

GEN Z SPEAKING ANXIETY IN EFL CONTEXTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIA AND VIETNAM

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Abstract

This study investigates how Generation Z students experience speaking anxiety, the strategies they employ to overcome it, and ways to build confidence in speaking English. Speaking anxiety is a common challenge among Generation Z learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly where oral communication is emphasized. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 female senior high school students from Indonesia and Vietnam selected through purposive sampling. All participants reported difficulties in oral performance due to speaking anxiety. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to students' experiences and coping strategies. The findings revealed three major forms of speaking anxiety: communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of receiving poor grades. Students employed various coping strategies to manage their anxiety. Indonesian students tended to adopt informal approaches, such as practicing with peers and using digital media, whereas Vietnamese students relied more on structured learning resources, including language-learning applications. Cross-cultural differences were also identified. Indonesian students were more likely to experience anxiety stemming from social pressure, such as fear of embarrassment or being ridiculed, while Vietnamese students were more concerned with linguistic accuracy. By comparing Generation Z learners from Indonesia and Vietnam, this study provides a cross-cultural perspective on speaking anxiety and coping strategies in EFL settings. The findings offer practical implications for EFL teachers in developing culturally responsive approaches to enhance students' speaking confidence and oral communication skills.

Keywords: *gen Z student; Indonesia; learning English; speaking anxiety; Vietnam.*

1. Introduction

Speaking anxiety has become a significant challenge among Generation Z students, particularly in educational contexts that require active oral communication. Growing up in a highly digital environment characterized by text-based and asynchronous interactions, many Generation Z learners feel less comfortable engaging in spontaneous face-to-face communication. Consequently, speaking in academic settings often evokes feelings of

nervousness, insecurity, and fear of making mistakes. Recent studies indicate that a considerable number of Generation Z students experience anxiety during real-time verbal communication, including classroom presentations, discussions, and debates (Lubis & Siregar, 2025). Similarly, Nababan and Lestariningsih (2024) found that many learners avoid oral participation due to concerns about negative evaluation and the possibility of making errors, a phenomenon also highlighted by Sadighi and Dastpak (2017). These findings suggest that speaking anxiety remains a persistent and growing concern among Generation Z learners, including those studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

In EFL contexts, speaking anxiety has long been recognized as one of the major barriers to effective language learning. Previous research consistently demonstrates that anxiety negatively influences students' oral performance, participation, and willingness to communicate. For instance, Rachmawati and Jurianto (2020) reported that highly anxious learners tend to avoid speaking activities and exhibit lower communicative competence. Likewise, Simanungkalit and Tondombala (2024) found that anxiety significantly reduces students' engagement in English classroom interactions. The phenomenon can be explained through Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (Horwitz et al., 1986), which identifies communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation as primary sources of anxiety in foreign language learning. Furthermore, the Willingness to Communicate Theory (MacIntyre et al., 1998) suggests that learners' readiness to communicate is shaped by psychological factors such as confidence and anxiety, as well as contextual and situational conditions. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a useful framework for understanding how emotional and psychological factors influence learners' participation in English-speaking activities.

Despite extensive research on speaking anxiety, several gaps remain. First, most studies have examined EFL learners in general without specifically focusing on Generation Z, whose communication habits have been profoundly influenced by digital technologies. Second, limited attention has been given to the relationship between digital communication practices and speaking anxiety in English-learning contexts. As Generation Z learners increasingly rely on text messaging, social media, and other digital platforms for communication, these practices may shape both their confidence and anxiety when engaging in face-to-face interactions. Third, comparative studies involving Southeast Asian EFL contexts remain scarce. In particular, little research has compared Generation Z learners in Indonesia and Vietnam, despite both countries representing important EFL environments with distinct educational systems and sociocultural characteristics. Consequently, cross-cultural differences in the sources of speaking anxiety and the strategies used to manage it remain insufficiently explored.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating how Generation Z students from Indonesia and Vietnam experience and manage speaking anxiety in English-learning contexts. It also examines how digital communication practices influence their coping strategies and confidence development. Understanding these experiences is important because it can assist educators in creating more supportive and effective speaking environments. Previous studies have shown that learners employ various strategies to manage anxiety, including self-regulation, preparation, and peer support (Nguyen, 2025). However, little is known about how such strategies are shaped by contemporary digital communication behaviors and sociocultural contexts.

