

Southern Thai High School Students' Anxiety in Speaking Performance

Atmo Kusumo^{1*}; Yoga Prihatin²; Nur Aflahatun³
English Department, Faculty of Teaching Training and Education,
Universitas Pancasakti Tegal
*Corresponding author: atmokusumo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study is focused on identifying the level of southern Thai high school students' anxiety in speaking performance, describing their attitudes towards oral communication during classroom and evaluation of their proficiency in speaking English, and investigating their reasons for anxiety in a foreign language. The participants of the research were 25 fourth-grade high school students at Koh Lanta Yai, Krabi, Thailand. The present study employed a case study qualitative research design. A questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale were obtained to investigate average levels of anxiety through three dimensions. Whereas, open-ended questions were obtained to collate students' oral communication attitudes, evaluation of their proficiency in speaking English, and reasons for anxiety in communicating orally. The quantitative analysis indicated that English speaking anxiety exists among southern Thai high school students generally at a moderate level. Qualitatively, students revealed negative attitudes towards communicating orally during the classroom, while half of the interviewed participants reported a negative evaluation of their proficiency in speaking English. Finally, the lack of students' self-confidence was found to be their major reason for anxiety in speaking.

Keywords: *Anxiety in a foreign language, oral communication performance, high school students in Thailand.*

INTRODUCTION

Even though English is said to be difficult to learn and to use, it keeps attracting people to learn it. In the case of learning English, EFL students are required to master four basic skills of language; they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As one of the variables that have been found affecting foreign language acquisition and performance, foreign language anxiety considers as one of the indicators of success in foreign language learning (Chinpakdee, 2015). Based on its possible effects in indicating success in foreign language learning, the relationship between foreign language proficiency and foreign language anxiety has been globally studied. English is considered a foreign language and used for academic, career, and traveling purposes in Thailand (Khamkhien, 2010). Their foreign language skills make them feel embarrassed as well as become afraid when they are seen as being less competent than others. Foreign language anxiety is created by

several main reasons such as fear of failing class, the unpreparedness of teacher's questions, and fear of forgetting vocabulary and structure (Pornthanomwong et al., 2019). Nevertheless, language learners' level of anxiety is affected by different cultural as well as educational backgrounds.

Moreover, English as a communication language of business, education, science, and technology plays an important role in the global market. As English language teachers, it is a need to create a friendly and relaxing classroom atmosphere, encouraging students' involvement in pair and group work activities and providing appropriate and useful activities to enhance their students' performance as well as minimize foreign language anxiety (Pornthanomwong et al., 2019). To effectively help both learners and teachers cope with foreign language anxiety in learning, it is essential to identify learners' anxiety as it helps reduce students' foreign language anxiety.

This study focused on students' foreign language anxiety in speaking performance to make Thai EFL high school students especially at Koh Lanta Yai, Southern Thailand aware of the factors that might hinder their English-speaking process so that they could find suitable ways to overcome their anxiety problems. As English will be used for higher academic purposes when these students leave school and enter university, it is important to ensure that they can perform well in English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As one of the variables that affects foreign language acquisition and performance, anxiety has been defined as a definite complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors associated with classroom acquisition arising from the distinctiveness of the acquisition process (Mukminin et al., 2015). This links to an announcement that anxiety is that the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry related to an arousal of the system (Akkakoson, 2016). The definition of tension is focused on a psychological and state characterized by somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components (Pokrivčáková et al., 2015). Additionally, anxiety is said to self-focused, negative, and anxious cognition during interaction (Khusnia, 2017). Highly anxious students often have relatively negative self-concepts, underestimating the standard of their speaking ability when put next to others. While some may argue that a dose of hysteria is critical to forming a learning "charge", for several student's nervousness distracts from

progressing to and remembering new language, and can thus affect the practice required for language to be assimilated. As stated in Ala et al. (2013), foreign language anxiety is classed into two concepts that supported its effect; beneficial anxiety and debilitating anxiety.

