

## Arabic Language Speaking Anxiety Among University Students in Central Java

### *Kebimbangan Bertutur Bahasa Arab dalam Kalangan Pelajar Universiti di Jawa Tengah*

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#### ABSTRACT

*This survey research identifies the students' level of Arabic language speaking anxiety and determines any significant difference in their speaking anxiety based on their background. 322 Arabic language students from six State Islamic Universities in Central Java purposively participated in this study. The data was obtained using the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS). The data were analysed using Winstep version 3.73 from Rasch model and IBM SPSS version 23. The logit measure and the Wright map indicated that most students experienced moderate speaking anxiety, meaning they felt anxious only in some situations in the muhadathah class. In other words, their maturity (age) controls their anxiety. The independent sample t-test result indicated that their speaking anxiety varied regarding gender and previous experience in learning muhadathah, while their origin did not significantly affect their speaking anxiety. The one-way ANOVA test showed that mothers' education level significantly affects the students' speaking anxiety. The higher their mothers' education level, the lower the speaking anxiety they experience.*

**Keywords:** *Muhadathah; Arabic language; speaking anxiety; Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS); Rasch model*

#### ABSTRAK

*Kajian tinjauan ini dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti tahap keimbangan pelajar dalam bertutur bahasa Arab serta menentukan perbezaan keimbangan bertutur yang signifikan berdasarkan latar belakang peribadi mereka. Sejumlah 322 pelajar bahasa Arab dari enam Universiti Islam Negeri di Jawa Tengah menjadi responden dalam kajian ini. Data diperolehi melalui Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS). Data dianalisis dengan Rasch model menggunakan aplikasi Winstep versi 3.73 dan juga IBM SPSS versi 23. Hasil dari logit measure dan Wright map menunjukkan bahawa majoriti pelajar mengalami tahap keimbangan yang sederhana yang bermaksud bahawa mereka hanya merasa bimbang dalam beberapa situasi di kelas muhadathah. Ini berlaku kerana kematangan (umur) dan boleh mengawal keimbangan. Hasil uji t-sampel bebas menunjukkan bahawa keimbangan bertutur berbeza dari segi jantina dan pengalaman terdahulu dalam pembelajaran muhadathah, sedangkan latarbelakang peribadi tidak mempunyai peranan penting dalam keimbangan bertutur. Ujian ANOVA sehala menunjukkan bahawa tahap pendidikan ibu memainkan peranan penting dalam menentukan tahap keimbangan pelajar. Semakin tinggi tahap pendidikan ibu, semakin rendah tahap keimbangan bertutur anak.*

**Kata kunci:** *Muhadathah; Bahasa Arab; keimbangan bertutur; Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS); Rasch model*

#### INTRODUCTION

Speaking, as one of four communication skills, is a productive skill used as a communication tool through an oral form (Susanto 2012). Therefore, it has been emphasized in the objectives of learning foreign languages such as English, Arabic, and other languages. Eaton (2010) explained that teaching and learning foreign languages in the twenty-first

century is no longer concerned with mastering the grammatical rules, memorizing vocabulary, and learning from rote. However, it focused on using the target language and cultural knowledge as a medium to communicate and connect to those from other parts of the world. Therefore, foreign language students need to be able to speak using the target language fluently.

*Muhadathah*, or Arabic language speaking class, is offered by the State Islamic Universities to Arabic language education students. This course aims to prepare and equip them with good oral communication skills. *Muhadathah* class may be the only chance the students can practice speaking Arabic with their teacher and friends because Indonesians do not speak Arabic daily.

Learners face many problems in learning foreign languages, especially when speaking, such as anxiety. Anxiety occurs in some people when they learn foreign languages, although their anxiety may differ from one to another. Speaking a foreign language itself is perceived by the learners as an anxiety-provoking situation (Debreli & Demirkan 2016). Horwitz and Cope (1986) found that some foreign language learners reported freezing in class due to anxiety.

Anxiety, as defined in the Collins Advanced Dictionary, is a feeling of nervousness or worry. Kristal (1981) defined anxiety as a unique mix of subjective and physiological events. The subjective or emotional reactions associated with an anxiety state include apprehension, tension, worry, and nervousness. When it is associated with speaking a foreign language, it can cause speaking anxiety. People experience it when faced with threatening situations, making them feel in danger. People who experience anxiety may respond with maladaptive behaviour or experience heart palpitations.

