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Speaking Anxiety Among English Education Students During English Day Program: A Case Study At Private University In Kendari

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ABSTRACT

This study explored speaking anxiety experienced by English Education students during the implementation of the English Day programme at a private university in Kendari. The study aimed to investigate students' experiences of speaking anxiety, its influence on their willingness and ability to communicate in English, and students' perceptions of the English Day policy. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Six English Education students were selected purposively as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun et al. (2022). The findings revealed that students experienced anxiety through nervousness, fear of making mistakes, low confidence, and hesitation during English communication. Speaking anxiety reduced students' participation and limited their use of English, particularly in formal and evaluative situations. The study also found that limited vocabulary, fear of negative evaluation, and compulsory English-use policies contributed to students' anxiety. Nevertheless, supportive learning environments, peer encouragement, and regular speaking practice were perceived as helpful strategies for reducing anxiety and improving speaking confidence. The study concludes that English Day programmes should provide supportive and less judgmental environments to promote students' confidence and communicative participation effectively.

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1. Introduction

Speaking anxiety has been globally recognized as a major affective factor hindering oral communication among EFL learners worldwide (Wirentake, 2025). Numerous studies report that university students experience apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and lack of confidence when required to speak English, particularly in institutional contexts where English use is compulsory (Virgonita, 2023). At the global level, research has consistently shown that high levels of speaking anxiety lead students to avoid oral participation, reduce their willingness to communicate, and negatively affect their overall speaking performance in EFL classrooms (Kayhan, 2025).

In the Indonesian EFL context, English is taught and learned as a foreign language with limited opportunities for authentic communication outside the classroom (Fauzi & Asi, 2023). Many Indonesian EFL students struggle with speaking English due to psychological barriers such as nervousness, lack of confidence, and fear of negative evaluation, which negatively affect their willingness to participate in oral activities (Nuralika et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2023). Studies in Indonesian universities also indicate that trait anxiety and communication

apprehension are dominant factors causing speaking anxiety among students, reflecting the challenges of using English in formal academic contexts (Lestari at al., 2025). Consequently, although institutional programs such as English Day aim to increase oral practice, the compulsory nature of English use may unintentionally intensify students' speaking anxiety due to social and academic pressure.

At a private university in Kendari, where my research will take place, English Day is implemented as an institutional policy aimed at encouraging students to use English in daily academic. This program particularly "force" all of its stakeholders including leaders, lecturers, staff and students to demonstrate active oral communication skills as part of the internationalization endeavors (Syahriani, 2025). Based on my informal conversation with English Department students, I found out that some of them felt extremely anxious during this English Day. While they agreed that this program could improve their professional preparation as future English teachers but they just could not help feeling it. This is aligned with studies on compulsory English-use policies in Indonesian higher education, of which the results indicate that such programs do not always lead to confident oral participation, as students may experience psychological pressure when English use is institutionally enforced (Pangestu, 2025). In practice, students may avoid using English in public or spontaneous interactions due to feelings of nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and social evaluation anxiety (Diana et al., 2024). These conditions indicate the need for a deeper investigation into students lived experiences of English Day, particularly in relation to speaking anxiety.

Although a growing number of studies have examined speaking anxiety among EFL learners, most existing research has primarily focused on classroom-based contexts and individual psychological factors, such as fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension (Sari et al., 2023 ; Norahmi et al., 2025). Previous studies tend to emphasize the causes and levels of anxiety rather than how students experience speaking anxiety within broader institutional practices (Sulistyowati, 2023). In particular, empirical research investigating speaking anxiety in compulsory English-use programs, such as English Day, remains limited in the Indonesian higher education context (Zakiyah et al., 2025).

At a private university in Kendari, English Day is implemented as a formal institutional policy regulated through a Rector's Circular Letter, which requires students to use English on designated days within the campus environment (Surat Edaran Rektor No. 009/EDR/II.3.AU/B/2025, 2024). This policy obliges students to communicate in English not only during classroom instruction but also in everyday academic interactions outside the classroom, such as speaking with peers, lecturers, and university staff. As a result, English use becomes institutionally enforced rather than voluntary, potentially creating pressure for students who experience difficulty or anxiety when speaking English. However, despite the existence of this official policy, there is still insufficient understanding of how English Education students perceive and cope with speaking anxiety when English is mandated beyond formal classroom settings, as most studies on Indonesian EFL speaking anxiety have predominantly concentrated on in-class learning experiences (Daflizar, 2024).To address this gap, the present study explores the experiences of English Education students at Private University in Kendari in dealing with speaking anxiety during the implementation of English Day.

