



Willingness to communicate as a mediator variable to speaking anxiety amongst EFL university-level learners

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating to what extent willingness to communicate in English mediate the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and speaking achievement of the EFL students in tertiary education. Using a multiple regression, the researchers analyzed foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) as the predictor variable, willingness to communicate (WTC) as the mediator variable and speaking achievement as the dependent variable. The respondents were 50 EFL students of the faculty of teacher training and education, Mulawarman University in Indonesia. The researchers used three instruments, namely: 1) modified version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) questionnaire, 2) willingness to communicate in English questionnaire, and 3) speaking test. The data were analyzed by using simple linear and multiple regression. The result of this study revealed that a) FLSA significantly predicted speaking achievement $B = -.36$, $t(48) = -6.10$, $p < .001$ (the negative coefficient ($B = -.36$) showed that if the speaking anxiety increased, speaking achievement tended to decrease); b) FLSA significantly predicted WTC, $B = -.32$, $t(48) = -5.63$, $p < .001$ (students who have increasing level of speaking anxiety tend to decrease their WTC level ($B = -.32$); and; c) WTC significantly predicted speaking achievement of the students, $B = .87$, $t(48) = 10.27$, $p < .001$ (the positive coefficient ($B = .87$) suggested that students who were willing to communicate in the classroom tended to score higher in speaking achievement). The final result of regression indicated that FLSA and WTC explained 72% of the variance, $R^2 = .72$, $F(2, 47) = 60.03$, $p < .001$. This implies that students' speaking anxiety might be kept constantly low in order that the EFL students have willingness to speak in English.

Keywords: University level of EFL learners, Foreign-language speaking anxiety (FLSA), EFL Speaking achievement, Willingness to communicate (WTC)

Introduction

A notion about the effect of affective factor on L2 learning achievement has been for long time convincing in the area of EFL teaching and learning. Therefore, it has been becoming an everlasting discussion. Some research findings showed empirical evidences for strengthening such belief, for instance, learners' psychological states gives positive affective impact on both in and out side-class English learning (Maisa, & Suherdi, 2019; Susilo, 2016) ^[41, 54]. More specifically, on the willingness to communicate (WTC) and anxiety, two of many important affective factors, some studies revealed findings that those factors can help successful L2 learners. For instance, anxiety as a variable in relation to L2 four skills has been explored by some studies to intervene the achievement on those skills in general (Mohammadpur & Ghafournia, 2015) ^[44], on listening skills (Golchi, 2012) ^[24], and in regard with speaking achievement (Yashima, 2002; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Chou, 2018; Debreli & Demirkan, 2015; Minghe & Yuan, 2013; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; A'yuni & Arifa, 2022) ^[59, 46, 16, 17, 43, 50, 7]. Firstly, for anxiety in regard with speaking skill, results on some studies showed various findings, for instance, speaking anxiety influenced speech performance.

(Sun, 2022)^[53]; high emotional understanding learners outperformed their speaking skills (Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora, 2022)^[19]; and relaxation is one of the learners' strategies to overcome speaking anxiety (A'yuni & Arifa, 2022)^[6]. In addition, anxiety occurs due to the teachers' role in raising and reducing anxiety, lack of vocabulary, test anxiety, peer anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, inability to comprehend the target language, lack of preparation before the class and limited participation in the class (e.g., Alhadi, 2014; Arabai, 2015; Rafada & Madini, 2017; Rafieyan & Yamanashi, 2016)^[3, 4, 48, 49]. Secondly, WTC put itself as a fundamental affective factor influencing an individual's ability to communicate (Ito, 2022; Soyoo, 2022)^[29, 52] together with other other factors such as trait-like or state-like factors (Lee & Liu, 2022)^[34], individual and situational factors (Muroya, 2022)^[45], digital setting (Waluyo & Bakoko, 2022)^[56], classroom environment (Alam *et al.*, 2022)^[2], teacher's strategies (Zohrabi & Farshbafan, 2022)^[64], and learners' experiences (Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora, 2022)^[19]. In addition, several studies have been given attention to WTC as is in correlation with L2 learning outcomes (Baghaei *et al.*, 2012)^[8]. However, (Joe *et al.*, 2017)^[30] contradictorily found that there is no correlation between WTC and FL learning outcomes. In a more tolerable notion, few findings argued that WTC is seen as a dynamic factor depending on the topic, conversational context, a desire to speak to a specific personal, trait-like factor and other potential situational variables (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015; Lee & Liu, 2022)^[34, 31, 40].