This study argues that Generation Z learners' speaking anxiety is influenced not only by linguistic challenges but also by psychological, social, and technological factors. Because

these learners are accustomed to low-risk, text-based communication, they may experience greater discomfort when required to engage in spontaneous oral interaction. Moreover, limited opportunities for authentic speaking practice and concerns about academic performance may further intensify anxiety (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). Therefore, it is important to examine how Generation Z learners navigate these challenges and develop strategies to enhance their speaking confidence.

By exploring the experiences of Generation Z students in Indonesia and Vietnam, this study contributes to the growing literature on speaking anxiety in EFL contexts. Specifically, it extends existing research by integrating perspectives from Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, Willingness to Communicate Theory, and contemporary digital communication practices. The study also provides a cross-cultural perspective on how learners experience and cope with speaking anxiety, offering practical insights for educators seeking to develop culturally responsive approaches to fostering students' confidence and oral communication skills.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: 1. How do Generation Z students experience speaking anxiety in English-learning contexts? And 2. What strategies do Generation Z students use to reduce speaking anxiety and build confidence in speaking English?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speaking Anxiety in EFL Learning

Speaking anxiety is widely recognized as one of the most significant psychological barriers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. It refers to feelings of tension, nervousness, apprehension, and fear experienced by learners when they are required to communicate in a foreign language. The concept is closely associated with Foreign Language Anxiety, which was first systematically conceptualized by Horwitz et al. (1986). According to their framework, foreign language anxiety consists of three primary dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension refers to learners' reluctance or fear of engaging in oral communication, fear of negative evaluation concerns apprehension about being judged by teachers or peers, and test anxiety relates to concerns about academic assessment and performance.

These dimensions collectively influence learners' confidence and participation in language-learning activities. Research has consistently demonstrated that speaking anxiety negatively affects learners' oral performance, communicative competence, and willingness to participate in classroom interactions (Rachmawati & Jurianto, 2020; Dewaele & Li, 2022). (Amaliah et al. 2025) also reported that emotional factors such as nervousness significantly influence students' speaking performance in EFL learning contexts. Learners experiencing high levels of anxiety often avoid speaking opportunities, hesitate to express their ideas, and exhibit lower levels of linguistic fluency. Consequently, speaking anxiety can be viewed not only as a psychological issue but also as an academic challenge that directly influences language-learning outcomes.

3.2 Generation Z and Digital Communication Practices

Generation Z generally refers to individuals born in the late 1990s and early 2010s who have grown up in an environment characterized by extensive exposure to digital technologies. Often described as digital natives, members of this generation rely heavily on smartphones, social media platforms, and online communication tools in their daily lives

(Lubis & Siregar, 2025). As a result, digital communication has become an integral component of their social interactions, educational experiences, and identity formation.

Unlike previous generations, Generation Z learners frequently engage in asynchronous communication through text messaging, social networking platforms, and other digital media. These communication modes allow greater control over message construction and reduce the immediate social pressures associated with face-to-face interaction. While such practices may enhance digital literacy and information-processing skills, they may also limit opportunities for spontaneous oral communication (Lee & Chiu, 2023). Consequently, many Generation Z students demonstrate confidence in online interactions while experiencing discomfort in situations requiring immediate verbal responses. This shift in communication behavior highlights the need to examine how digital communication practices influence learners' speaking confidence and communication anxiety in educational settings.

3.3 Speaking Anxiety and Willingness to Communicate

The relationship between speaking anxiety and learners' willingness to communicate has received considerable attention in second-language acquisition research. According to the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Theory proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998), learners' readiness to engage in communication is influenced by multiple psychological and contextual factors, including self-confidence, motivation, perceived competence, and anxiety. Anxiety is considered one of the most influential variables because it directly affects learners' decisions to participate in communication.

In EFL classrooms, speaking activities such as presentations, group discussions, role plays, and oral examinations often become anxiety-provoking situations. Previous studies have found that learners with higher anxiety levels tend to participate less frequently in classroom interactions and demonstrate lower speaking performance (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020; Istiqomah, 2024). Anxiety may also discourage learners from taking communicative risks, thereby limiting opportunities for language development. These findings suggest that reducing anxiety is essential for increasing learners' willingness to communicate and improving their overall speaking proficiency. Therefore, supportive classroom environments, constructive feedback, and learner-centered instructional approaches are crucial for fostering speaking confidence.