Therefore, this study aims to explore speaking anxiety experienced by English Education students during the implementation of English Day as an institutional English-use policy at a private university in Kendari. This study focuses on students' experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses when English use is compulsory outside formal classroom settings. In addition, the study seeks to examine how speaking anxiety influences students' willingness and

ability to communicate in English during English Day, as well as how students perceive the English Day policy in relation to their anxiety.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do English Education students experience speaking anxiety during the implementation of English Day?
2. How does speaking anxiety influence students' willingness and ability to communicate in English during English Day?
3. How do English Education students perceive the English Day policy, and what forms of support do they consider helpful in reducing speaking anxiety?

2. Method

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore students' experiences of speaking anxiety during the English Day program. Qualitative research is appropriate because it focuses on understanding meanings, experiences, and interpretations within a specific social context rather than measuring variables numerically (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Speaking anxiety is considered an affective and psychological phenomenon closely related to learners' emotions, perceptions, and personal experiences in language use (Horwitz, at al., 1986). Since language anxiety is subjective and context-dependent, qualitative inquiry allows a deeper understanding of how students experience and interpret anxiety in real educational settings (Macintyre, 2017).

A case study design was selected because this research investigates a single bounded system, namely the English Day program implemented at one private university in Kendari (Yin, 2018). Case studies are suitable for examining phenomena within real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are unclear (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This design also aligns with the exploratory nature of the research questions, which focus on how students experience and perceive speaking (Tisdell at al., 2025).

Participants

The participants of this study are six English Education students from a private university in Kendari who participate in the English Day program. Participants were selected purposively because they could provide rich and relevant information related to speaking anxiety during English Day activities (Creswell & Poth, 2016); Palinkas et al, 2015). The inclusion criteria required participants to (1) be registered English Education students, (2) participate in the English Day program, and (3) experience speaking anxiety when using English during the program. Participants from different academic semesters were included to capture variation in experiences and language confidence development (Tian & Mccafferty, 2022).

Participant recruitment began through informal observation during English Day activities to identify students who appeared hesitant or anxious when speaking English (Tracy, 2024). Potential participants were then contacted privately through WhatsApp to ensure comfort and minimize social pressure (Sanjari et al., 2014). Ethical principles, including voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and the right to withdraw, were maintained throughout the study (Wiles, 2012). Participants' identities were anonymized using pseudonyms or codes to protect confidentiality (Sanjari et al., 2014)

Data Collection Method

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews because interviews allow researchers to explore participants lived experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Speaking anxiety is a subjective phenomenon that cannot be

fully understood through observation alone therefore, participants' verbal accounts were essential (Horwitz et al., 1986) Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide flexibility for follow-up questions while maintaining alignment with the research objectives (Guest at al., 2013).

The interviews were conducted on campus in a familiar environment to encourage open communication. Each interview lasted approximately 10–15 minutes and was audio-recorded using a mobile phone application to ensure the accuracy of participants' responses during data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2016). All recordings were securely stored in a password-protected folder accessible only to the researcher (Orb et al., 2001). Ethical considerations, including informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and participants' right to withdraw, were strictly observed throughout the data collection process (Race & Vidal-Hall, 2019).

Data Analysis

Method The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following (Braun & Clarke, 2012) Thematic analysis was selected because it provides a systematic and flexible approach for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. This study followed six phases of thematic analysis: (1) familiarizing with the data through transcription and repeated reading of interview transcripts, (2) generating initial codes by identifying meaningful segments of data, (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes, (4) reviewing and refining themes to ensure consistency with the dataset, (5) defining and naming themes clearly, and (6) producing the final report by integrating themes with supporting participant quotations and relevant literature (Braun et al., 2022).

