

Language Shaming and Speaking Anxiety among Indonesian Secondary EFL Students

Salma Yatri*, Maemuna Muhayyang, Muhammad Miftah Fauzan

Email: Salmayatri032@gmail.com*, maemarasyid@unm.ac.id, miftah.fauzan@unm.ac.id

Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examined the association between language shaming and speaking anxiety among secondary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at SMP Negeri 8 Makassar. A quantitative ex post facto correlational design was used. The population comprised 360 eighth-grade students, and the reported sample consisted of 35 students from two classes selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using a 15-item language shaming questionnaire and a 20-item speaking anxiety questionnaire and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. Language shaming was positively associated with speaking anxiety ($r = .719, p < .001$). The fitted model accounted for 51.7% of the sample variance in anxiety ($R^2 = .517$; adjusted $R^2 = .502$), $F(1, 33) = 35.312, p < .001$. The slope was 0.558 ($SE = 0.094, p < .001$; approximate 95% CI [0.367, 0.749]). Students with higher shaming scores therefore tended to report higher anxiety scores. The small sample, classroom clustering, and self-report design limit generalization and preclude causal inference. The findings suggest the relevance of respectful feedback and supportive classroom interaction, although these practices were not tested as interventions.

Keywords: *language shaming, speaking anxiety, secondary students, linear regression, EFL*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking English remains challenging for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners because oral communication involves both linguistic knowledge and psychological readiness. Speaking enables learners to express ideas and participate in academic and social interaction, but concern about how others will judge their performance can make classroom communication difficult. Horwitz et al. (1986) identify fear of negative evaluation as an important aspect of foreign language classroom anxiety. This perspective makes the social conditions surrounding speaking relevant to understanding learners' reported anxiety.

The interpretation of anxiety also depends on how the construct is defined. Scovel (1978) distinguished potentially facilitating and debilitating forms of anxiety, while Horwitz (2001) reviewed language anxiety as a situation-specific concern rather than simply a general personality disposition. Skill-specific research further suggests that writing and speaking anxiety should not automatically be treated as identical constructs (Cheng et al., 1999). Woodrow (2006), examining learners preparing for university study in Australia, distinguished speaking anxiety within and outside the classroom. These distinctions support a focused account of the English-speaking situations covered by the present questionnaire and caution against equating its scores with all forms of learner anxiety.

Research has examined speaking anxiety in different educational settings, including Indonesian secondary classrooms (Hermawan et al., 2024) and adults using English as a medium of instruction (Yildiz, 2021). Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis also provides a theoretical account of how emotional conditions may constrain language

acquisition. Preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 8 Makassar suggested reluctance to answer questions and participate in speaking activities. These observations motivate the present inquiry; they are contextual impressions rather than a systematically analyzed dataset and do not establish why students were reluctant to speak.

The educational relevance of anxiety is supported by broader syntheses of the literature. Teimouri et al. (2019) found a negative association between second language anxiety and achievement across a substantial international evidence base. Botes et al. (2020) likewise identified negative associations between foreign language classroom anxiety and achievement, including skill-specific outcomes. These syntheses justify attention to anxiety as an educational concern, but they do not establish that shaming causes anxiety or that the present correlation predicts achievement. Anxiety–achievement associations and shaming–anxiety associations involve different constructs and should not be compared as though they were estimates of the same relationship.

Evidence relevant to secondary learners also comes from Saito et al. (2018), who examined motivation, emotions, learning experience, and speech comprehensibility development among high school EFL students. Their cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses connect emotional experience with speaking development while demonstrating the value of observations across time. This literature strengthens the rationale for studying the emotional context of secondary English lessons. The current study contributes a more limited estimate of concurrent self-reported shaming and anxiety and does not measure speaking development.

Language shaming refers to humiliating or stigmatizing responses to a learner's language use, including ridicule directed at pronunciation, grammar, or accent (Abeyseena, 2022). It should be distinguished from respectful corrective feedback: identifying an error does not in itself constitute shaming. The distinction concerns how correction positions the learner and whether it involves ridicule, devaluation, or humiliation. Piller (2016) situates unequal treatment related to language within broader concerns about linguistic diversity and social justice. These perspectives suggest that language learning must be considered in relation to the social meanings attached to learners' speech.

The possibility of negative evaluation is especially relevant when learners interpret errors as evidence of personal inadequacy. Kitano (2001) associated anxiety in university Japanese classes with fear of negative evaluation and perceived speaking ability. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) examined differences in how anxious and nonanxious learners reacted to their own oral performance in relation to perfectionism. Young (1991) also considered classroom conditions relevant to reducing language anxiety. Together, these studies suggest attending to learners' interpretations of evaluation as well as the interpersonal manner of feedback. They do not establish that every correction is experienced as shaming or that findings from adult learners transfer directly to Indonesian schoolchildren.