Sometimes, anxiety differs according to personal backgrounds, such as gender, origin, parents' education level, and previous experience. Abu Rabia (2004), Balemir (2009), and Hsu (2012) found that female students were more anxious than male students. Concerning parents' education level, Chen (2012) found that the lower the mother's education level, the higher the test anxiety and perceived parental pressure the students may experience.

Knowing that foreign language learners often feel language anxiety, Phillips (1991) explained that it is vital for future teachers or practitioners of a foreign language to understand some of the underlying factors and other related variables associated with language anxiety, such as students' background. If they also suffer from anxiety in speaking a foreign language and do not understand it well, they will be unable to help their future students decrease their anxiety. Therefore, further research on speaking anxiety needs to identify students' anxiety in speaking Arabic.

Based on the problems and previous research, this study identified the students' anxiety in speaking

Arabic. The research questions focused in this study were:

1. What is the student's level of anxiety in speaking the Arabic language?
2. Is there any significant difference in the students' speaking anxiety based on gender, origin, parents' education level, and previous experience learning *muhadathah*?

## METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted in six State Islamic Universities in Central Java. The selected universities are in Semarang, Salatiga, Pekalongan, Purwokerto, Surakarta, and Kudus. Approximately 322 Arabic language students attending the *muhadathah* class in the current semester participated in this study since they have already learned this skill and practiced speaking Arabic.

The students were given the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS) by Balemir (2009), which consisted of two sections. The first section elicited personal background characteristics such as gender, origin, parents' education level, and previous experience learning *muhadathah*. The second section consisted of 28 items related to speaking anxiety. The FLSAS employs a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly. It was initially written in English, and in order to avoid misunderstanding, the questionnaire was translated into Indonesian and validated by some lecturers with some improvements for clarity and understanding for the students.

Some items were written in negative sentences, while others were in positive sentences. For instance, item number 4 "*Saya merasa sangat cemas ketika menjadi satu-satunya orang yang menjawab pertanyaan dari guru dalam kelas*" (I am anxious in class when I am the only person answering the question advanced by my teacher in English class) was written in a positive sentence. While a negative item was item number 2 "*Kegelisahan saya berkurang ketika berbicara Bahasa Arab di depan orang yang saya kenal*" (I feel less nervous about speaking English in front of others when I know them).

After being validated by some lecturers, the FLSAS for reliability. The Cronbach alpha of this questionnaire was .90, which indicated reliability for use in survey research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007).

The data collected from the students were analyzed using Winstep version 3.73 and SPSS version 23. The logit measure and Wright map were employed to identify the students' level of speaking anxiety. The independent sample *t*-test to identify the difference in students' speaking anxiety based on their background, such as gender, origin, their previous experience. In contrast, the one-way ANOVA test to identify the difference in the students' speaking anxiety based on their parent's education

level.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### STUDENTS' DEMOGRAPHY

Table 1 shows the students' demographic characteristics.

TABLE 1. Students' Demography Based on Gender

Demographics		N	%
Gender	Male	79	24.5 %
	Female	243	75.5 %
<i>Muhadathah</i> class in the previous school	Studied previously	163	50.6 %
	Not study previously	159	49.4 %
Origin	Rural	259	80.4 %
	Urban	63	19.6 %
	Elementary School	114	35.4 %
Father's educational background	Junior High School	68	21.1 %
	Senior High School	87	27 %
	University	53	16.4 %
	Elementary School	134	41.6 %
Mother's educational background	Junior High School	65	20.2 %
	Senior High School	83	25.8 %
	University	40	12.4 %

Table 1 describes the students' demography based on their gender. It shows that the male students who participated in this study were 24.5%, while the female students were 75.5%. The majority of the participants in this study were female students.

The table also gives information about the *muhadathah* class in respondents' previous schools. The table shows that slightly more than half of the respondents (50.6%) experienced learning *muhadathah* in their previous school, while 49.4% have not previously learned *muhadathah*. Not all Islamic elementary schools, junior and senior high schools offer their students the speaking course; therefore, not all Arabic language education students have experience practicing speaking skills.

According to Table 1, 80.4% of respondents came from rural areas, while 19.6% came from urban areas, indicating that most study participants came from rural areas.