3.4 Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

Although speaking anxiety has been extensively investigated in EFL contexts, several important gaps remain in the literature. First, most previous studies have focused on EFL learners broadly rather than specifically examining Generation Z learners, whose communication patterns are strongly shaped by digital technologies. Second, limited research has explored the relationship between digital communication habits and speaking anxiety in foreign language learning. Existing studies tend to examine anxiety from linguistic and psychological perspectives while paying less attention to the influence of contemporary communication behaviors.

Third, comparative studies involving Southeast Asian EFL contexts remain relatively limited. In particular, research comparing Generation Z learners from Indonesia and Vietnam is scarce, despite the fact that both countries represent important EFL environments with distinct educational systems, sociocultural backgrounds, and language-learning experiences.

Understanding these differences is important because sociocultural contexts may influence both the sources of speaking anxiety and the strategies learners use to cope with it.

Based on these considerations, this study adopts a conceptual framework that integrates Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (Horwitz et al., 1986), Willingness to Communicate Theory (MacIntyre et al., 1998), and perspectives on Generation Z digital communication behavior. The study assumes that Generation Z learners' preference for digital and asynchronous communication may reduce opportunities for face-to-face interaction, thereby influencing their speaking confidence, communication anxiety, and willingness to communicate in English. By examining learners from Indonesia and Vietnam, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how digital communication practices shape speaking anxiety and coping strategies among Generation Z students in Southeast Asian EFL contexts. This integrated perspective constitutes the primary contribution and novelty of the present study.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore Generation Z students' experiences of speaking anxiety in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' subjective experiences, perceptions, emotions, and coping strategies related to speaking English. As speaking anxiety is a complex psychological phenomenon that cannot be fully captured through numerical measurements alone, qualitative inquiry enables a deeper exploration of learners' perspectives and lived experiences (Creswell, 2011).

The phenomenon under investigation was speaking anxiety experienced during English-speaking activities, including classroom discussions, oral presentations, conversations, and speaking assessments. These activities were selected because they represent contexts in which foreign language anxiety commonly emerges (Horwitz et al., 1986). The study was conducted in senior high school settings in Indonesia and Vietnam to enable a cross-cultural examination of students' experiences within different educational and sociocultural environments. By focusing on classroom-based speaking activities, the study aimed to capture the contexts in which speaking anxiety is most likely to affect learners' confidence and participation.

3.2 Participants and Research Setting

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, which allows researchers to identify information-rich cases relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The study involved ten female Generation Z students aged 18 years, consisting of five participants from Indonesia and five from Vietnam. All participants were enrolled in public senior high schools and were in their final year of study.

Two inclusion criteria were used in participant selection: (1) relatively low performance in English-speaking assessments and (2) self-reported experiences of speaking anxiety during English-speaking activities. Final-year students were selected because speaking performance at this stage is frequently evaluated through formal assessments and is associated with increased academic demands. Furthermore, learners with lower speaking performance were considered more likely to provide rich insights into the challenges associated with speaking anxiety and confidence development.

In addition to interview data, contextual information related to classroom practices and learning environments was considered to support the interpretation of participants' experiences. This approach enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to speaking anxiety in different EFL settings.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which provided participants with opportunities to describe their experiences while allowing the researcher to explore emerging issues in greater depth (Creswell, 2011). The interviews focused on participants' perceptions of speaking anxiety, factors contributing to their anxiety, and the strategies they employed to manage it.

Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. Indonesian participants were interviewed face-to-face, whereas Vietnamese participants participated through WhatsApp video calls due to geographical constraints. To facilitate accurate and comfortable expression of personal experiences, interviews were conducted in Indonesian for Indonesian participants and in a combination of English and Vietnamese for Vietnamese participants. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to withdraw from the research at any stage without penalty. To protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in place of real names, and all personal information was kept confidential. Prior approval to conduct the study was obtained from the academic supervisor and the participating schools before data collection commenced.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). This method was selected because it provides a systematic procedure for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data.

The analysis involved six stages. First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data through repeated reading of the interview transcripts. Second, meaningful segments of data were coded systematically. Third, related codes were grouped into potential themes. Fourth, the preliminary themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and relevance to the research questions. Fifth, the themes were clearly defined and named. Finally, the themes were interpreted and reported in relation to the study's objectives and theoretical framework.