Beneficial anxiety also called facilitating anxiety refers to as helpful anxiety. In line with Mulyono (2019), foreign language anxiety plays a big role in motivating students to be told more from their lack of foreign language production. Whereas, debilitating anxiety is stated as harmful anxiety. As reported by Suleimenova (2015), debilitating anxiety can hinder learners from speaking, causing them to face 'mental block', stay quiet and feel worse than others.

Besides, foreign language performance anxieties are conceptualized into three different components (Pornthanomwong et al., 2019):

a. Communication apprehension

Communication apprehension is defined as a students' feeling of shy, nervous, and unable to express thoughts when conversing during a distant language (Chinpakdee, 2015). When required to talk in an exceedingly very foreign language, learners are looked as if it would have an unwillingness to be suffering from communication apprehension. Conforming to Sutarsyah (2017), language learners with communication apprehension have difficulty not only in speaking but also in taking note to understand messages from others.

b. Test anxiety

Male (2018) mentioned that test anxiety is about the fear of exams, quizzes, and other assignments acquainted with evaluating students' performance. As reported by Kralova & Petrova (2017) test anxiety may be caused by the high demands that learners placed on themselves to be perfect masters of the foreign language.

c. Fear of negative evaluation

As stated in Salehi & Marefat (2014), fear of negative evaluation arises from a learner must make a positive social impression on others. Fear of negative evaluation cause learners to feel inadequate of themselves and sometimes intimidated by other people's evaluation. Mentioned by Ala et al. (2013), fear of negative evaluation occurs in cases where students are unsure of what they're saying.

Foreign language anxiety may potentially stem from various contributing factors.

Therefore, the contributing factors of students' anxiety are categorized into several major problems, some which are: First and foremost, the factors are categorized as academic evaluations. As reported by Chinpakdee (2015), academic evaluations consult with the participants' worries about scoring but expected which may be influenced by the concept of their inability to use English to perform the required tasks effectively.

The second main factor related to foreign language performance anxiety is unpreparedness. It refers to students' feelings of panic after they need to speak without preparation within the form (Batiha et al., 2016). Students show a high level of tension when speaking in class because they don't seem to be yet fluent within the target language.

Thirdly, the factors are categorized as fear of being publicly and shy. It refers to a way apprehensive about participating or getting involved in any speaking activity; students would get confused and stressed whether or not they were acquainted with the topic (Batiha et al., 2016). In other words, they trembled in anticipation of being called upon within the oral class. In line with Sjaifullah (2019), fear of being publicly and shyness explained as a good factor that may construct imaginary barriers that inhibit foreign or second language acquisition.

The final main factor related to foreign language performance anxiety is general speaking class anxiety. It's defined as a students' feeling of unsure or unrelaxed to attending foreign Language oral class (Batiha et al., 2016). Therefore, students barely remember the materials they have learned as well as did not know what to do during the speaking class.

Additionally, anxiety is found to be associated with another affective factor-like attitude (Chinpakdee, 2015). Attitude is formed. Formation of attitude is experiential which suggests that attitudes that folks perform come from what they experience whether it's positive or negative (Okyere, 2019). Therefore, certain attitudes are performed by learners after they perceive speaking anxiety. These all variables are associated with and influence one another which determines the success and failure in language acquisition.

METHOD

The present study employed the qualitative research method as the approach of the research to describe high school students' anxiety in speaking performance in Koh Lanta Yai, Southern Thailand. While case study research was utilized as the design of the

research and the data were transcribed to the descriptive explanation.

The subject of this study is the 4th-grade high school students of Koh Lanta Yai, Southern Thailand academic year 2019/2020. The researchers used two classes with one or more of the same characteristics namely 4/1 and 4/2 which consisted of 25 students of each class. The first class (4/2) was used as a non-class sample for construct validity and reliability of the questionnaires while the second class (4/1) was used to gather the data. And those 25 students were being the focus of this study.