Existing work on classroom anxiety and linguistic shaming provides a basis for investigating their relationship, but findings from other institutions or age groups cannot establish the pattern at SMP Negeri 8 Makassar. Secondary learners are already represented in the anxiety literature (Hermawan et al., 2024), so the contribution of this study is a bounded, school-specific examination of the association between reported language shaming and English-speaking anxiety. Work on linguistic shame in teacher education offers a related perspective while addressing a different population and setting (Abeyseena et al., 2024).

Willingness to communicate provides a related but distinct perspective on classroom participation. MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualized second language willingness to communicate through a situational model involving confidence and affiliation. Liu and Jackson (2008) examined unwillingness to communicate alongside foreign language anxiety among Chinese EFL learners, while Peng and Woodrow (2010) modeled willingness to

communicate in relation to confidence, motivation, learner beliefs, and classroom environment. This work supports considering the social context in which speaking takes place. However, willingness to communicate was not measured here, so it remains a possible outcome for subsequent research rather than an additional finding of this study.

Classroom emotional experience also extends beyond anxiety. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) investigated foreign language enjoyment and anxiety as related dimensions of learners' experiences. Their findings encourage a broader account in which positive engagement and anxiety can coexist rather than treating low anxiety as equivalent to enjoyment. For the present inquiry, language shaming is therefore positioned as one possible correlate of an emotional experience, not as a complete description of classroom climate. Subsequent research could examine whether supportive relationships and enjoyment alter the association, using measures specifically designed for those constructs.

The study addresses the following research question: Is language shaming positively associated with speaking anxiety among eighth-grade EFL students at SMP Negeri 8 Makassar? The null hypothesis is that the population linear association between the two questionnaire scores is zero. The analysis estimates the direction and magnitude of the sample association. Its practical relevance lies in informing teachers' reflection on feedback and classroom interaction, while recognizing that an observational association cannot demonstrate the effectiveness of a particular teaching practice.

METHOD

Study Design

This study employed a quantitative ex post facto correlational design with statistical prediction. Language shaming was the predictor and speaking anxiety was the outcome. Neither variable was manipulated, and the questionnaires were administered within the same data collection period. Accordingly, the design estimates an association between reported scores; statistical prediction does not establish temporal order or a causal effect.

Population and sampling technique

The population comprised 360 eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 8 Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in the 2025 academic year. The reported sampling approach was cluster random sampling, with intact classes as the sampling units. Two classes were selected, yielding an analyzed sample of 35 students. The number of eligible classes, the random selection procedure, and class-specific recruitment and nonparticipation counts are not documented in the available sampling description. No prospective sample-size justification is reported. These omissions limit assessment of representativeness and precision.

Data Collection

Two closed-ended questionnaires were administered: 15 items on language shaming and 20 items on speaking anxiety. Each item used a five-point agreement scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For summed item scores, the possible ranges are 15–75 and 20–100, respectively, with higher scores intended to represent greater reported shaming and anxiety. Agreement ratings should not be interpreted as direct counts of how often an event occurred. The instrument sources, administration language, translation procedures, reverse-scoring key, and exact item wording are not specified in the available instrument description. Consequently, the distinction between the two constructs and between corrective feedback and humiliating treatment requires further instrument documentation.

The questionnaires were administered directly to participants from the two selected classes over two consecutive days in the 2025 academic year. Before administration, the researcher explained the study's purpose, confidentiality, and completion instructions. Students completed the questionnaires individually in class under researcher supervision. The

month or term and specific measures preventing teachers or classmates from seeing responses are not reported. Supervision of completion should therefore not be taken as evidence that responses were free of social pressure.

Data Analysis

Data analysis used IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. The questionnaires were reported to have been piloted at a different school with students of similar characteristics. Pearson item correlations and Cronbach's alpha were described as the procedures used to examine item relationships and internal consistency. However, the pilot sample size, correlation thresholds, use of corrected item-total correlations, item removal decisions, and numerical alpha coefficients are not reported. Item correlations do not establish content or construct validity, and internal consistency is a property of a scale rather than an individual item. The measurement evidence must therefore be interpreted as incompletely documented. Cronbach's (1951) account of coefficient alpha provides a basis for discussing internal consistency, but citing that procedure cannot substitute for reporting coefficients calculated from the actual pilot responses. The reference is methodological context and does not supply missing reliability evidence for these questionnaires.

Descriptive statistics summarized the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of each score. Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests assessed the distributions of the observed scores. An ANOVA test for linearity examined the linear component and deviation from linearity. These checks do not establish normality of regression residuals, constant error variance, or absence of influential observations. Residual plots, influence diagnostics, and a scatterplot were not included in the reported output, so those assumptions cannot be confirmed from the available summaries.