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the thematic data analysis, four themes emerges as follow:

Awareness and Perception of English Day

The findings revealed that all participants were familiar with the implementation of English Day in the English Education Department. Although students generally demonstrated awareness of the program, they showed different levels of understanding regarding its rules, implementation, and effectiveness. Students' responses reflected not only their knowledge about the existence of English Day but also their perceptions of how the policy functioned within the academic environment. Based on the interview data, three subthemes emerged under this theme: (1) awareness and sources of information, (2) understanding of rules, and (3) implementation and perceived effectiveness.

Awareness and Sources of Information

The findings revealed that all participants demonstrated awareness of the English Day policy implemented within the department. Most students stated that they had known about English Day since the beginning of their study in the English Education program. Participants also explained that lecturers played an important role in introducing the policy and informing students about its implementation. One participant explained: "Yes, I am aware of English Day because the lecturers previously explained it to us". (P1)

This statement indicates that lecturers became one of the primary sources through which students obtained information regarding English Day. The participant's response reflects that awareness of the program was formed through classroom interaction and direct explanation from lecturers. This also suggests that lecturers had a significant role in socializing institutional programs to students.

Similarly, another participant stated: "I learned about English Day from lecturers as well as from official announcements" (P2). The statement above demonstrates that students not only gained information through lecturers but also through official institutional communication such

as announcements or letters. The participant's response implies that the department attempted to formally introduce and support the implementation of English Day through multiple communication channels. This may have contributed to students' general awareness of the policy.

Another participant also shared: "I became aware of English Day through lecturers, media, and official letters" (P4). This response further highlights that awareness of English Day was shaped through both academic and institutional environments. Besides lecturers, media and official documents also became supporting sources of information for students. The finding suggests that students were repeatedly exposed to the concept of English Day through different forms of communication within the department.

In addition, several participants simply responded with statements such as "Yes, I know about it." (P1), "saya mengetahui English Day" (P2), and "Yes, I know about it." (P6), indicating that the existence of English Day was generally recognized among students in the English Education Department.

Overall, these findings indicate that awareness of English Day was widespread among participants and was mainly shaped through formal institutional communication. Lecturers appeared to play the most influential role in introducing the policy, while media and official announcements supported students' understanding of the program's existence within the department.

Understanding of Rules

Although students demonstrated awareness of English Day, the findings showed that participants had different levels of understanding regarding the rules and implementation of the policy. Some students admitted that they did not fully understand the regulations, while others only had partial knowledge about how English Day should be practiced in daily communication. One participant explained "Regarding the rules, I am not entirely sure. I only know that it is implemented on Mondays" (P1). This statement indicates that the participant only understood English Day in a limited way, particularly regarding the schedule of implementation. The participant appeared uncertain about the broader rules or objectives of the program. This suggests that awareness of the policy did not necessarily mean students clearly understood how English Day should be implemented in practice.

Similarly, another participant stated "I do not fully understand the regulations of English Day, so I usually just follow what my friends do" (P5). The response above demonstrates that some students depended on peers rather than institutional understanding when participating in English Day activities. The participant's statement reflects uncertainty and lack of confidence regarding the policy's implementation. Instead of following clear guidelines, the participant tended to adapt based on what other students were doing.

Other participants also expressed similar responses such as "I do not know the rules" (P1), "I do not really understand the rules" (P3), and "do not know much about it" (P5). These responses indicate that several students lacked a comprehensive understanding of the regulations and expectations related to English Day.

However, not all participants showed limited understanding. One participant explained:

> "As far as I understand, English Day was created to encourage students to become more confident in using English." (P6)

This statement demonstrates a deeper understanding of the purpose behind English Day. Unlike participants who only viewed it as a scheduled activity, this participant understood the program as an effort to improve students' confidence and speaking practice. The participant's response suggests awareness of the educational objective of English Day rather than merely its procedural implementation.

Overall, these findings suggest that students interpreted English Day differently depending on the information and explanations they received. While some students understood the program only at a surface level, others recognized its purpose as a strategy to encourage English communication and speaking confidence. This finding also indicates that clearer explanation and reinforcement of the policy may be needed to ensure students fully understand its goals and implementation.

Speaking Anxiety Experiences

The findings revealed that students experienced various forms of speaking anxiety during the implementation of English Day. Participants described emotional reactions, situations that triggered anxiety, and factors contributing to their nervousness when speaking English. Most students admitted that speaking English often created pressure, especially when they had to communicate in formal situations or in front of other people. Based on the interview data, three subthemes emerged under this theme: (1) emotional responses to speaking English, (2) anxiety-provoking situations, and (3) linguistic and psychological factors.