Among 322 participants, approximately 35.4% of their fathers graduated from elementary school, compared to 41.6% of them whose mothers graduated from elementary school. Some 21% of their fathers graduated from junior high school, while 20.2% of their mothers had junior high school education. Those with fathers and mothers who graduated from senior high school are 27% and 25.8%, respectively, while 16.4% of their fathers graduated from university compared to 12.4% of mothers who graduated from university.

This personal information of the respondents identifies the difference in the level of anxiety according to their background.

### THE STUDENTS' LEVEL OF ARABIC LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY

The translated version of FLSAS aimed to measure the extent to which the students felt anxious about

speaking Arabic. As Balemir (2009) stated, foreign language students who suffer from anxiety into three different anxiety levels: high, moderate, and low anxious students.

Table 2 about the logit measure and Figure 1 about the Wright map (Person and item map) from the Rasch model was employed to get detailed information about the distribution of respondents based on the logit measure or ability.

TABLE 2. Logit Measure of the Respondents' Speaking Anxiet

Logit scale	Number of People	%	Level of Anxiety
0.44	44 people	13.67 %	High anxious
- 0.24	230 people	71.42 %	Moderate anxious
-0.92	48 people	14.91 %	Low anxious

Table 2 explains the logit measure of the participants. The cut-off point was the value mean -.24 and standard deviation .68 of the logit measure. The students with logit measure higher than 0.44

into highly anxious students, those whose logit measure fell between 0.44 to -0.92 were moderately anxious students, and those whose logit measure fell below -0.92 were low, anxious students.