Whatever the role of WTC and anxiety in L2 learning, these two variables might presumably be put in intersupporting variables in terms of increasing the success of L2 learners. Research on such notion has been done, for instance, Wu & Lin (2014)^[57] exploring anxiety about speaking a foreign language as a mediator between motivation and willingness to communicate. This study summarizes the finding that high motivation and low anxiety of speaking are needed to perform a better willingness to communicate. Eventhough many studies conducted to raise the issue of WTC and anxiety in the context of EFL learning achievement, however, a doubtfull conclusion on how WTC can function as the mediator variable to minimize speaking anxiety in the accomplishment of speaking performance still needs more empirical evidences. Therefore, it is rare that research on such method be conducted. The current study is intended to investigate WTC as a mediator of the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking achievement of EFL students. Researchers asked three questions in the study, i.e.

1. What is the level of foreign language speaking anxiety of the students?
2. What is the level of willingness to communicate of the students?
3. To what extent does willingness to communicate mediate the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and speaking achievement of the students?
 - a) Does foreign language speaking anxiety significantly predict speaking achievement of the students?
 - b) Does foreign language speaking anxiety significantly predict willingness to communicate of the students?
 - c) Does willingness to communicate significantly predict speaking achievement of the students?

Review of Related Literature

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA)

Mastering a foreign language represents not only cognitive but also affective features. Anxiety is mentioned as one of the most studied factors in affective features of learning process that obviously seen in speaking class (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986)^[27]. According to (Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017)^[50] most of students perceived speaking a foreign language as the most anxiety provoking. It is supported by (Young, 1991)^[33] who mentioned that students with a high level of anxiety mostly perform poorly in oral performance. In other words, improving student's speaking performance has something to do with reducing anxiety.

Horwitz *et al.*, (1986)^[27] stated that students who suffer for anxiety tend to identify speaking as the most frightening language skills. They commonly suffered for stress and start to "freeze" when they have to perform speaking activities. In specific, activities such as oral-presentations, role-play, formal discussions and answering questions in English are the main factor activities for students to be anxious (Koch & Terrell, 1991; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013)^[33, 32]. Speaking is seen as barrier for language learners due to anxiety to participate in the classroom interactions (Rafieyan & Yamanashi, 2016)^[49]. Young (1991)^[33] mentioned that speaking activities that required students to do on spot performance in front of the class produce anxiety greater than other language skills. As a result, foreign language speaking anxiety becomes the most powerful predictor of unwillingness to communicate in foreign language classes (Liu & Jackson, 2008)^[35]. It is related to self-perceptions, feelings and behaviors. It can be seen as stressful experience that may bring students to avoid learning process (Rafada & Madini, 2017)^[48]. There are some factors contributing to foreign language speaking anxiety; for instance, there are two different factors, i.e. linguistic and psychological factors (Toubot & Seng, 2018)^[55], linguistic factor (Ellis, 2015)^[18], linguistics difficulties (Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Melouah, 2013)^[32, 42], psychological aspect (Minghe & Yuan, 2013; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002)^[43, 25].

Types of Foreign Language Anxiety

Anxiety in speaking a foreign language can be divided into types that brought differences for teachers to manage this affective problem. Horwitz *et al.*, (1986)^[27] classified three different types of anxieties, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Similarly, Ganschow & Sparks (1996)^[21] mentioned types of performance anxiety as those in the three categories. The explanation of foreign language classroom anxiety types mainly by Horwitz *et al.*, (1986)^[27] are presented below supported also by some other researchers: 1) *Communication apprehension* which is defined as a kind of nervousness described by anxiety about communicating with people. It is related to an experience of shy, awkward and worried while speaking to others; 2) *Test Anxiety* which refers to an experience of anxiety resulting from fear of failure before taking a test. Therefore, a poor performance in a previous test leads to anxiety (Wu & Lin, 2014)^[57]; 3) *Fear of Negative Evaluation* which refers to fear of others' evaluation. It is defined as the act of avoiding evaluative situation. Someone who has this type of anxiety tends to fear of others would evaluate them negatively. It is not only related to test-taking but also in social experience such as speaking a foreign language in a class (Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002)^[5].