Emotional Responses to Speaking English

The findings showed that students frequently experienced negative emotional responses when speaking English. Most participants described feelings of nervousness, fear, anxiety, and lack of confidence whenever they were required to communicate using English. These emotional reactions appeared to influence students' comfort and willingness to participate during English Day activities.

One participant explained:

"I feel nervous whenever I have to speak in English." (P1)

This statement indicates that speaking English created emotional pressure for the participant. The feeling of nervousness suggests that the participant did not feel fully comfortable communicating in English. The participant's response also reflects that speaking English was perceived as a difficult activity rather than a natural form of communication. As a result, the participant tended to feel hesitant when using English in academic interactions. Similarly, another participant stated:

"Usually, I feel anxious and nervous when speaking English." (P2)

The statement above demonstrates that anxiety and nervousness were closely connected in students' speaking experiences. The participant not only experienced nervousness but also emotional anxiety before or during communication. This suggests that students often worried about their speaking performance, especially when they felt uncertain about grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary usage. Consequently, speaking English became a stressful experience for some students. Another participant also shared:

"I feel afraid and nervous when I have to speak English." (P3)

This response highlights that fear became one of the dominant emotions experienced by students. The participant's fear may indicate concern about making mistakes or being negatively evaluated by others. In addition, feelings of nervousness could reduce students' confidence and prevent them from speaking more actively in class or during English Day implementation.

Other participants expressed similar responses such as:

"feel nervous and lack confidence." (P5) and "I feel anxious and afraid of making mistakes when speaking English." (P6)

This statement further emphasizes that fear of making mistakes intensified students' anxiety. The participant appeared worried about producing incorrect sentences or inappropriate pronunciation while speaking English. This fear may have caused students to become overly cautious during communication, making it more difficult for them to speak naturally and confidently.

Overall, these findings show that anxiety was a dominant emotional response experienced by students during English communication. Feelings of nervousness, fear, and low confidence frequently emerged when students were required to speak English, particularly in formal academic situations. The findings also suggest that emotional factors strongly influenced students' participation and communication behaviour during English Day activities.

Anxiety-provoking Situations

The findings revealed that students experienced speaking anxiety in specific situations, particularly in formal and evaluative contexts. Several participants explained that their anxiety increased when they had to speak in front of lecturers, classmates, or authority figures. Situations involving public speaking and direct evaluation appeared to create greater pressure for students.

One participant explained:

"I usually feel nervous when lecturers ask me questions in front of the class." (P2)

This statement indicates that direct interaction with lecturers became one of the situations that triggered anxiety. Being asked questions in front of the class may have created pressure because the participant felt observed and evaluated by others. The participant's response suggests that formal classroom interaction increased nervousness and reduced speaking confidence.

Similarly, another participant stated:

"I feel afraid when giving presentations in English." (P3)

The statement above demonstrates that presentations became another major source of anxiety for students. Speaking in front of an audience required students to organize ideas, use English accurately, and maintain confidence at the same time. This combination of academic and social pressure appeared to make presentations particularly stressful for participants.

Another participant also shared:

"Whenever I have to speak in front of the class, I become nervous." (P6)

This response highlights that classroom speaking activities were perceived as challenging situations. The participant's nervousness may have been influenced by fear of making

mistakes, embarrassment, or negative evaluation from peers and lecturers. This suggests that speaking anxiety became stronger in situations where students felt highly exposed to public attention.

In addition, another participant stated:

"When I meet lecturers or the rector, I become even more nervous speaking English." (P4)

This statement indicates that interactions with authority figures also increased students' anxiety. The presence of lecturers or university leaders may have created psychological pressure because students felt the need to speak more accurately and appropriately. Consequently, students became more nervous and less confident during communication.

Overall, these findings suggest that speaking anxiety was highly situational and influenced by perceived pressure within formal academic environments. Situations such as classroom questioning, presentations, and interactions with authority figures became significant triggers of anxiety. The findings also indicate that evaluative situations tended to reduce students' comfort and confidence in speaking English.

Linguistic and Psychological Factors

The findings showed that students identified both linguistic and psychological factors as the main causes of speaking anxiety. Participants explained that limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes contributed to their difficulty in communicating in English. These factors appeared to interact with each other and influenced students' overall speaking performance.