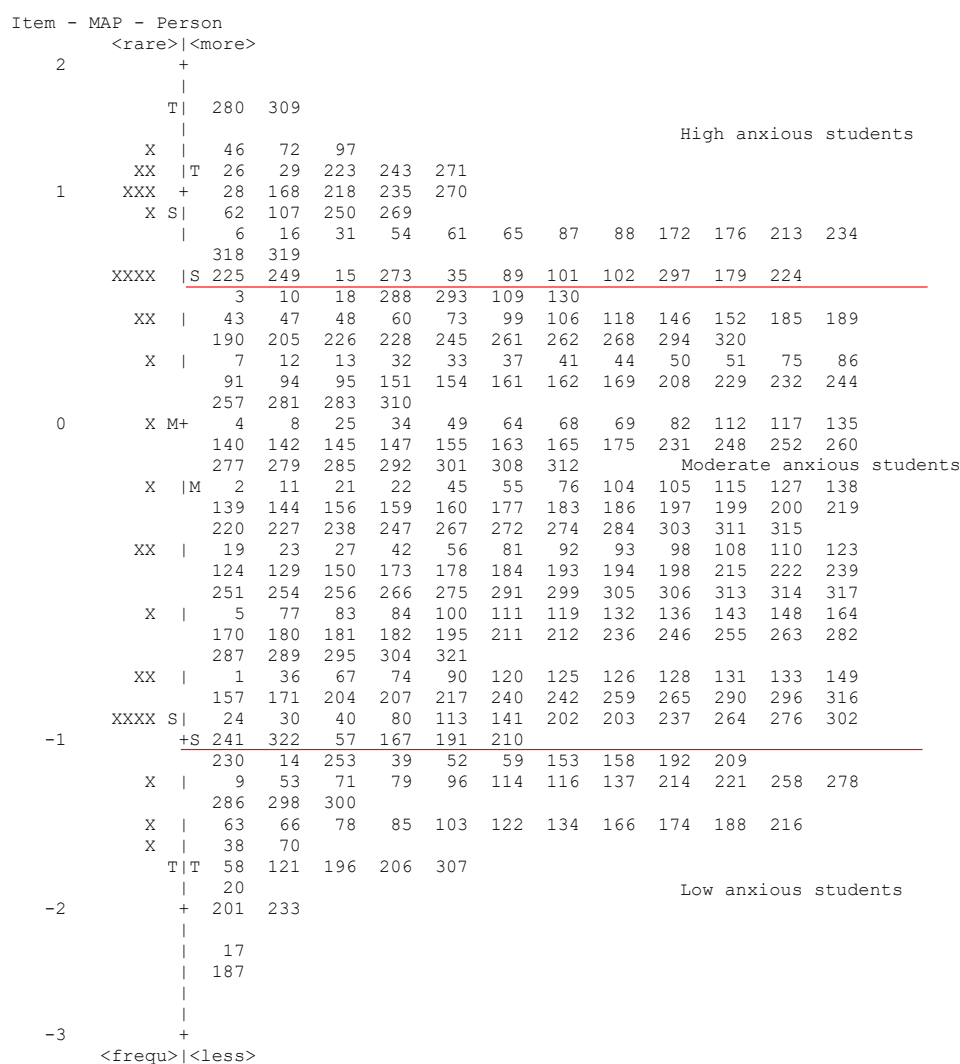


FIGURE 1. Wright Map for Students' Level of Speaking Anxiety

Figure 1 is the Wright map describing the hierarchy of persons involved in the study. The higher the position of the person on the map, the higher the level of anxiety experienced; on the other hand, the lower the position, the lower the level of anxiety experienced. The persons numbered 309 and 280 were placed at the top of the map, indicating that both were highly anxious students. They have higher logit measures than other students, 1.67 and 1.60, respectively. A higher logit measure indicates more agreement with the items on the questionnaire (Boone, Staver, & Yale 2014) and thus means that almost all items on the questionnaire represent the anxiety-provoking situation. While the students numbered 17 and 187 at the bottom of the map were classified as low, anxious students with logit measures of -2.37 and -2.55, respectively. Lower logit measure indicates that they tend to answer disagree or very disagree with the items on the FLSAS.

As shown in Table 2, out of 322 respondents, 13.67% of them reported that they experienced a high level of anxiety when they had to speak in the Arabic language in the *muhadathah* class. It means they felt anxious in almost all situations, as stated in the FLSAS. For example, some of them answered agree or strongly agree with an item about being anxious when they perform speaking in front of those familiar to them (FC 2), although it is one of the facilitating conditions which are supposed to help them lower their anxiety and is labelled as the problematic item. Those students need to improve their self-confidence and motivation and seek help from the lecturer and peers to lower their anxiety in speaking.

Most participants (71.42%) are moderately anxious students, or those who have chosen to agree to some items and disagree with some or choose neutral to some items. It means they do not always feel anxious when speaking Arabic, but only in some situations. For example, student number 3, a moderately anxious student, perceived "being corrected by peers" as not an anxiety-provoking situation, but anxiety arises when being graded in speaking class. These students must also improve their motivation and self-confidence to help lower their anxiety in speaking Arabic.

Moreover, the last group comprising 14.91% out of 322 students, was categorised as low anxious. These students tend to answer disagree or strongly disagree with most of the items on the FLSAS. Nevertheless, a few items provoke their anxiety,

such as being graded in the speaking class, fear of giving the wrong answer and being unable to deliver their ideas effectively. For instance, student number 187 did not feel anxious when being graded in the speaking class but was anxious for fear of giving the wrong answer. Some help from peers and lecturers may help them reduce their anxiety in speaking Arabic.

The finding from the present study supported that of other previous studies. Balemir (2009) found that Turkish EFL students had moderate anxiety levels. Similarly, Alsowat (2016) ascertained that Saudi English major students had moderate anxiety. Chin, Ling, and Yeh (2016), Cagatay (2015), and Akkakoson (2016) also found similar findings.

Concerning the finding of this study, Nur Afiqah (2015) explained that most of the students experienced moderate levels of speaking anxiety, not high levels of anxiety, due to their maturity so that they could control their anxiety. Lileikienė and Danilevičienė (2016) also stated that anxiety correlates with students' age (maturity) and motivation. Since the respondents of this study were all university students who were mature enough, they could control their speaking anxiety so that they did not experience high anxiety.

However, a few of the participants of this study have experienced higher anxiety in speaking Arabic. Horwitz et al. (1986) found that anxious students were afraid to speak a foreign language. They also tend to withdraw from classroom speaking activities and remain silent (Krupova 2015). They will not likely volunteer themselves to answer questions from their teachers. Additionally, they were afraid of not understanding what the foreign language teachers said. Making mistakes while speaking also frightened them because they feared being corrected by the teachers. They perceive every correction as a failure (Horwitz et al. 1986). Williams (1991) added that the facilitating condition, which helps students to lower anxiety, turned into a debilitating condition for those highly anxious students.