Through this process, several overarching themes emerged, including communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and coping strategies. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify recurring patterns across participants' experiences while also capturing contextual differences between Indonesian and Vietnamese learners. These findings provided insights into how Generation Z students experience and manage speaking anxiety in EFL learning environments.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Communication Apprehension

The findings reveal that communication apprehension constitutes one of the most prevalent dimensions of speaking anxiety experienced by Generation Z learners in both Indonesia and Vietnam. A considerable number of participants reported feelings of nervousness, hesitation, fear, and low self-confidence when required to communicate in English, particularly in situations involving spontaneous oral interaction. These emotional responses indicate that speaking English is frequently perceived as a demanding task that exposes learners to potential errors and negative evaluation.

A Vietnamese participant expressed this concern by stating, *"Tôi cảm thấy lo lắng vì tôi không giỏi tiếng Anh"* (I feel worried because I am not good at English). Likewise, an Indonesian participant remarked, *"Saya merasa sedikit gugup dan takut salah"* (I feel a little nervous and afraid of making mistakes). Participants from both countries further indicated that they experienced discomfort when they were unexpectedly called upon to answer questions or speak in front of their classmates without prior preparation.

Similar perceptions emerged from other participants. One Vietnamese participant stated, *"Tôi thường cảm thấy lo lắng khi nói tiếng Anh với giáo viên hoặc bạn bè có trình độ tiếng Anh rất tốt"* (I often feel nervous when speaking English with teachers or friends who have very good English skills). Another participant explained, *"Tôi cảm thấy sợ khi phải thuyết trình bằng tiếng Anh vì khả năng phát âm của tôi chưa tốt"* (I feel afraid when I have to give presentations in English because my pronunciation is not good enough). These responses suggest that communication apprehension is closely associated with learners' perceptions of their linguistic competence, particularly in relation to pronunciation and overall language proficiency. The presence of more proficient interlocutors, such as teachers or highly skilled peers, appears to intensify feelings of inadequacy and anxiety.

Comparable experiences were reported by Indonesian participants. One participant stated, *"Pernah, seperti saat sedang ujian bahasa Inggris saya disuruh berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris dan itu membuat saya merasa sangat gugup"* (I experienced it during an English examination when I was asked to speak English, which made me very nervous). Another participant reported, *"Ya gugup, saat berpidato dalam bahasa Inggris"* (Yes, I feel nervous when delivering a speech in English). These statements indicate that formal speaking situations, such as examinations and public speeches, often trigger heightened levels of anxiety. The requirement to perform in front of an audience increases learners' self-consciousness and concern about making mistakes, thereby reducing their confidence in using English orally.

Overall, the findings suggest that learners perceive oral communication in English as a challenging activity characterized by uncertainty, immediate language processing, and the possibility of making linguistic errors. Communication apprehension becomes particularly pronounced in situations that require spontaneous responses, where learners have limited time to formulate ideas and monitor language accuracy. Such circumstances place considerable cognitive and emotional demands on learners, often resulting in increased anxiety and reduced willingness to communicate.

A cross-cultural comparison reveals both similarities and subtle differences in the manifestation of communication apprehension. Vietnamese participants predominantly linked their anxiety to perceived deficiencies in linguistic competence, including pronunciation and overall English proficiency. In contrast, Indonesian participants more

frequently emphasized emotional reactions, such as nervousness, embarrassment, and fear of making mistakes during public speaking situations. Despite these differences, communication apprehension emerged as a common experience among participants from both countries. This finding suggests that spontaneous oral communication remains a significant source of anxiety for Generation Z learners, regardless of cultural context, highlighting the persistent challenges associated with speaking English as a foreign language.

4.1.2 Fear of Negative Evaluation

Another major theme emerging from the data is fear of negative evaluation, which was consistently identified as a significant source of speaking anxiety among Generation Z learners in both Indonesia and Vietnam. Participants frequently expressed concerns about how their English-speaking performance would be perceived by teachers and peers. These concerns often stemmed from the possibility of making mistakes, receiving criticism, or being viewed negatively by others, all of which contributed to heightened anxiety during oral communication activities.