One participant explained:

"Sometimes my vocabulary is limited, so I become confused about what to say." (P1)

This statement indicates that limited vocabulary became a major obstacle for students when speaking English. The participant experienced difficulty expressing ideas because of insufficient vocabulary knowledge. As a result, the participant often felt confused and hesitant during communication. This suggests that language limitations directly contributed to students' anxiety.

Similarly, another participant stated:

"I do not know what to say when speaking English." (P3)

The response above demonstrates that students sometimes struggled to organize and express their thoughts in English. The participant's hesitation suggests a lack of linguistic readiness during communication. This condition may have caused students to become silent or avoid participation because they were unsure about what to say.

In addition to linguistic difficulties, students also described psychological factors affecting their speaking confidence. One participant explained:

"I lack confidence when speaking English." (P2)

This statement reflects that low self-confidence played an important role in shaping students' speaking anxiety. Even when students understood what they wanted to say, they still doubted their ability to communicate effectively in English. This lack of confidence may have reduced students' willingness to participate actively during English Day.

Another participant also stated:

"I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking English." (P4)

The participant's fear of making mistakes indicates concern about negative judgment from lecturers or peers. Students appeared to focus heavily on grammatical accuracy and pronunciation, which increased pressure during communication. Instead of concentrating on delivering meaning, students became overly worried about errors.

One participant summarized this issue clearly by stating:

"I am afraid of making mistakes because my vocabulary is limited." (P6)

This response demonstrates the close relationship between linguistic limitations and psychological anxiety. Limited vocabulary increased students' fear of making mistakes, while fear itself further reduced confidence and communication ability. The participant's statement suggests that speaking anxiety emerged from the interaction between language competence and emotional factors.

Overall, these findings indicate that speaking anxiety was influenced by both linguistic and psychological challenges. Limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes, and lack of confidence collectively affected students' ability to communicate in English. These factors not only reduced students' fluency but also influenced their willingness to participate during English Day activities.

The Impact of Speaking Anxiety on Communication

The findings revealed that speaking anxiety significantly influenced students' willingness and ability to communicate in English during the implementation of English Day. Anxiety affected how students participated in conversations, how often they used English, and how confidently they expressed their ideas. Most participants admitted that nervousness and fear often limited their communication behavior, particularly in situations that required active speaking. Based on the interview data, three subthemes emerged under this theme: (1) reduced participation, (2) limited use of English, and (3) lack of confidence in communication.

Reduced Participation

The findings showed that speaking anxiety reduced students' participation in English communication activities. Several participants explained that they tended to remain passive and only spoke when necessary. Anxiety appeared to make students reluctant to initiate conversations or participate actively during English Day activities.

One participant explained:

"I usually speak only when someone asks me to." (P1)

This statement indicates that the participant preferred to wait for others to start communication rather than initiating interaction independently. The participant's response reflects hesitation and lack of confidence in using English spontaneously. This condition suggests that speaking anxiety reduced the participant's willingness to actively engage in communication.

Similarly, another participant stated:

"I rarely speak in English." (P2)

The statement above demonstrates that anxiety influenced the frequency of students' English use. The participant appeared to avoid speaking English unless it was absolutely necessary. This finding suggests that fear and nervousness may have caused students to minimize their participation in English conversations.

Another participant also shared a similar response:

"I seldom speak." (P3)

This response further highlights how anxiety contributed to passive communication behavior. The participant's limited participation may have been influenced by fear of making mistakes or concern about being judged by others. As a result, students preferred silence over active involvement in communication.

Other participants also admitted that they rarely used English during interaction. One participant stated:

"I rarely speak because I am afraid of making mistakes." (P4)

This statement demonstrates that fear of making mistakes directly affected students' participation. Anxiety not only reduced confidence but also discouraged students from expressing their thoughts openly in English.

However, not all participants completely avoided communication. One participant explained:

"I still try to speak even though I feel worried." (P6)

This response suggests that although anxiety limited participation, some students still attempted to engage in communication. The participant's effort indicates awareness of the importance of practice despite experiencing nervousness and fear. This finding shows that anxiety did not entirely prevent communication but often reduced students' level of participation.