To obtain the data regarding participants' foreign language anxiety – a questionnaire was employed as a research instrument. Designed as a student response scale survey, the questionnaire was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by a group of pioneer researchers in the field (Akkakoson, 2016 and Pokrivčáková et al., 2015). Widely adopted and adapted by several later researchers, the questionnaire from the FLCAS is a 33-item Likert-type scale questionnaire ranging from Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly disagree (1) with regards to the three components of anxiety namely communicative apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Following the first instrument, to obtain qualitative data the researchers conducted three open-ended questions transcribed from Students Interview Form (SIF) which were adapted from (Akkakoson, 2016). Therefore, open-ended questions were considered as a suitable method to get information that is not seized by a questionnaire. Designed as a written response form, the open-ended questions were used to gather students' opinions on English-speaking anxiety supported their self-ratings of English-speaking ability.

For construct validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a 33-item Likert-type scale questionnaire was distributed to the non-class sample before collecting the data. And then, the results were calculated according to the Pearson Product Moment Correlations formula by the SPSS program. The questionnaire items that significantly correlate with the total score indicate that the items are valid. The instrument is valid if the significance value is smaller than 0.05 and if the value of proxy is greater than r table product moment.

Furthermore, the results were also calculated according to Cronbach's Alpha formula by the SPSS program (Salehi & Marefat, 2014). The questionnaire items are considered reliable if the value of Cronbach's Alpha is greater than 0.600. The open-ended questions adapted from Students Interview Form (SIF) (Akkakoson, 2016) are believed

as a valid and reliable open-ended question as it represents three related performance anxieties, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was analyzed to investigate students' anxiety when speaking English as a foreign language in the classroom. The findings of the study obtained from the questionnaire were calculated in the quantitative method using Statistical Packages in Social Sciences (SPSS). The questionnaire is a 21-item Likert-type response scale survey based on the three categories of anxiety in foreign language presented in table 4.1. Whereas, table 4.2 shows every statement was tested on a five-point Likert Scale.

Table 1 Category of Anxiety

	Number of Statements
Communication Apprehension	1 to 7
Test Anxiety	8 to 14
Fear of Negative Evaluation	15 to 21

Table 2 Point Likert Scale

Range	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Value	5	4	3	2	1

In line with Akkakoson (2016), to indicate the level of anxiety in the oral communication class of the respondents, the mean scores were calculated using descriptive statistics. Furthermore, the mean scores are presented on the dimensions of anxiety in speaking English (i.e. communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation).

Table 3 Level of Speaking-in-Class Anxiety

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication Apprehension (CA)	25	3.16	0.701
Test Anxiety (TA)	25	2.81	0.702
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)	25	3.14	0.513
Average	25	3.03	0.468

In general, the general statistical result shown in table 4.1 suggests that the students during the present study perceive a medium level of English-speaking anxiety regarding the dimension of foreign language speaking anxiety (i.e. communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation). The results demonstrate that the general anxiety in speaking English within the classroom of southern Thai high school students at Koh Lanta Yai, Krabi was at a medium-anxiety level, with a mean score of 3.03. The very best level was found in factor one "Communication Apprehension" ($\bar{\chi} = 3.16$). Also, factor three "Fear of Negative Evaluation" ($\bar{\chi} = 3.14$), and factor two "Test Anxiety" ($\bar{\chi} = 2.81$). It may be said that commonly high school students' in Southern Thai during this study are moderately anxious about speaking a foreign language within the class.

Based on the research results above, it is often seen that the extent of their perceived anxiety is at a medium-anxiety level with a mean score of 3.03. As stated in Akkakoson (2016), the typical mean score obtained falls within the range of 2.61 to 3.40 is indicated as a medium-anxiety level. Besides, a high level of hysteria ($\bar{\chi} = 3.41$ to 5.00), while a coffee level of hysteria ($\bar{\chi} = 1.00$ to 2.60). In agreement with Akkakoson (2016), the fact that the amount of their perceived anxiety was neither high nor low is maybe the outcomes of those students might imagine that having the ability to talk English as a remote language in Thailand could be a necessity-cum-non-necessity. That is, there's some reluctance on their part to get entangled during this language as they have not seen its distinct advantage. This finding corroborates those of Pornthanomwong et al. (2019) and Batiha et al. (2016), but it's different from what Chinpakdee (2015) has found. The half of Thai university students significantly experience a high level of EFL speaking anxiety as they consider their academic levels and background English knowledge.