Willingness To Communicate

Some people are found to be unwilling to join in a communication. Willingness to communicate (WTC) serves as a concept that explores the reasons of ones to engage or disengage in a communication. It is defined as an interest of someone to engage in a communication with specific interlocutor in a particular time by using foreign or second language (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998) ^[38]. Moreover, Kang (2005) ^[31] and Cao (2011) ^[15] further defined WTC as one's tendency to be involved actively in a communication influenced by certain situations such as the interlocutor, topic, context, teacher, group size and other potential situational variables. Former definition refers to dual perspective that WTC as personality trait and situational variable (Peng & Woodrow, 2010) ^[47]. In the trait area, a communicative tendency based on personality while at the situational area refers to an individual communicative tendency vary across time and situations.

The concept of WTC is treated as situational variable and changes time to time (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998) ^[39]. According to Kang (2005) ^[31], situational contextual factors such as topic, interlocutors, group size and cultural background have an effect towards WTC. Those situational variables interacted with security, excitement and other psychological conditions that change moment to moment. A small change of one variable may bring immediate or delay impact on the other deBot, Lowie, & Verspoor in (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015) ^[40]. In conclusion, willingness to communicate is dynamic process of an interest of someone to join in a communication with certain person in a specific time by using foreign language.

Several studies have been investigated the factors of willingness to communicate for years; for example, individual variables such as attitudes, motivation, self-confidence and anxiety are found to be the factors of willingness to communicate (Ghonsooly *et al.*, 2012; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002) ^[23, 59, 37]; negative attitude of learning and using second language leads to nervousness and anxiety (Zheng & Cheng, 2018) ^[63]; willingness to reach goal with energy to put an effort on it is a long version of it (Wu & Lin, 2014) ^[57]; less self-confidence leads to discourage students to speak (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014) ^[46]; and lower anxiety, and higher perception of communicative competence are associated to higher willingness to communicate (Yashima, 2002) ^[59].

Willingness to Communicate

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The concept of WTC has been iterated as situational variable and changes time to time (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998) ^[38]. According to Kang (2005) ^[31], situational contextual factors such as topic, interlocutors, group size and cultural background have an effect towards WTC. Those situational variables interacted with security, excitement and other psychological conditions that change moment to moment. In conclusion, willingness to communicate is dynamic process of an interest of someone to join in a communication with certain person in a specific time by using foreign language. Several studies have been investigated the factors of willingness to communicate for years. Individual variables such as attitudes, motivation, self-confidence and anxiety are found to be the factors of willingness to communicate (Ghonsooly *et al.*, 2012 ^[23]; (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996) ^[37]; Yashima, 2002) ^[59]. The studies implied that students who had a positive attitude toward English learning were automatically motivated to learn. Zheng & Cheng (2018) ^[63] mentioned that negative attitude of learning and using second language leads to nervousness and anxiety. As a result, avoiding a situation to use the second language may be the most choice of students. In relation to motivation, willingness to reach goal with energy to put an effort on it is a long version of it (Wu & Lin, 2014) ^[57]. Wu & Lin (2014) ^[57] mentioned that students with strong motivation were expected to work hard in learning English. Two reasons exist, either for having a better future with less foreign language anxiety or understand more about culture and the natural conversation with native. The study of Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014) ^[46] revealed that less self-confidence leads to discourage students to speak. Studies above revealed anxiety as one of the individual factors of willingness to communicate. Yashima (2002) ^[59] found that lower anxiety, and higher perception of communicative competence are associated to higher willingness to communicate. In other words, students are more willing to communicate if teacher are able to create a condition to facilitate in reducing anxiety. A high motivated students in learning led to better self-perceptions they had about competence that will lower anxiety and in turn increased the willingness to communicate. It is supported by MacIntyre *et al.*, (1998) ^[39] who stated that a positive and negative attitude of students toward learning process lead to different intensity and efforts of language learning and communication.

However, it was frequently mentioned by researchers that self-confidence is the most immediate basis of willingness to communicate in foreign/second language learning (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998; Yashima, 2002) ^[59, 38]. Self-confidence predicted self-perceived communicative competence of someone. A better self-perceived communicative competence led to higher willingness to communicate.