Overall, these findings suggest that speaking anxiety limited students' active participation during English Day activities. Most students became passive communicators and tended to avoid initiating conversations because of fear, nervousness, and lack of confidence. Nevertheless, some students still attempted to participate despite feeling anxious.

Limited Use of English

The findings revealed that students rarely used English outside formal classroom settings. Although English Day encouraged students to communicate in English, participants admitted that English was not consistently practiced in their daily interactions. As a result, the use of English tended to remain limited to academic situations only.

One participant stated:

"English is rarely used." (P3)

This statement indicates that English was not commonly practiced in students' daily communication. The participant's response suggests that opportunities to use English outside the classroom were limited, which may have reduced students' familiarity and comfort with the language.

Similarly, another participant explained:

"Usually, I mix Indonesian and English when communicating." (P4)

The response above demonstrates that students often relied on mixed-language communication rather than fully using English. The participant appeared more comfortable combining Indonesian and English during conversations. This may indicate that students lacked confidence or fluency to maintain full English communication consistently.

Another participant also shared:

"English is used in class, but outside the classroom not many people use it." (P6)

This statement highlights the difference between classroom and non-classroom communication environments. While English was expected during lessons or English Day activities, students rarely encountered situations where English was actively used outside academic contexts. The participant's response suggests that the surrounding environment did not fully support consistent English communication.

The limited use of English outside the classroom may have contributed to students' speaking anxiety. Because students rarely practiced English in daily interactions, they became less accustomed to spontaneous communication. Consequently, students often felt nervous and unprepared when they were required to speak English during formal activities.

Overall, these findings indicate that English use among students was largely restricted to academic settings. Outside the classroom, students tended to communicate in Indonesian or mixed language forms rather than fully using English. The lack of consistent practice opportunities may have affected students' confidence and speaking fluency during English Day implementation.

Lack of Confidence in Communication

The findings showed that students' lack of confidence strongly influenced their communication ability. Many participants admitted that they often hesitated to speak English because they were unsure about their vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammatical accuracy. This lack of confidence reduced both the frequency and quality of students' communication.

One participant explained:

"I do not know what to say." (P3)

This statement indicates that the participant experienced uncertainty when trying to express ideas in English. The participant's hesitation reflects a lack of confidence in organizing thoughts and choosing appropriate vocabulary during communication. As a result, the participant became less active in speaking situations.

Similarly, another participant stated:

"I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking English." (P4)

The response above demonstrates that fear of making mistakes strongly affected students' confidence. The participant appeared worried about producing incorrect grammar or pronunciation, which created additional pressure during communication. This fear often caused students to hesitate before speaking or avoid communication entirely.

Another participant also explained:

"I lack confidence when I have to speak English in front of other people." (P5)

This statement highlights that students' confidence was influenced not only by language ability but also by social situations. Speaking in front of other people appeared to increase students' self-consciousness and anxiety. The participant may have feared negative judgment from peers or lecturers, which reduced confidence in communication.

In addition, lack of confidence seemed to influence students' communication quality. Because students were overly focused on avoiding mistakes, they often became less fluent and less expressive when speaking English. Instead of communicating naturally, students tended to speak cautiously and with hesitation.

Overall, these findings indicate that low confidence significantly affected students' communication behavior during English Day activities. Fear of mistakes, uncertainty in vocabulary usage, and concern about negative evaluation reduced students' willingness and ability to communicate effectively in English. Consequently, anxiety not only influenced how often students communicated but also affected the quality of their spoken interaction.

Coping Strategies and Support Systems

The findings revealed that students used various coping strategies to deal with speaking anxiety during the implementation of English Day. In addition, students emphasized the importance of support systems, including lecturers, peers, and a comfortable learning environment, in helping them reduce anxiety and improve their speaking confidence. Based on the interview data, three subthemes emerged under this theme: (1) motivation to improve speaking skills, (2) social support and learning environment, and (3) practice and improvement strategies.

Motivation to Improve Speaking Skills

The findings showed that students demonstrated strong motivation to improve their English-speaking ability despite experiencing anxiety. Most participants expressed a desire to become more fluent and confident in speaking English. Their responses indicated that they were aware of their limitations and wanted to improve themselves through continuous learning and practice.

