

CAUSES OF ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG TAIWANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This survey focuses on the factors leading to students' speaking anxiety in an EFL class in the East Asian educational context. Eighty first-year students from a private university in southern Taiwan are surveyed. All of them are EFL majors. Respondents are asked to answer two questions about the frequency of their fear of speaking in an English class and the causes of that fear. The findings show that over half of the respondents feel speaking anxiety in English classes either all the time or almost all the time. The major causes of student English speaking anxiety belong to three interrelated and intersect groups: psychological, educational, and socio-cultural. With regard to the main psychological cause, the overwhelming majority of first-year students noted they feel reluctant to speak English aloud for fear of not understanding or misunderstanding the teacher's question or task. The second group of speaking anxiety causes is related to the students' current and pre-university English learning experience. In this group, the most frequently mentioned factors are lack of fluency, making errors, poor knowledge of vocabulary, and insufficient oral practice in class. Hence, lack of confidence leads to fear of public failure and/or ridicule. In respect of the third group, including socio-cultural factors, the main cause turns out to be the traditional shyness of the Chinese people and their dislike of speaking in public. The paper concludes with a number of suggestions on how to reduce learners' fear of speaking during English classes.

Abstract text must be in one column and Arial font, 10 point, normal, justified alignment with single-spaced interline spacing.

Keywords: EFL (English as a Foreign Language), English speaking anxiety.