An Indonesian participant explained, "*Saya takut dipermalukan atau ditertawakan oleh teman*" (I am afraid of being embarrassed or laughed at by my friends). Similarly, a Vietnamese participant stated, "*Tôi sợ bị đánh giá khi nói sai*" (I am afraid of being judged when I make mistakes while speaking). These statements illustrate that learners are highly sensitive to external evaluations and often associate speaking performance with potential social and academic consequences. As a result, the anticipation of negative judgments can create psychological barriers that discourage active participation in English-speaking activities.

Additional responses further demonstrate the prevalence of this concern. A Vietnamese participant stated, "*Tôi sợ bị bạn bè cười nhạo hoặc chế giễu khi mắc lỗi*" (I am afraid of being laughed at or mocked by my friends when I make mistakes), while another participant reported, "*Tôi sợ bạn bè trêu chọc và nghĩ rằng tiếng Anh của tôi rất kém*" (I am afraid that my friends will tease me and think that my English is very poor). These responses suggest that learners not only fear making mistakes but also worry about the social implications of those mistakes. The possibility of being ridiculed, underestimated, or perceived as linguistically incompetent appears to intensify feelings of anxiety and self-consciousness.

Indonesian participants expressed similar concerns. One participant stated, "*Takut salah dan akhirnya malu*" (I am afraid of making mistakes and feeling embarrassed). Another explained that speaking anxiety occurs because "*takut salah, tidak percaya diri seolah olah orang lain akan menertawakan kita*" (I am afraid of making mistakes and lack confidence, as if other people will laugh at me). These statements indicate that fear of negative evaluation is closely linked to diminished self-confidence. Learners tend to anticipate unfavorable reactions from others, even when such reactions may not actually occur, which in turn discourages them from engaging in classroom communication.

The findings suggest that speaking anxiety is strongly shaped by social pressure and learners' perceptions of how they are evaluated by others. Many participants reported hesitating to participate in speaking activities because they expected criticism, negative comments, or unfavorable judgments. This anticipation of negative evaluation often reduced their willingness to communicate and limited opportunities for language practice. Consequently, fear of evaluation becomes a self-reinforcing cycle in which anxiety leads to

avoidance of speaking activities, thereby restricting learners' opportunities to develop communicative competence.

A cross-cultural comparison reveals both commonalities and distinctive patterns in the way fear of negative evaluation is experienced. Indonesian participants tended to emphasize peer reactions, social embarrassment, and concerns about being laughed at or rejected by their classmates. Their responses indicate that maintaining positive social relationships and peer acceptance plays a central role in shaping speaking confidence. In contrast, Vietnamese participants more frequently associated anxiety with linguistic accuracy and formal evaluation. Their concerns focused on being judged for grammatical, lexical, or pronunciation errors, reflecting a stronger emphasis on language performance and correctness. These differences may be influenced by variations in classroom culture, educational expectations, and assessment practices. Nevertheless, despite these cultural nuances, fear of negative evaluation emerged as a shared and influential factor affecting learners' willingness to speak English, highlighting the important role of social and evaluative contexts in the development of speaking anxiety among Generation Z learners.

4.1.3 Test Anxiety and Coping Strategies

The third major theme identified in the data is test anxiety, which emerged as a significant factor influencing participants' speaking performance. Both Indonesian and Vietnamese learners reported experiencing substantially higher levels of anxiety during formal speaking assessments than during routine classroom interactions. The findings suggest that evaluative situations, particularly those involving grades and performance judgments, intensify learners' concerns about their language abilities and increase the pressure associated with oral communication.

One Indonesian participant stated, "*Saya biasanya merasa gugup saat ujian speaking karena takut salah grammar*" (I usually feel nervous during speaking examinations because I am afraid of making grammatical mistakes). Similarly, a Vietnamese participant explained, "*Tôi rất lo lắng khi thi nói tiếng Anh*" (I feel very anxious during English-speaking examinations). These responses indicate that formal assessment contexts are often perceived as high-stakes situations in which learners become increasingly aware of their linguistic performance and potential shortcomings. The fear of making errors, particularly those that may affect grades or academic evaluation, appears to heighten feelings of tension and anxiety.