One participant stated:

"I want to become fluent in speaking English." (P1)

Similarly, another participant explained:

"I want to keep learning so that I can become more confident in using Englis." (P2)

These statements indicate that students possessed internal motivation to improve their speaking skills even though they often experienced nervousness and fear when communicating in English. Their willingness to continue learning suggests that anxiety did not completely discourage them from participating in English communication.

Another participant also expressed a stronger emotional motivation:

"I want to continue learning because I do not want to keep feeling afraid when speaking English." (P6)

This statement suggests that students not only wanted to improve their language ability but also hoped to overcome the emotional barriers associated with speaking anxiety. The findings indicate that students recognized the importance of English proficiency and were motivated to

reduce their fear through learning and practice. Therefore, motivation became an important factor that encouraged students to continue improving their speaking ability despite experiencing anxiety during English Day activities.

Social Support and Learning Environment

The findings revealed that social support and a positive learning environment played an important role in helping students reduce speaking anxiety. Participants emphasized that encouragement from lecturers and peers made them feel more comfortable and confident when speaking English.

One participant stated:

"Support from lecturers and friends is very helpful." (P5)

This statement indicates that students needed emotional and academic support from people around them in order to feel more confident using English. Supportive lecturers and classmates appeared to reduce students' fear of making mistakes and being judged negatively.

Another participant explained:

"When the atmosphere is relaxed, I usually feel more confident to speak." (P2)

Similarly, another participant shared:

"A safe environment makes me less afraid of making mistakes when speaking." (P3)

These findings suggest that classroom atmosphere strongly influenced students' emotional responses during English communication. A relaxed and supportive environment helped students feel safer to participate in speaking activities.

Another participant also highlighted the importance of peer interaction:

"When the community feels comfortable, it becomes easier to practise speaking." (P4)

This statement indicates that students preferred practicing English in a friendly and non-threatening environment. Positive peer interaction appeared to increase students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

Overall, these findings suggest that social support and a supportive learning environment are essential factors in reducing speaking anxiety. When students feel accepted, supported, and comfortable, they become more confident in expressing themselves during English communication activities.

Practice and Improvement Strategies

The findings showed that students believed regular practice was necessary to improve their speaking ability and reduce anxiety. Participants emphasized the importance of practicing English through communication with friends and participating in enjoyable speaking activities.

One participant stated:

"We need to engage in frequent conversations with friends so that we become more accustomed to speaking English." (P5).

This statement indicates that students viewed frequent interaction and daily practice as effective ways to improve fluency and reduce nervousness. Speaking practice helped students become more familiar with English communication and gradually increased their confidence.

Another participant explained:

"in my opinion, the atmosphere should be made more enjoyable and less pressuring." (P6)

This finding suggests that students preferred learning environments that were less stressful and more encouraging. Excessive pressure appeared to increase students' anxiety, while enjoyable activities helped them participate more actively in speaking practice.

In addition, some participants implied that consistent practice could help them overcome fear and hesitation when speaking English. Students believed that anxiety could gradually decrease if they were given more opportunities to practice without fear of criticism or embarrassment. Overall, these findings indicate that students considered continuous practice, peer interaction, and enjoyable learning situations as important strategies for improving speaking ability and coping with speaking anxiety. Frequent exposure to English communication in a relaxed environment appeared to help students become more confident and willing to use English during English Day activities.

The findings demonstrate that speaking anxiety remains a significant challenge for English Education students during the English Day program. Students experienced nervousness, fear of making mistakes, low confidence, and hesitation when communicating in English. These findings support Foreign Language Anxiety Theory proposed by (Horwitz et al., 1986), which identifies communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety as key dimensions of language anxiety. Students' fear of speaking in front of lecturers and peers reflects these dimensions.

Speaking anxiety also negatively affected students' willingness to communicate. Participants tended to avoid initiating conversations, limit their participation, or remain silent when anxious. These findings support previous studies by (Kayhan, 2025) and (Virgonita, 2023), as well as (Macintyre, 2017) argument that anxiety can reduce communicative confidence and spontaneous language production. Similarly, (Krashen, 1981) Affective Filter Hypothesis explains that anxiety, fear, and low confidence may hinder language acquisition. In this study, these emotional barriers appeared to limit students' participation and encourage them to remain silent or switch to Indonesian.

