomfortable or nervous when speaking. In addition, these anxious feelings described in the statements can raise students' affective filters. According to Krashen (1992), when the affective filter is high due to anxiety or self-consciousness, it can block comprehensible input, making it harder for students to acquire and use the language effectively in speaking situations. This anxiety may prevent Form Six students from fully engaging in speaking activities, potentially hindering their language acquisition process.

Table 8. Communication apprehension factor.

No	Statements	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my MUET speaking class.	1	5	2.46	0.980
2	It frightens me when I cannot understand what my MUET teacher is saying in English.	1	5	2.65	1.135
3	I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in my MUET speaking class.	1	5	2.86	1.201
4	I get upset when I do not understand what my MUET teacher is telling me to fix when I am talking.	1	5	2.91	1.327
5	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students during my MUET speaking class.	1	5	2.40	1.144
6	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my MUET speaking class.	1	5	2.62	1.082
7	I get nervous when I do not understand every word my MUET teacher says.	1	5	2.54	1.166
8	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English in	1	5	1.92	0.958

my MUET speaking class.		
Mean total	2.54	0.777

The moderate level of communication apprehension suggests that while speaking anxiety was present, it was not overwhelmingly high for most students. Interestingly, comprehension-related anxieties are also evident, as shown by statements like "It frightens me when I cannot understand what my MUET teacher is saying in English" (mean 2.65) and "I get nervous when I do not understand every word my MUET teacher says" (mean 2.54). This highlights that speaking anxiety is not just about producing speech, but also about understanding and processing English in real time during class interactions.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the overall speaking anxiety level and its contributing factors among Form Six students in Terengganu during English-speaking classes. The results revealed that respondents experience moderate levels of speaking anxiety, with fear of negative evaluation emerging as the primary contributing factor. This suggests that students are particularly concerned about how their English-speaking performance is perceived and judged by others, which could include peers, teachers, or examiners. Test anxiety ranked as the second most significant factor, indicating that informal assessment in English-speaking classes and formal assessment situations in English-speaking also contribute substantially to students' speaking anxiety levels. Interestingly, communication apprehension was found to be the least impactful factor, which supported the finding that grammar rules and language structures were not the main source of anxiety. The study, however, had several limitations. Particularly, the sample was drawn exclusively from the Besut district in Terengganu, comprising 226 students. Since the study employed descriptive analysis, the findings are not intended for generalization but rather to provide insights into the specific context studied. To broaden the applicability of future research, participants from multiple districts and states could be included, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety among diverse populations. Additionally, the current study did not account for participants' backgrounds or academic achievements, which could potentially influence speaking anxiety levels. Future investigations would benefit from examining the relationship between these factors and speaking anxiety, offering a more holistic view of the phenomenon.

The findings from this research offer valuable insights for language teachers, illuminating the key factors contributing to speaking anxiety among Form Six students in Terengganu. Educators can now tailor their interventions more effectively by identifying fear of negative evaluation as the primary concern, followed by test anxiety, by noting the relatively lower impact of communication apprehension. This understanding enables teachers to develop targeted strategies that address students' specific anxieties, such as creating a more supportive and less judgmental classroom environment, providing ample practice for test-like situations, and focusing less on grammatical perfection in favour of building overall communication confidence. For MUET speaking components, where individual performance is crucial, teachers can now design activities that gradually expose students to evaluation scenarios and help them build resilience. By implementing these approaches, educators can significantly enhance students' comfort levels, potentially leading to improved performance in

MUET speaking assessments and fostering a more positive attitude towards English language communication in general.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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