While few of them experience lower anxiety in speaking Arabic, the low, anxious students enjoy every situation they face in the speaking class. The facilitating conditions lowered their anxiety (Williams 1991), while only some debilitating conditions evoked their anxiety. Therefore, these low-anxious students can be helpful to the high-anxious students by sharing their experiences in lowering their anxiety.

### THE DIFFERENCE IN THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY BASED ON GENDER

sample *t*-test on speaking anxiety between male and female students.

Table 3 displays the results of the independent

TABLE 3. Independent Sample *t*-Test Speaking Anxiety Between Male and Female

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Male students	79	-.37	.69	-2.009	320	<.05
Female students	243	-.20	.67			

As shown in Table 3, the *t*-test result was significant ( $t = -2.009$ ,  $df = 320$ ,  $p < .05$ ), meaning that a difference existed between male and female students in their Arabic language speaking anxiety. The mean difference value of -.176 shows that in the population from which the sample was, the mean score of female students (-.20) was higher than that of the male students (-.37). The result indicated that students' anxiety in speaking the Arabic language varied for gender.

The result of this study was in line with the findings from previous studies. For instance, Balemir (2009), who investigated foreign language speaking anxiety regarding gender, found that female respondents were slightly more anxious than male respondents. Similarly, Hsu (2012) found a significant difference in public speaking anxiety between female and male students. The female students experience more anxiety than the male students despite having more preparation time for the speech. The same result appeared in another study by Abu Rabia (2004). He also found that female students experience higher levels of anxiety in comparison to male students.

Various theories have explained why females are likely more anxious than males. Nur Afiah (2015) explained that female students tend to exhibit more shyness than male students; therefore, they feel more anxious when speaking a foreign language. Balemir (2009) also stated that female students wanted to be more successful in language learning. The desire to be more successful has made them

more ambitious, which may result in more anxiety.

Another theory was that anxiety thoughts affected women more than men because men knew that worry must be avoided (Bahrami & Yousefi 2011). Women have more challenging control strategies and metacognitive beliefs than men. Hosseini and Khazali (2013) assumed that psychological factors might influence males and females differently. For instance, males believe more in their control over the situation; this is a variable that helps to protect them against the feeling of anxiety.

Generally, it concluded that gender was a significant variable in students' Arabic language-speaking anxiety. The female students experienced higher Arabic language speaking anxiety compared to the male students. Female students tend to be more shy than male students and have more tough control strategies and metacognitive beliefs. This finding can give new insight to the teachers that they have to pay more attention and encourage female students not to be afraid of speaking in front of others and not be afraid of making mistakes—however, further research is to investigate the reasons for their anxiety.

### THE DIFFERENCE IN THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY BASED ON THE ORIGIN

Table 4 displays the results of the independent sample *t*-test on speaking anxiety based on origin.

TABLE 4. Independent Sample *T*-Test Speaking Anxiety Based On Their Origin

Origin	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Urban	63	-.38	.72	-1.810	320	>.05
Rural	259	-.21	.66			

Table 4 represents the independent sample *t*-test analysis on students' speaking anxiety according to their origin (urban or rural). The result showed there was no significant difference in the students' speaking anxiety between those who came from urban and those who came from rural areas ( $t = -1.810$ ,  $df = 320$ ,  $p > .05$ ). However, the mean score of anxiety from those who came from a rural area ( $M = -.21$ ) was higher than those who came from urban area ( $M = -.38$ ). This means that although the students' level of anxiety in speaking Arabic language did not depend on their origins, those who came from rural areas might experience some degree of anxiety in speaking Arabic language as compared to those who came from urban areas.

This finding was consistent with previous studies showing that students' origin did not affect their anxiety. Nevertheless, the mean score of students' anxiety revealed that students with a rural background are slightly more anxious than those with an urban background (Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz 2010). Hesketh and Ding (2005) stated that rural adolescents tend to be more vulnerable to symptoms of anxiety and depression than urban

adolescents.

Both urban and rural students might experience similar speaking anxiety due to their same level of emotional maturity. As Vyas and Gunthey (2017) explained, almost everyone faces life difficulties nowadays. These difficulties caused psycho-somatic problems such as anxiety, tension, frustrations, and daily emotional upsets. Vyas and Gunthey, in their study, found that people from urban and rural have the same level of emotional maturity. Students in this university, whether they come from a city or a village, might not feel that their origin affects their performance in speaking Arabic because what worries them is their speaking ability.