Review of Previous Studies

WTC and anxiety are two interrelated affective factors which are quite crucial in boosting the learners' speaking performance. Previously, results on some studies revealed that speaking anxiety influenced speech performance (Sun, 2022) ^[53], high emotional understanding learners outperformed their speaking skills (Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora, 2022) ^[19], relaxation is one of the learners' strategies to overcome speaking anxiety (A'yuni & Arifa, 2022) ^[7]. Furthermore, research findings on WTC as a fundamental affective factor influencing an individual's ability to communicate (Ito, 2022; Soyoof, 2022) ^[29, 52] have

been conducted, together with other other factors such as trait-like or state-like factors (Lee & Liu, 2022) ^[34], individual and situational factors (Muroya, 2022) ^[45], digital setting (Waluyo & Bakoko, 2022) ^[56], classroom environment (Alam *et al.*, 2022) ^[2], teacher's strategies (Zohrabi & Farshbafan, 2022) ^[64], and learners' experiences (Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora, 2022) ^[19]. Moreover, Alhmedi (2014) ^[3] found that anxiety was a major factor that had negative impacts towards learning. The causes may come from teachers' role in raising and reducing anxiety, lack of vocabulary, test anxiety, speaking in front of others (peer anxiety), fear of negative evaluation, inability to comprehend the target language, lack of preparation before the class and limited participation in the class (Rafada & Madini, 2017; Rafieyan & Yamanashi, 2016) ^[48, 49].

More spesifically researches on anxiety and WTC have been conducted in similar method to the current study are explained as follows. Chou (2018) ^[16] investigated speaking anxiety and strategy use for learning English as a foreign language. This study was done in the context of full and partial English-medium instruction. The participants were 638 second-year undergraduate students in four universities in Taiwan. It was intended to investigate students' speaking performance, their degree of speaking anxiety, perceived difficulties, strategy use, and how well the use of speaking strategies predicts anxiety in speaking English in full and partial English-medium instruction contexts. This study used questionnaire of 6-point Likert scale, open-ended questions and students' English speaking tests. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to improve and reduce the large number of individual questionnaire items and was suitable for analysis such as multiple regression or MANOVA. After reducing the data, MANOVA was conducted to compare result between groups. After that, a hierarchical multiple regression was adopted to predict students' anxiety. The participants' speaking difficulties were analyzed by using chi-square tests of independence. The qualitative data were analyzed based on components of speaking. The result suggested that students who received partial English-medium instruction showed high speech anxiety, a lack of confidence, and negative feeling toward English learning. Moreover, students in partial English-medium instruction were found to use rehearsal and paraphrasing strategies less frequently comparing to those in full English-medium instruction. At last, there is a relationship found between English-medium instruction context and difficulties in speaking. However, speaking anxiety and speaking performance relationship did not revealed by the study. Therefore, the current study similarly investigated levels of speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance as well as its relationship as the novel side.

Another previous study is by Debreli & Demirkan (2015) ^[17] who investigated sources and levels of foreign language speaking anxiety of English as a foreign language for university students with regard to language proficiency and gender. This study was conducted in a university in Cyprus, Turkey. The participants were 196 students who were volunteered to participate. It was intended to investigate the levels of EFL students' speaking anxiety and sources that make them anxious. Furthermore, this study also explored whether there is any relationship of speaking anxiety and students' language proficiency level and gender.

This study used questionnaire and semi-structured interview to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed to 196

students while semi-structured interview was conducted to randomly selected 10 students using Turkish language. The questionnaire was adopted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Yan & Horwitz (2008) ^[58]. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part was asking personal questions (age, gender, language proficiency level) and the second part was 33 questions of 5 Likert-scale. Moreover, semi-structured interview was used to provide deep ideas on students experience of speaking anxiety. Two categories were analyzed by the result of interview namely, EFL speaking anxiety and sources as well as reasons for speaking anxiety. The result suggested that the students generally had low level of speaking anxiety. Also, students with higher level of language proficiency had a higher level of anxiety compared to those with lower level of anxiety. Furthermore, there was no statistically meaningful difference between students' gender and anxiety levels. Regarding to the factors of anxiety, there are some factors not found in literature appeared in the study such as difficultly in pronunciation, being asked immediate questions by the teacher, and not understanding the question asked by the teacher. Similarly, the current study investigated levels of anxiety and relationship of anxiety toward other variables. However, the current study specifically focused on speaking achievement rather than language proficiency, adding willingness to communicate as mediator variable and neglecting gender category.