Other participants reported similar experiences, emphasizing that speaking tests and graded presentations were considerably more stressful than ordinary classroom communication. This finding suggests that the evaluative nature of formal assessments creates additional psychological pressure beyond the challenges of language production itself. During examinations, learners must simultaneously manage content delivery, language accuracy, fluency, and audience expectations, which can increase cognitive load and contribute to heightened anxiety.

The findings further indicate that formal assessment situations intensify anxiety because students become highly conscious of evaluation, grading criteria, and performance expectations. As a result, concerns regarding grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, fluency, and the possibility of failure become more pronounced. In such contexts, learners often focus not only on communicating meaning but also on avoiding mistakes, which may interfere with their ability to speak naturally and confidently.

Despite these challenges, participants actively employed a variety of coping strategies to manage their speaking anxiety. The data reveal both shared and culturally distinctive approaches to anxiety management. Vietnamese participants generally favored structured and systematic learning methods, frequently utilizing language-learning applications and regular practice routines to improve their speaking proficiency and confidence. Applications such as *Duolingo* and *Elsa Speak* were commonly mentioned as useful tools for enhancing language skills and reducing anxiety through repeated practice.

Additional responses further illustrate these strategies. A Vietnamese participant explained, *"Tôi liên tục luyện tập và ôn tập mỗi ngày"* (I continuously practice and review every day), while another participant stated, *"Tôi thường ghi âm giọng nói của mình, học từ vựng và luyện nói tiếng Anh với bạn bè"* (I often record my voice, learn vocabulary, and practice speaking English with my friends). These responses demonstrate a strong emphasis on consistent preparation, self-monitoring, and skill development as mechanisms for reducing anxiety. Recording one's voice, reviewing vocabulary, and engaging in repeated speaking practice appear to help learners become more familiar with spoken English and improve their confidence over time.

In contrast, Indonesian participants tended to adopt more informal and socially oriented strategies. Many reported practicing with friends, consuming English-language content through digital platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, and engaging in self-directed speaking exercises. These approaches suggest that learners sought to increase their exposure to authentic language use while creating less stressful opportunities for practice.

For example, one Indonesian participant stated, *"Ya, saya sering berlatih berbicara sendiri di rumah dan mencoba mengucapkan kosakata baru dengan benar"* (Yes, I often practice speaking by myself at home and try to pronounce new vocabulary correctly). Another participant explained, *"Latihan rutin dan mempersiapkan materi sebelum berbicara sangat efektif untuk meningkatkan kepercayaan diri"* (Regular practice and preparing materials before speaking are very effective for improving self-confidence). These statements highlight the importance of preparation and repeated practice in fostering a sense of competence and reducing anxiety. By familiarizing themselves with vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking content in advance, learners reported feeling more confident and better prepared for oral communication tasks.

Although the coping strategies varied in form and implementation, they shared a common objective: enhancing learners' confidence and reducing anxiety before speaking activities. Whether through structured technological resources, regular self-practice, peer interaction, or increased exposure to English-language content, participants sought to strengthen their communicative competence and psychological readiness. While these strategies did not completely eliminate speaking anxiety, most participants perceived them as effective in improving their preparedness, self-confidence, and willingness to engage in oral communication.

A cross-cultural comparison reveals that Vietnamese learners generally relied on more structured and proficiency-oriented approaches, emphasizing systematic practice, language-learning applications, and continuous skill development. Indonesian learners, on the other hand, tended to employ more flexible and socially interactive methods, focusing on informal practice opportunities and exposure to authentic English content. Despite these differences, participants from both countries recognized the value of consistent practice and preparation as essential strategies for managing speaking anxiety. This finding underscores the importance of fostering supportive learning environments and encouraging effective

coping mechanisms to help Generation Z learners navigate the challenges of English-speaking performance.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Generation Z learners experience English-speaking anxiety through three interrelated dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. These findings provide strong empirical support for the Foreign Language Anxiety Theory proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which conceptualizes foreign language anxiety as a situation-specific construct comprising communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. The emergence of these three dimensions among both Indonesian and Vietnamese participants indicates that speaking anxiety remains a persistent emotional and psychological barrier in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning contexts. Consistent with previous research, the findings suggest that anxiety negatively influences learners' confidence, willingness to communicate, and oral performance, particularly in situations requiring spontaneous language production and public communication.