#### THE DIFFERENCE IN THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY BASED ON PARENTS' EDUCATION LEVEL

Table 5 shows the results for the mean of students' speaking anxiety according to their father's education level.

TABLE 5. Mean of Students' Speaking Anxiety

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Elementary school	114	-.207	.687
Junior high school	68	-.232	.714
Senior high school	87	-.262	.712
University	53	-.310	.565

According to Table 5, the highest mean was those whose fathers graduated from elementary school, followed by those whose fathers graduated from junior high schools (-.232) and senior high schools (-.262). Moreover, the lowest mean of

speaking anxiety was among those whose fathers graduated from university (-.310). The result indicates that there was only a slight decline in the students' mean of anxiety based on their fathers' education level.

TABLE 6. One-Way ANOVA The Difference in Speaking Anxiety Based on Fathers' Education Level

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between-groups	.417	3	.139	.299	>.05
Within-groups	147.82	318	.465		

Table 6 describes the result of a one-way ANOVA test to see the difference in students' level of anxiety based on their fathers' education level.

The result showed that there was no significant difference in the level of anxiety in speaking the Arabic language according to their fathers' education level ( $F(3, 138) = .299, p > .05$ ).

TABLE 7. Mean of Students' Speaking Anxiety

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Elementary school	134	-.139	.680
Junior high school	65	-.206	.763
Senior high school	83	-.322	.654
University	40	-.493	.497

Table 7 shows the mean of speaking anxiety according to the mother's educational background. The highest mean was from those whose mothers graduated from elementary schools (-.139), followed by those whose mothers graduated from junior high

schools (-.206) and senior high schools (-.322). In contrast, the lowest mean of anxiety was those whose mothers graduated from university (-.493), indicating a decline in anxiety according to their mothers' education level.

TABLE 8. One-Way ANOVA for Difference in Speaking Anxiety Based on Mothers' Education Level

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between-groups	4.566	3	1.522	3.368	< .05
Within-groups	143.68	318	.452		

Table 8 shows the result of a one-way ANOVA test to see the difference in students' level of anxiety depending on their mothers' education level. The result described a significant difference ( $F(3, 138) = 3.368, p < .05$ ). This means that the

mother's education level plays an essential role in the student's level of anxiety in speaking the Arabic language. The higher their mother's education, the lower the level of anxiety they experience.

TABLE 9. Post Hoc Scheffe Test on Difference in Speaking Anxiety Based on Mothers' Education Level

Mothers' Education (I)	Mothers' Education (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Elementary School	Junior High School	.067	.102	.931
	Senior High School	.184	.094	.282
	University	.354*	.121	.038
Junior High School	Elementary School	-.067	.102	.931
	Senior High School	.116	.111	.780
	University	.286	.135	.215
Senior High School	Elementary School	-.184	.094	.282
	Junior High School	-.116	.111	.780
	University	.170	.129	.630
University	Elementary School	-.354*	.121	.038
	Junior High School	-.286	.135	.215
	Senior High School	-.170	.129	.630



The Scheffe post hoc test was because the one-way ANOVA result showed a significant difference in students' level of speaking anxiety based on their mothers' education level. The Scheffe analysis results in Table 9 show a significant difference between the mean score of the group whose mothers graduated from elementary school and university. The mean difference was .354,  $p < .05$ . Meaning that among the respondents of this study, those whose mothers from elementary schools are more anxious when they have to speak using the Arabic language in most of the situations in *muhadathah* class as compared to those whose mothers from university. However, there is no difference in students' anxiety levels based on other categories of mothers' education levels.

Azhar, Nadeem, Naz, Perveen, and Sameen (2013) stated that parents' educational background is the backbone of providing financial support and mental confidence to their children. This study's findings were similar to those from Jehangir, Tahir, and Saeed (as cited in Parveen & Alam 2008). They found that students whose parents have high education levels, i.e., Bachelor of Art or Bachelor of Science and above, would be relatively more confident, self-reliant, and free from anxieties and other psychological problems than those with parents with low education. As Khan, Iqbal, and Tasneem (2015) explained, children with high education parents are more confident, resourceful, and experienced than children whose parents have low education.