In relation to anxiety and willingness to communicate relationship, Wu & Lin (2014) ^[57] explored study on anxiety about speaking a foreign language as a mediator of the relation between motivation and willingness to communicate. The study by Wu & Lin (2014) ^[57] aimed to investigate whether anxiety in speaking a foreign language facilitated relation between motivation and willingness to communicate. This study was conducted in one private university and two public universities in central and southern Taiwan. The participants were 60 male and 47 female. This study used GEPT (General English Proficiency Test) as the instrument to know the level of speaking proficiency of the students and 5 Likert-scale questionnaire as the instrument to know about students' speaking anxiety, willingness to communicate and motivation. This study used multiple regression analysis to investigate anxiety on speaking a foreign language as mediator of the relationship between motivation and willingness to communicate following causal step by Baron & Kenny (1986) ^[9]. The result of this study suggested that motivation was negatively related to speaking anxiety and positively related to willingness to communicate. Also, speaking a foreign language was negatively related to willingness to communicate and partially facilitated relationship between motivation and willingness to communicate. This study summarized the point that high motivation and low anxiety of speaking are needed to perform a better willingness to communicate. Likewise, the current study used multiple regression as the statistical analysis, following (Baron & Kenny, 1986b) ^[10] steps of testing mediation and investigating levels of anxiety. Furthermore, this study aimed to place willingness to communicate as the mediator of the relation between foreign language speaking anxiety and speaking achievement.

Research Method Design

The researchers used correlational design with multiple

regression analysis to investigate a mediator of the relationship between independent and dependent variable. The researchers have FLSA as the independent variable, WTC as the mediator and speaking achievement as the dependent variable (see Figure 1).



Fig 1: Illustration of the variable relationship

The participants were 50 students of the third semester of English Department at Mulawarman University, Indonesia, who were taken using simple random sampling. There were three instruments used, i.e. 1) Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) Scale which was adopted from the modified version of Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014) [46] as it is specified the items of questionnaire on speaking anxiety; and 2) Willingness to Communicate in English Questionnaire, which was developed by Peng & Woodrow (2010) [47] consisting of 10 items, with 6-point Likert-scale representing two observed variables; and 3) speaking test, in which the researchers used speaking prompts as stimuli to guide students in delivering speaking performance.

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) Scale

The researcher adopted the modified version by Öztürk & Gürbüz (2014) [46] as it is specified the items of questionnaire on speaking anxiety. It is 5-point Likert-scale instrument ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale possible ranges from 18-90. The FLSA scale version that was used in this study has alpha coefficient of 0.91 suggested that the scale is reliable (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014) [46]. The questionnaire involves two components including communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension refers to nervousness felt by the students while communicating with people (Yan & Horwitz, 2008) [58]. One of the example on the questionnaire is represented by statement “*I am never quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English.*” There are 9 items of communication apprehension in the questionnaire. Moreover, another component is about fear of negative evaluation. It is the act of avoiding negative evaluation, in this case is by the audiences such as friends in the classroom people (Yan & Horwitz, 2008) [58]. It is reflected in the statement of item number 2, “*I am afraid of making mistakes in English classes.*” This second component also has 9 items, equal to the previous component.

Willingness to Communicate in English Questionnaire

WTC in English questionnaire was developed by Peng & Woodrow (2010) [47]. It consists of 10 items, 6-point Likert-scale representing two observed variables. The 6-point Likert-scale ranged from 1 *Not at all true about me*, 2 *Very slightly true about me*, 3 *Slightly true of me*, 4 *Moderately true of me*, 5 *Very much true of me*, 6 *Extremely true about me*. The questionnaire is divided into in meaning-focused activities and in form-focused activities. All of the 10 items are positively worded. This instrument was used to measure

willingness to communicate in speaking a foreign language inside the classroom. This questionnaire has been tested for the internal consistency reliability and resulted 0.88 which meant that the scale is reliable.

Speaking Test

Speaking test is required to obtain data on students' speaking achievement. In this study, the researcher used speaking prompts as stimuli to guide students in delivering speaking performance. Speaking prompts contained procedure of conducting speaking performance as required in this study. As it has been depicted in the speaking anxiety questionnaire (adapted version of Yan & Horwitz (2008) [58], students should experience classroom environment when conducting a speaking test so that they can relate better with the items of questionnaire.

Speaking Prompts

The speaking prompts are made based on the consideration of questionnaire content of FLSAS and WTC. Generally, it required students to experience speaking performance in front of their friends. The speaking prompts in this study have two parts including preparation and performance. The first part is preparation. All of the topics are presented to students together with explanation of each. There are 5 topics including current phenomena, storytelling, telling schedule activity, describing something and telling past events. The topics are those which are used for Speaking Course of the first till the third semester in Mulawarman University especially for impromptu speaking. After that, the researcher shows and explains the rubric used for scoring to students. Students are informed that speaking performance is lasted for 3 minutes. They are given 15 minutes to collect idea of what to speak in each topic. The second part is performance of speaking. The first performer student picks one of five topics represented by cards provided on the desk. Three opportunities are given to change the choice. She or he is given 3 minutes to make notes preparing what to speak. After three minutes preparation, first student stands in front of the class without paper while the second student comes to the desk and chooses the topic. The first student starts speaking at the same time with the second student starts to make notes for preparation. The third student counts the 3 minutes by using stopwatch.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed by using simple linier and multiple regression. Based on the result of regression, the acceptance of the hypotheses were as follows:

Ha: $p < .05$

If p-value is lower than .05, it means that Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected.