A significant contribution of the present study lies in its focus on Generation Z learners, a cohort whose communication practices have been profoundly shaped by digital technologies. While previous studies have primarily examined speaking anxiety from linguistic, cognitive, and affective perspectives, the present findings suggest that contemporary communication habits may also influence learners' experiences of foreign language anxiety. As digital natives, Generation Z learners are accustomed to communicating through text messages, social networking platforms, and digital applications that allow time for planning, revising, and editing messages before transmission. In contrast, classroom speaking activities require immediate verbal responses, real-time interaction, and rapid linguistic processing. The transition from asynchronous digital communication to spontaneous face-to-face communication appears to create additional psychological pressure, contributing to reduced speaking confidence and heightened anxiety. This finding extends existing understandings of foreign language anxiety by highlighting the potential role of digital communication culture in shaping learners' oral communication experiences.

The findings related to communication apprehension reveal that many participants experienced discomfort when required to communicate in English without prior preparation. Learners frequently reported nervousness when responding to unexpected questions, participating in classroom discussions, or delivering oral presentations. Such findings align with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) argument that communication apprehension arises when learners perceive themselves as lacking sufficient communicative competence to express their ideas effectively in a foreign language. However, the present study suggests that communication apprehension among Generation Z learners may be intensified by their familiarity with digital communication environments that permit greater control over message construction. Because online communication allows users to carefully formulate and revise responses, spontaneous speaking situations may be perceived as more demanding, unpredictable, and threatening. Consequently, learners may experience greater anxiety when confronted with communicative situations that require immediate language production and real-time interaction.

Fear of negative evaluation emerged as another prominent source of speaking anxiety. Participants consistently expressed concerns about being criticized, judged, laughed at, or negatively evaluated by teachers and peers. This finding is consistent with Horwitz et

al.'s (1986) proposition that fear of negative evaluation constitutes one of the most influential components of foreign language anxiety. Learners' concerns regarding possible mistakes often resulted in avoidance behaviors, including reluctance to participate in classroom discussions, reduced willingness to volunteer answers, and a tendency to remain silent even when they possessed relevant knowledge. Such behaviors demonstrate how anxiety can impede language development by limiting opportunities for meaningful interaction, communicative practice, and feedback, all of which are essential for language acquisition.

The cross-cultural comparison further revealed important differences in the manifestation of fear of negative evaluation. Indonesian participants predominantly emphasized peer reactions, social embarrassment, and concerns about being laughed at by classmates. In contrast, Vietnamese participants were more likely to associate anxiety with linguistic accuracy, academic performance, and formal evaluation. These differences may reflect broader sociocultural and educational influences operating within each context. Indonesian learners' concerns appear to be closely associated with collectivist cultural values and face-saving orientations, where maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and avoiding public embarrassment are highly important. Meanwhile, Vietnamese learners' stronger emphasis on language accuracy and performance evaluation may be influenced by examination-oriented educational traditions and rigorous academic expectations. These findings suggest that although the underlying dimensions of foreign language anxiety may be universal, their specific manifestations are mediated by local cultural norms, educational systems, and classroom practices.

The findings concerning test anxiety further highlight the significant role of assessment-related pressure in shaping learners' emotional experiences. Participants from both countries reported substantially higher anxiety levels during speaking examinations and graded presentations than during routine classroom communication. This finding supports Horwitz et al.'s (1986) assertion that formal evaluation contexts intensify anxiety because learners become increasingly aware of the potential consequences of their performance. During speaking assessments, concerns regarding grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and overall communicative effectiveness create additional cognitive demands that may interfere with performance. From a cognitive perspective, anxiety consumes attentional resources that would otherwise be available for language processing, thereby reducing speaking effectiveness. Consequently, learners may perform below their actual level of linguistic competence, reinforcing perceptions of inadequacy and contributing to a cycle of anxiety and avoidance.

Another noteworthy finding concerns the coping strategies employed by learners to manage speaking anxiety and enhance confidence. Although participants from both countries actively sought ways to improve their speaking ability, notable differences emerged in their preferred approaches. Vietnamese learners generally favored structured learning methods, including language-learning applications such as Duolingo and Elsa Speak, daily practice routines, vocabulary review, and self-recording activities. These strategies reflect a systematic approach to language improvement and a strong focus on skill development through repetitive practice and feedback. In contrast, Indonesian learners tended to prefer more informal and socially oriented strategies, including practicing with friends, watching English-language content on YouTube, and engaging with English-language

materials on social media platforms such as TikTok. These approaches emphasize exposure, familiarity, and communicative interaction rather than formalized skill training.