Specifically, concerning the mothers' education level, Parveen and Alam (2008) found that it significantly affects students' real personalities. Chen (2012) also found that the lower mothers'

education level, the higher test anxiety, and perceived parental pressure the students may experience. Most mothers in China usually play a more critical role than fathers in monitoring their children's academic progress. Cai (2014) added that parents with high education levels are more actively involved in students' academic studies, positively influencing the children. As stated by Ntitika (2014), parental education may influence the willingness or ability to be involved in their children's education. Therefore, mothers with high education levels will be able to give more motivation, suggestions, and advice and boost their children's mental confidence so that the children will make academic progress and lower their anxiety. As Khan et al. (2015) explained, parents' education motivates their children.

According to Sudhir and Lalhirimi (as cited in Parveen & Alam 2008), parents' education level shapes their children's class status and personality characteristics. Children whose parents have high education levels will likely be more able to manage their emotional stability and lower their anxiety. In contrast, children of less educated or uneducated parents tend to have low emotional stability and high anxiety levels. Students' speaking anxiety varied based on their mothers' education level. The higher the mother's education level, the lower the speaking anxiety they experience.

#### THE DIFFERENCE IN THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY BASED ON PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Table 10 displays the results of the independent sample *t*-test on speaking anxiety based on previous experience in *muhadathah*.

TABLE 10. Independent Sample T-Test Speaking Anxiety Based on Previous Experience in Muhadathah

Category	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Studied previously	163	-.36	.70	-3.317	317.3	<.05
Not studied previously	159	-.12	.62			

The results showed a significant difference in their speaking anxiety ( $t = -3.312$ ,  $df = 317.3$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Those who have not learned *muhadathah* in their previous schools ( $M = -.12$ ) have a higher mean of anxiety compared to those who have learned *muhadathah* before ( $M = -.36$ ). Those with experience in learning *muhadathah* in the

previous school, either in Islamic school which offer *muhadathah* class or those who went to *pondok pesantren*, were found to be less anxious as compared to those who have never learned *muhadathah* before attending university.

This finding aligned with Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, and Daley's (2000) findings. They found that

students who have never learned about the course before in their previous schools would experience higher anxiety compared to those who have taken the course in their previous schools because such experience likely gave them greater competence and thus lowered their feeling of anxiety at the university level.

As Kayaoglu and Saglamel (2013) and Cota (1997) have stated, students' past experiences in learning impact their current learning process. Having prior experiences with speaking Arabic in their previous schools might help them lower their speaking anxiety and know how to cope with it. Those who have attended the *muhadathah* course must have known the basic knowledge they need to master to be able to speak in Arabic; besides, they must have discovered the best strategy to learn about it as well.

## CONCLUSION

This survey research using the FLSAS revealed that Arabic language students in the State Islamic Universities in Central Java experienced moderate anxiety, meaning that they felt anxious only in some situations in *muhadathah* class, such as being graded and when the teacher asked other students to correct their mistakes. Nur Afiah (2015) said university students could control their speaking anxiety due to their maturity. Knowing that speaking anxiety does exist in the *muhadathah* class, the Arabic language teachers to create a less stressful classroom environment, employ new teaching strategies and be friendlier to the students so that they can help students reduce their anxiety. Having more discussions with the students or asking them to write a journal about their feelings about *muhadathah* class is also suggested.

The students' speaking anxiety also varied depending on their backgrounds. The female students are more anxious than the male students. Therefore, teachers to pay more attention or give some more motivation to the female students. Giving more chances for female students to practice speaking in class or giving them compliments may help to boost their self-confidence and reduce their speaking anxiety.

Previous experience in learning *muhadathah* in their previous schools also appeared to have a significant role in reducing their anxiety, as the students who had attended *muhadathah* classes in their previous schools were less anxious than

those who had just started learning *muhadathah* in the university because they have experienced the environment of *muhadathah* class and understood how to deal with their anxiety.

This study also revealed that mothers' education level significantly affects their children's speaking anxiety. The higher their mothers' education level, the less anxious the children become. It is that teachers motivate their students and give them the understanding that they should be more confident about their abilities despite having parents with low education levels.

To sum up, foreign language teachers consider the students' background to affect their speaking anxiety. By doing so, students will get more encouragement which will help them lower their anxiety and improve their speaking performance. Besides, further research investigates how the students feel and experience speaking performance by interviewing the students and doing observation.

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