The hypotheses of this study are

1. Foreign language speaking anxiety significantly predicts speaking achievement of the students.
2. Foreign language speaking anxiety significantly predicts willingness to communicate of the students.
3. Willingness to communicate significantly predicts speaking achievement of the students.
4. Willingness to communicate mediates the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and speaking

achievement of the students.

Findings

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) Scale

The calculation of student's response resulted the raw score ranged from 18 to 90 with the mean score was 58.42 as showed in table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of FLSA Categories

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Medium	28	56,0	56,0	56,0
Low	16	32,0	32,0	88,0
High	6	12,0	12,0	100,0
Total	50	100,0	100,0	

Table 1 showed that students generally experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety. The result of descriptive statistics suggested that 28 (56%) students scored between 54-72, which indicated a medium level of speaking anxiety. Then, 16 (32%) students scored between 18-53 which implied a low level of speaking anxiety. Furthermore, 6 (12%) students appeared to have higher than 72 as the score which means that they have high level of speaking anxiety.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Questionnaire

There are three levels of WTC based on the raw score including low, moderate, and high level. The divisions of the levels are: WTC' scores lower than 25th percentile is decided to be low level; WTC's scores between 25th and 75th percentiles are decided to be moderate level; and WTC' scores higher than 75th percentile is decided as high level of WTC.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of WTC categories

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Medium	27	54,0	54,0	54,0
High	12	24,0	24,0	78,0
Low	11	22,0	22,0	100,0
Total	50	100,0	100,0	

As seen in table 2, more than half of students experienced a moderate level of WTC. It was found that 27 students (54%) were categorized into moderate level with the scores ranged from 39-51. Moreover, 12 students (24%) were found to have high level of WTC with the scores ranged from 52 to 60. The smallest percentage was shown by 11 students (22%) whose the levels were categorized as low ranging from 10-38.

Students' Speaking Achievement

To know the speaking achievement, students' scores were categorized into A, B, C, D, or E following the Academic Regulation of Mulawarman University (2018). As shown in table 3, students' scores generally categorized as C level which ranged from 60 - 69. There were 22 (44%) students whose the scores fell within C category. It was influenced by the type of speaking test which required students to speak in front of the class with impromptu topic. Moreover, slightly lower in frequency, 21 (42%) scores were judged as B category which ranged from 70 – 79. Students who had score higher than 79 were decided to deserve an A letter. Among 50 students, 4 (8%) of them had an A category for their scores. The least number of letter category was D level, there were only 3 (6%) students who had score lower than 60.

At last, no one was categorized as E since none of the students scored lower than 40.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of Speaking Achievement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid C	22	44,0	44,0	44,0
B	21	42,0	42,0	86,0
A	4	8,0	8,0	94,0
D	3	6,0	6,0	100,0
Total	50	100,0	100,0	

The relationship between FLSA and Speaking Achievement

A simple regression was conducted to predict speaking achievement based on speaking anxiety.

Table 4. Model Summary of FLSA and Speaking Achievement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,661 ^a	,436	,425	5,765

a. Predictors: (Constant), FLSA

Table 5. ANOVA Table of FLSA and Speaking Achievement

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1234,806	1	1234,806	37,148	,000 ^b
	Residual	1595,514	48	33,240		
	Total	2830,320	49			

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Achievement

b. Predictors: (Constant), FLSA

Table 6. Coefficients Table of FLSA and Speaking Achievement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	89,291	3,498		25,529	,000
	FLSA	-,355	,058	-,661	-6,095	,000

As summarized from tabel 4, 5 and 6, the results suggested that speaking anxiety explained 44% of the variance, $R^2 = .44$, $F(1, 48) = 37.15$, $p < .001$. It was found that speaking anxiety significantly predicted speaking score, $B = -.36$, $t(48) = -6.10$, $p < .001$. A negative coefficient ($B = -.36$) showed that if the speaking anxiety increased, speaking achievement tended to decrease.