The effectiveness of these coping strategies can be interpreted through the lens of the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Theory proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). According to this framework, learners are more likely to engage in communication when they possess sufficient confidence, perceived competence, and psychological readiness. The strategies identified in the present study appear to function as mechanisms for strengthening these psychological resources. Through repeated practice, increased language exposure, and enhanced familiarity with spoken English, learners gradually develop greater confidence in their communicative abilities. As a result, they become more willing to participate in speaking activities despite experiencing varying degrees of anxiety. This finding reinforces the notion that anxiety reduction and confidence building are closely interconnected processes that influence learners' willingness to communicate.

The findings also underscore the increasingly complex role of digital technology and social media in contemporary language learning. On the one hand, digital platforms provide valuable opportunities for autonomous learning, language exposure, pronunciation practice, and communicative engagement beyond the classroom. The widespread use of language-learning applications, online videos, and social networking platforms demonstrates how technology can facilitate language development and support learners' efforts to manage anxiety. On the other hand, extensive reliance on mediated communication may inadvertently reduce opportunities for spontaneous face-to-face interaction. As learners become increasingly accustomed to communicating through digital channels, they may develop greater confidence in online environments than in direct oral communication settings. This imbalance may contribute to the confidence gap observed among Generation Z learners, who often demonstrate strong digital communication skills but experience anxiety during real-time spoken interaction.

Taken together, these findings suggest that speaking anxiety among Generation Z learners is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by an interplay of linguistic, psychological, technological, and sociocultural factors. The study therefore extends traditional perspectives on foreign language anxiety by incorporating the influence of digital communication culture into the discussion. While the fundamental dimensions identified by Horwitz et al. (1986) remain highly relevant, the experiences of contemporary learners indicate that communication practices associated with the digital era may amplify or reshape these dimensions in unique ways.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that language educators should move beyond an exclusive emphasis on linguistic accuracy and give greater attention to learners' emotional experiences during speaking activities. Creating supportive classroom environments, providing constructive rather than punitive feedback, encouraging collaborative learning, and gradually increasing the complexity of speaking tasks may help reduce anxiety and foster communicative confidence. Furthermore, educators may benefit from integrating familiar digital tools into speaking instruction to bridge the gap between students' digital communication habits and face-to-face communication demands. By leveraging technology as a scaffold rather than treating it as a separate learning domain, teachers can facilitate a smoother transition from mediated communication to spontaneous oral interaction. Such an approach may ultimately enhance learners' confidence, willingness to communicate, and overall speaking proficiency in English.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated how Generation Z learners from Indonesia and Vietnam experience and manage speaking anxiety in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The findings revealed that speaking anxiety is primarily manifested through communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, all of which influence learners' confidence, willingness to communicate, and participation in speaking activities. Although both groups shared similar anxiety-related experiences, notable cross-cultural differences emerged. Indonesian learners were more concerned with peer reactions, social embarrassment, and interpersonal relationships, whereas Vietnamese learners emphasized linguistic accuracy, academic performance, and formal assessment. The study also identified the influence of digital communication practices on speaking anxiety. As digital natives, participants reported greater confidence in text-based and asynchronous communication than in spontaneous face-to-face interaction, suggesting a gap between digital communicative competence and oral communication performance.

The findings further demonstrated that learners actively employ various coping strategies to manage anxiety, including regular practice, increased exposure to English, and preparation for speaking tasks. Vietnamese participants generally preferred structured strategies such as language-learning applications and self-monitoring activities, while Indonesian learners favored peer interaction, English-language media, and social media engagement. These findings highlight speaking anxiety as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by linguistic, psychological, sociocultural, and technological factors. Consequently, EFL educators should create supportive learning environments, provide constructive feedback, encourage gradual participation in speaking activities, and integrate familiar digital tools into instruction. While the study is limited by its small sample of ten female participants and qualitative design, it offers valuable insights into the experiences of Generation Z learners and suggests the need for future research involving larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal approaches. Overall, speaking anxiety among Generation Z learners emerges from a complex interaction of personal, cultural, educational, and technological influences that must be addressed to foster greater confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

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