Following questionnaire data analysis, the open-ended questions data were further analyzed to find out students' attitudes toward speaking in English classrooms and their self-ratings of English-speaking ability. The research findings obtained from the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively. The open-ended questions from the Student Interview Form ask how the 25 high school students in Koh Lanta Yai, Southern Thailand feel about speaking English in class and how they rate their foreign language speaking skills. However, not all of the given forms were answered. Only 12 of the answered forms were used in the final analysis. The following part presents the research findings regarding the students' attitudes towards speaking in English classrooms.

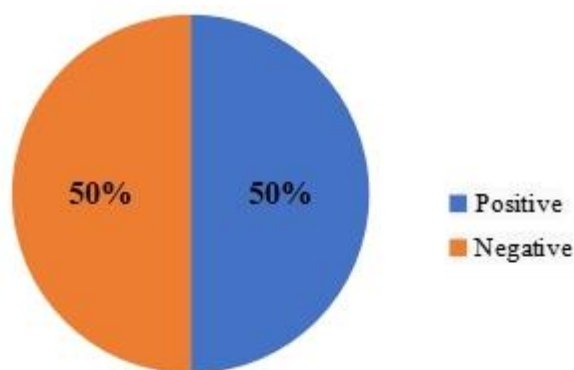


Figure 1 Average Speaking Ratings

Based on the open-ended questions data, the researcher found that 33.33% of the participants who answered the open questions reflected positive attitudes about speaking in the classroom. Among these students, some of them reported that:

- P7: I feel fun when playing an English game.
- P9: I am so happy but I don't get many chances to speak English.

Based on the students' excerpts above, some points of the debate will be indicated. First, what the scholars said may show their interest in foreign language speaking class because they'll play games. These findings revealed that the emergence of the learners' positive opinions is possible because their anxiety may decrease after the teacher provides more fun and joyful teaching-learning activities. Therefore, it's suggested that the utilization of games and other various activities like role-playing, pair work, and tiny group work may reduce students' anxiety (Salehi & Marefat, 2014). By providing more fun and joyful teaching-learning activities, students feel more friendly with acquisition strategies and feel less stressed. Moreover, these students believe the importance of practicing more in their target language and want to be provided more opportunities to perform and express themselves. Conforming to Chinpakdee (2015) that by having more chances to perform and express themselves, their confidence will reinforce and their self-efficacy will increase.

Whereas, 66,67% of the interviewed respondents expressed negative attitudes towards speaking English in the classroom. Some of them stated that:

- P1: I can't make sentences fast.
- P2: I felt confused about pronunciation.
- P6: I feel nervous when speaking English in class as I can't think the right words.

This finding corroborates those of Mulyono (2019) and Asghar et al. (2012), but it's

different from what Akkakoson (2016) has found. As reported by Amiri & Puteh (2018), students' speaking performance is influenced by the judgmental view and unwelcoming interlocutors' attitude. Mentioned by Hammad et al. (2015), foreign language speaking anxiety is stricken by other aspects, which lead the scholars to reluctant to talk, negatively impeding successful communication, like feeling petrified of making mistake, shyness, stress and pressure (Hidayat et al., 2019). Moreover, those with a negative attitude will tend to permit less input into their language acquisition device (Batiha et al., 2016).

Some learners during this study show that they lacked the willingness to talk English within the classroom while they were cognizant that was necessary to use the target language within the conversation class. They realize that they have to boost their skill, especially in spoken language. Al-Roud (2016) suggested that anxiety and unwillingness during the English-speaking process are considered two of the most important obstacles for EFL learners. Additionally, anxiety and unwillingness are caused by the fear of being negatively evaluated when making mistakes, particularly before their friends. The very fact that students reported negative attitudes towards speaking English within the classroom and reflected a negative self-evaluation while they perceived a moderate level of oral English anxiety show that there was no strong correlation between these two variables.