The relationship between FLSA and WTC

A simple linear regression was run with FLSA predicting WTC.

Table 7 Model Summary of FLSA and WTC

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,631 ^a	,398	,385	5,654

a. Predictors: (Constant), FLSA

Table 8. ANOVA Result of FLSA and WTC

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1013,674	1	1013,674	31,708	,000 ^b
	Residual	1534,506	48	31,969		
	Total	2548,180	49			

a. Dependent Variable: WTC

b. Predictors: (Constant), FLSA

Table 9. Coefficients of FLSA and WTC Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	63,203	3,430		18,426	,000
	FLSA	-.322	,057	-.631	-5,631	,000

a. Dependent Variable: WTC

As extracted from table 7, 8 and 9, the results suggested that speaking anxiety explained 40% of the variance, $R^2 = .40$, $F(1, 48) = 31.71$, $p < .001$. The result showed that speaking anxiety significantly predicted WTC, $B = -.32$, $t(48) = -5.63$, $p < .001$. Students who have increasing level of speaking anxiety tend to decrease in willingness to communicate level, confirmed by negative regression coefficient ($B = -.32$).

The relationship between WTC and Speaking Achievement

Another simple linear regression was conducted with the WTC predicting speaking achievement.

Table 10. Model Summary of WTC and Speaking Achievement Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,829 ^a	,687	,681	4,295

a. Predictors: (Constant), WTC

Table 11. ANOVA Result of WTC and Speaking Achievement ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1944,974	1	1944,974	105,449	,000 ^b
	Residual	885,346	48	18,445		
	Total	2830,320	49			

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Achievement

b. Predictors: (Constant), WTC

Table 12. Coefficients of WTC and Speaking Achievement Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	29,752	3,828		7,773	,000
	WTC	,874	,085	,829	10,269	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Achievement

As summarised from table 10,11, and 12, the results suggested that WTC explained 69% of the variance, $R^2 = .69$, $F(1, 48) = 105.45$, $p < .001$. It showed that WTC significantly predicted speaking achievement of the students, $B = .87$, $t(48) = 10.27$, $p < .001$. A positive coefficient ($B = .87$) suggested that students who were willing to communicate in the classroom tended to score higher in speaking achievement.

FLSA and WTC toward Speaking Achievement

To know if there is a full or partial mediation occurred, Baron & Kenny (1986) [9] explained that full mediation exists if independent variable (FLSA) is no longer significant when mediating variable (WTC) is controlled. In contrast, a partial mediation is supported if independent variable (FLSA) is still significant (i.e., both FLSA and WTC significantly predict speaking achievement).

Table 13. Model Summary of FLSA, WTC, and Speaking Achievement Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,848 ^a	,719	,707	4,116

a. Predictors: (Constant), WTC, FLSA

Table 14. ANOVA result of FLSA, WTC, and Speaking Achievement ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2034,051	2	1017,025	60,030	,000 ^b
	Residual	796,269	47	16,942		
	Total	2830,320	49			

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Achievement

b. Predictors: (Constant), WTC, FLSA

Table 15. Coefficients of FLSA, WTC, and Speaking Achievement Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	43,677	7,095		6,156	,000
	FLSA	-.123	,054	-.229	-2,293	,026
	WTC	,722	,105	,685	6,868	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Achievement

Based on the table 13, 14, and 15, the result of regression indicated that FLSA and WTC explained 72% of the variance, $R^2 = .72$, $F(2, 47) = 60.03$, $p < .001$. Thus, 28% could perhaps be explained by other factors which were not being observed in this study. WTC contributed significantly ($B = .722$, $t(47) = 6.87$, $p < .001$) and FLSA was also still contributed significantly ($B = -.123$, $t(47) = -2.29$, $p < .03$). This means that partial mediation is supported because the FLSA as independent variable was still significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that willingness to communicate partially mediated the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and speaking achievement.

Sobel test for mediation

Frazier *et al.*, (2004) noted that in testing mediator effect, it needs more than only reporting a smaller size or insignificant result of the relation between independent and dependent variable when the mediator is added. Sobel test should be conducted in advance to confirm the significance of the mediated effect. In other words, Sobel test is used as a way to estimate the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable via moderator (Sobel, 1982).