Furthermore, institutional English-use policies may unintentionally increase students' anxiety. Although English Day aims to encourage communication, participants sometimes perceived it as socially and academically demanding. This finding aligns with MacIntyre (2017) argument concerning anxiety-provoking communication environments and Diana et al (2024), who found that institutional pressure may increase fear of mistakes and social embarrassment. Thus, English Day may provide valuable communication opportunities while also creating psychological pressure for students with limited speaking confidence.

The findings also support Ur (1996) theory of speaking difficulties, particularly inhibition, "nothing to say," low participation, and mother-tongue use. Participants reported nervousness, fear of mistakes, and uncertainty about what to say, consistent with Sari et al. (2023), who identified inhibition as a major factor affecting speaking difficulties. Della et al. further explained that fear of criticism, low confidence, and embarrassment can cause anxiety

and reduce classroom participation. Similarly, participants in the present study avoided communication because they feared negative judgment from lecturers and peers.

Linguistic limitations also contributed to speaking anxiety. Participants reported that limited vocabulary and uncertainty about sentence construction caused hesitation and silence. These findings align with Sari et al. (2023), who identified insufficient vocabulary, sentence-construction difficulties, and pronunciation and intonation differences as barriers to speaking. Aguila & Harjanto (2016) similarly argued that inadequate vocabulary and grammatical knowledge contribute to speaking anxiety and communication breakdowns. These findings indicate that linguistic limitations and psychological confidence are closely interconnected in EFL communication.

Speaking anxiety was also situational, becoming more intense during presentations, classroom questioning, and interactions with lecturers or university authorities. This supports Horwitz et al. (1986), who associated foreign language anxiety with communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation, and Ur (1996), who explained that inhibition may arise from fear of mistakes, criticism, or public attention. Sari et al. (2023) likewise identified inhibition and shyness as major causes of speaking difficulties in formal classroom interactions. Therefore, speaking anxiety reflects not only linguistic limitations but also socially evaluative environments.

Additionally, students rarely used English outside formal academic situations, often returning to Indonesian or mixing languages in everyday communication. This finding supports Fauzi & Asi (2023), who highlighted the limited opportunities for authentic English communication among Indonesian EFL learners. Sari et al. (2023) similarly reported that students often relied on their mother tongue because English pronunciation and communication patterns felt unfamiliar. Limited opportunities for regular English practice may therefore contribute to persistent anxiety and low communicative confidence.

Despite these challenges, participants remained motivated to improve their speaking ability, aiming to become more fluent and confident. This suggests that anxiety does not always discourage learning. Rather, some students viewed it as a challenge that motivated them to practice and participate more actively, supporting MacIntyre (2017) argument that anxiety may coexist with motivation and willingness to communicate.

Supportive learning environments were also important in reducing anxiety. Participants explained that encouragement from lecturers and peers, together with comfortable classroom atmospheres, helped them communicate more confidently. These findings support Krashen (1981) argument that low-anxiety environments facilitate language acquisition by lowering the affective filter. Nijat (2019) similarly emphasized emotional support and positive classroom interaction, while Sari et al. (2023) recommended motivation, supportive feedback, and greater participation opportunities to reduce speaking difficulties and classroom silence. Therefore, English Day may become more effective when implemented in a supportive and nonjudgmental environment.

Overall, the findings support Foreign Language Anxiety Theory and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis while extending existing literature on institutional English-use policies in Indonesian higher education. Students' speaking anxiety was influenced by linguistic limitations, institutional expectations, social evaluation, and limited communicative practice. Accordingly, English Day should not focus solely on compulsory English use but should also prioritize psychological support, encouragement, and anxiety-sensitive practices to strengthen students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

4. Conclusion

This study revealed that English Education students experienced speaking anxiety during the English Day program, characterized by nervousness, fear of making mistakes, low confidence, and hesitation, particularly in formal and evaluative situations. Their anxiety was influenced by limited vocabulary, fear of negative evaluation, and the psychological pressure of compulsory English use, which affected their willingness and participation in communication. Despite these challenges, students remained motivated to improve their speaking ability through regular practice and supportive environments. Therefore, English Day should balance compulsory English use with emotional support, encouragement from lecturers and peers, and a less judgmental atmosphere to strengthen students' confidence and English-speaking ability.

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