Table 4 *Students' Reported Reasons for Speaking Anxiety*

Reasons for Anxiety	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Self Confidence	3	25.00
Vocabulary Limitation	2	16.75
Pronunciation	2	16.75
Attitude to English	2	16.75
Grammar/ Language Accuracy	2	16.75
Chance to Speak English	1	8.00
Total	12	100

Lack of self-confidence was viewed by 25% of the students as a major reason; limited vocabulary (16.75%), pronunciation (16.75%), negative attitudes towards English (16.75%), and inaccurate use of grammar/language (16.75%) are considered as less frequent factors while having no chance of speaking English in their class (8%) as a minor reason of anxiety.

Based on the results of question 3 within the open-ended questions, the researchers

found that the shortage of self-confidence was the most reason for his or her anxiety in oral English classrooms. The results of this study seem to resonate with those of other empirical studies. A study conducted in a very Thai EFL context in Thailand confirmed that a lack of self-confidence could be a reason for his or her anxiety in oral English (Akkakoson, 2016). It's mentioned that a scarcity of self-confidence or self-perception of poor speaking ability within the target language can potentially contribute to a far-off language speaking anxiety. Moreover, the above-perceived reasons for anxiety are both consistent and contrasting with those of previous researchers. Mukminin et al. (2015) who also studied speaking anxiety of high school students found that anxiety participants in his study reported multiple reasons for anxiety. The key reasons for anxiety included an absence of vocabulary and grammar/language accuracy. Lack of vocabulary and grammar/language accuracy within the target language is additionally identified as a possible reason resulting in West Germanic language speaking anxiety. Moreover, another major reason involved students' attitude in English. Conforming to Batiha et al. (2016), those with a negative attitude will tend to permit less input into their language acquisition device.

CONCLUSION

The present study focused on the exploration of foreign language anxiety in English communication through the perspectives of southern Thai high school students. The results of the study show that the southern Thai high school students as respondents feel moderately anxious. Level of tension by dimensions, namely communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety (TA), was found to be moderate. However, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation became more common performance anxiety than test anxiety. Moreover, a correlation between the 2 affective variables-speaking anxiety and attitude to oral English was revealed during this study; the scholars reflected negative attitudes towards speaking English within the classroom. The results provide evidence that students have negative attitudes and reported a negative self-evaluation although a moderate level of oral English anxiety was found generally. Finally, it was found that the main reason for students' speaking anxiety was an absence of self-confidence followed by limited vocabulary, pronunciation, negative attitudes towards English, and inaccurate use of grammar/

language. Whereas, a scarcity of self-confidence or self-perception was found to be their minor reason for speaking anxiety.

Besides, to accommodate the degree of English-speaking anxiety perceived by southern Thai high school students, teachers should remember students' apprehension after they perform and be sensitive to students' fears and insecurities. These moderately anxious learners may be helped by increasing their motivation and confidence, encouraging speaking classroom. Moreover, the language classroom should be a more relaxing and non-anxiety-provoking environment.

For anxious students, they ought to help themselves by using several strategies. These may include; first, telling your instructor that you simply are anxious. Second, sharing your worries with other students. Third, actively encouraging yourself to require a risk in performing. Next, practicing to enhance speaking. Lastly, preparing words, phrases, and sentences before speaking.

The researchers hope this study will be a reference for the next researchers to conduct the subsequent research or similar problem of speaking through other techniques, methods, or media. Also, the results of this study are predicted to be ready to encourage other researchers to conduct a study coping with the communicative approach methods. It is suggested that the next researchers may conduct a study about speaking anxiety factors and its causes, and also add the answers of the matter in speaking which will make the scholars gain the success in English.