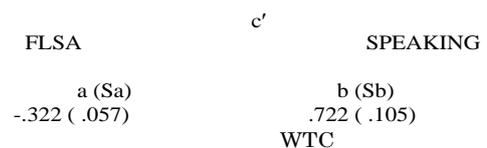


Figure 2. Illustration of Sobel test

Table 16. Sobel Test

Test Statistic	p-value
-4.3649691	0.00001271

Resulted from online calculation (Interactive Mediation Tests)

Table 16 showed that willingness to communicate as mediator significantly explained that speaking achievement was determined by the predictor of foreign language speaking anxiety with the help of mediator ($z = -4.46$, $p < .001$). The result was in line with previous causal step by (Baron & Kenny, 1986) [9] which specifically resulted on WTC as partial mediator.

Discussion

The result of FLSA scale revealed that students generally experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety. The result is linear with studies in EFL students from Turkish (Çağatay, 2015) who found a moderate level of FLSA among students. However, studies had inconsistent result among speaking anxiety levels, i.e. Turkish EFL students' low level of speaking anxiety (Debreli & Demirkan, 2015; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014) [46, 17], EFL Libyan students' moderate to high level of speaking anxiety (Toubot & Seng, 2018) [55]. Students' anxiety level varies following their linguistics knowledge as well as psychological aspect (Toubot & Seng, 2018) [55]. In addition, students who feel comfortable in a classroom environment might be able to give a more totality performance (Minghe & Yuan, 2013) [43].

Theoretically, speaking anxiety levels differ based on the factors contributed to anxiety when speaking, such as personal and interpersonal anxiety, learner beliefs about language learning, teacher beliefs about language teaching, teacher-learner interactions, classroom procedures, and language teaching (Young, 1991) [33]. Obviously, not only students fighting their anxiety does matter but teachers' facilitation of decreasing anxiety is also important. At the first glance, moderate level of speaking anxiety might be tolerable. However, it is still represented an affective problem which is previously indicated as an alarm that could discourage students to express their thoughts as well as participations in practicing English as part of their WTC. The result of the current study revealed moderate level of WTC which is in line with the study by (Ghonsooly *et al.*, 2014; Basöz & Erten, 2018) [22]. However, two studies found different results of WTC, i.e. a low level of WTC (Bursali & Yilmaz, 2019) and high level of WTC (Bukhari *et al.*, 2015). This inconsistency might be influenced by the fact that WTC has a dynamic factors including topic, conversational context, desire to speak to a specific person as well as other potential situational variables, trait-like factor and other potential situational variables ((Lee & Liu, 2022; Kang, 2005) [34, 31]. In addition, inconsistency might also be the result of different individual variables, one of them is being discussed in this study, which is anxiety (Yashima, 2002) [59]. In a nutshell, FLSA and WTC are found to be the influencing factors in speaking achievement. Some studies revealed such findings, for instance, a significant negative relationship between students' anxiety and their speaking performance (Aghajani & Amanzadeh, 2017); positive relationship between WTC toward speaking fluency and accuracy (Yousefi & Ahmad Kasaian, 2014).

In terms of WTC as mediator, the result of the current study revealed that FLSA significantly predicted speaking achievement. This finding is in line with (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012) study. Hence, anxiety becomes a concern in speaking class as it has debilitating effect proven by studies have been mentioned earlier as well as confirmed by the result of this study.

In terms of prediction, the finding of the current study showed that FLSA significantly predicted WTC with 40% of prediction. As the level of FLSA increases, the level of WTC tends to decrease ($B = -0.32$), several studies agreed that lower anxiety students associated with higher level of WTC (Yashima, 2002) [59]; (Liu & Jackson, 2008) [35]. The current study also revealed that WTC explained 69% of the variance of student's speaking achievement, which was approved by other studies, e.g. (Yousefi & Ahmad Kasaian, 2014). It can

be concluded that willingness to communicate partially mediated the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and speaking achievement. In other words, FLSA was able to directly predict speaking achievement or indirectly predict speaking achievement through WTC. At last, Sobel test confirmed the role of WTC as mediator between FLSA and speaking achievement ($z = -4.46, p < .001$).

Conclusion

The study poses three conclusions. First, the EFL learners of university students generally experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety. Second, students generally had moderate level of willingness to communicate. It was found that 27 students were judged to have moderate level of willingness to communicate; meanwhile the other 12 and 11 students were categorized to have high and low level of WTC respectively. The last, WTC partially mediated the relationship between FLSA and speaking achievement; in other words, result represented the importance of WTC as a medium to facilitate enhancing the relationship between FLSA and speaking achievement.

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