REFERENCES

- Akkakoson, S. (2016). Speaking anxiety in English conversation classrooms among Thai students. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 13(1), 63–82. <https://doi.org/10.32890/mjli2016.13.1.4>
- Al-Roud, A. (2016). Problems of English Speaking Skills that University Students Encounter from Their Perspectives. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 18(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.9734/bjesbs/2016/28404>
- Ala, H., Oda, A., Ali, H., & A Khammat, M. (2013). Investigating the Factors that Cause Language Anxiety in Iraqi EFL Learners. *Journal of Basrah Researches/Humanities*, 38(October), 25–53.
- Amiri, F., & Puteh, M. (2018). Oral Communication Apprehension among International Doctoral Students. 11(2), 164–171. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n2p164>
- Asghar, A., Azarfam, Y., & Baki, R. (2012). Exploring Language Anxiety Regarding

Speaking Skill in Iranian EFL Learners in an Academic Site in Malaysia Exploring Language Anxiety Regarding Speaking Skill in Iranian EFL Learners in an Academic Site in Malaysia. (July). <https://doi.org/10.7575/ijalel.v.1n.2p.153>

Batiha, J. M., Noor, N. M., Kebangsaan, U., & Rosniah Mustaffa, M. (2016). Speaking Anxiety among English as a Foreign Language Learner in Jordan: Quantitative Research. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 4(10), 63–82. Retrieved from www.ijern.com

Chinpakdee, M. (2015). Thai EFL University Students' Perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety. *Silpakorn University Journal of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts*, 15(3), 61–90.

Hammad, E. A., Mahmoud, E., & Ghali, A. (2015). Speaking Anxiety Level of Gaza EFL Pre-service Teachers : Reasons and Sources Speaking Anxiety Level of Gaza EFL Pre-service Teachers : Reasons and Sources. (December). <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v5n3p52>

Hidayat, R. A., Rofiudin, R., & Sulistianingsih, E. (2019). The Effect of Photovoice on Speaking Skills at the Secondary School Level. *Vision: Journal for Language and Foreign Language Learning*, 8(2), 141.

Khamkhien, A. (2010). Teaching Speaking and English Speaking Test. *English Language Teaching*, 3(1), 184. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v3n1p184>

Khusnia, A. N. (2017). Students' Perspectives on Speaking Anxiety in the English Foreign Language Classroom. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 11(1), 83. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v11i1.4301>

Kralova, Z., & Petrova, G. (2017). Causes and consequences of foreign language anxiety. *XLinguae*, 10(3), 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.18355/XL.2017.10.03.09>

Mukminin, A., Masbirorotni, M., Noprival, N., Sutarno, S., Arif, N., & Maimunah, M. (2015). EFL Speaking Anxiety among Senior High School Students and Policy Recommendations. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 9(3), 217. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v9i3.1828>

Mulyono, H. (2019). Factors Contributing to EFL Students ' Speaking Anxiety. 12(1), 13–27.

Okyere, M. (2019). Student attitude towards Mathematics and performance : Does the teacher Student attitude towards Mathematics and performance : Does the teacher attitude matter ? (June).

Pokrivčáková, S., Kráľová, Z., & Sorádová, D. (2015). Foreign language learning anxiety. *Teaching Foreign Languages to Learners with Special Educational Needs*, (December), 91–100. <https://doi.org/10.17846/sen.2015.91-100>

Pornthanomwong, K., Tipyasuprat, N., & Kanokwattanameta, N. (2019). English Speaking Anxiety Among Undergraduate Students at Rangsit University. (April),

1259–1266.

Salehi, M., & Marefat, F. (2014). The effects of foreign language anxiety and test anxiety on foreign language test performance. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(5), 931–940. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.4.5.931-940>

Sjaifullah, A. (2019). An Analysis of EFL Students ' Anxiety Factors in Speaking. 5(3), 43–48.

Suleimenova, Z. (2015). Speaking Anxiety in a Foreign Language Classroom in Kazakhstan ScienceDirect Speaking anxiety in a foreign language classroom in Kazakhstan. (October 2013). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.10.131>

Sutarsyah, C. (2017). An Analysis of Student's Speaking Anxiety and its Effect on Speaking Performance. *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)*, 1(2), 143–152. <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v1i2.14>