Pearson correlation and ordinary simple linear regression were used to estimate the score association, with a significance level of .05. The regression tested the null hypothesis that the language shaming slope equals zero. Approximate two-sided 95% confidence intervals were calculated from the reported rounded coefficients and standard errors using the *t* distribution with 33 residual degrees of freedom. The reported analysis did not adjust for class membership. Students within either class may have shared experiences and correlated responses, violating the independent-error assumption; with only two classes, reliable estimation of between-class variation is especially limited. The reported *p* values and intervals consequently depend on the ordinary regression assumptions and should be interpreted cautiously. McNeish and Stapleton (2016) explain why a small number of clusters can compromise multilevel estimation. Their review reinforces the need for caution with this two-class sample; it does not provide a statistical correction for the present analysis.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the principal of SMP Negeri 8 Makassar. Participation was described as voluntary, and students were informed that responses would remain confidential, would be used only for research, and would not affect academic assessment. Personally identifiable information was excluded from the analysis and report. School permission is distinct from research ethics review, student assent, and parent or guardian consent. The available account does not specify the assent procedure, guardian consent or an approved waiver, or institutional ethics approval or exemption; no such arrangements are asserted here without supporting records.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarizes the observed language shaming and speaking anxiety scores for the 35 analyzed participants. The variables are named explicitly to distinguish the predictor from the outcome.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Language shaming	35	55.00	67.00	60.49	3.16
Speaking anxiety	35	74.00	83.00	79.00	2.45

Language shaming had a mean score of 60.49 (SD = 3.16; observed range 55–67), and speaking anxiety had a mean of 79.00 (SD = 2.45; observed range 74–83). Both means lie toward the upper end of the possible summed-score ranges of 15–75 and 20–100. No categorical label such as “high” is assigned because a prespecified classification rule and its source were not reported. These descriptive results characterize this sample rather than the prevalence of shaming or anxiety in the school population.

Score Distribution Checks

Table 2 presents the tests of the observed score distributions. These are preliminary distributional checks rather than diagnostics of the fitted regression residuals.

Table 2 Score Distribution Tests

Variable	K–S statistic	K–S p	S–W statistic	S–W p
Language shaming	.121	≥ .200	.969	.405
Speaking anxiety	.144	.063	.955	.166

Note. N = 35 for both variables. K–S = Kolmogorov–Smirnov with Lilliefors correction; S–W = Shapiro–Wilk. SPSS reports .200 as a lower bound for the first K–S p value.

Neither Shapiro–Wilk test detected a statistically significant departure from normality (language shaming: $W = .969$, $p = .405$; speaking anxiety: $W = .955$, $p = .166$). The Kolmogorov–Smirnov results were also nonsignificant. Nonsignificant results do not prove normality, particularly in a sample of 35. Regression inference additionally requires attention to residual behavior, variance, influence, and independence, which these score-level tests do not establish.

Linearity Test

Table 3 reports the ANOVA test for linearity between language shaming and speaking anxiety. The test separates the fitted linear component from departures associated with the observed predictor score groups.

Table 3 Test for Linearity

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between groups combined	130.083	12	10.840	3.226	.008
Linear component	105.452	1	105.452	31.386	< .001
Deviation from linearity	24.632	11	2.239	0.666	.754
Within groups	73.917	22	3.360	—	—
Total	204.000	34	—	—	—

Note. Outcome: speaking anxiety; predictor: language shaming. Values are retained from the reported output; small discrepancies in sums reflect rounding.

The linear component was statistically significant, $F(1, 22) = 31.386$, $p < .001$. No statistically significant deviation from linearity was detected, $F(11, 22) = 0.666$, $p = .754$. These results are compatible with a linear specification, but a nonsignificant deviation test does not exclude curvature or unusual observations. No claim of scatterplot inspection is made because paired student-level scores and the corresponding plot were not provided.

Correlation and Regression

The null hypothesis was that language shaming and speaking anxiety had no linear association. Tables 4-6 summarize the ordinary simple linear regression and its coefficient estimates.

Table 4 Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of estimate
.719	.517	.502	1.728

Note. Outcome: speaking anxiety; predictor: language shaming. R is nonnegative; the positive slope establishes the direction of the association.

The reported model correlation was $R = .719$. In a simple regression with an intercept, its magnitude equals the Pearson correlation magnitude; the positive slope establishes a positive signed correlation, $r = .719$. The fitted model accounted for 51.7% of the sample variance in speaking anxiety ($R^2 = .517$; adjusted $R^2 = .502$). The remaining 48.3% is unexplained by this model and may include unmeasured influences, measurement error, and other variation. It cannot be allocated to particular alternative causes.

The observed R^2 describes the fit of this one-predictor model in this sample. It is not a percentage of anxiety caused by shaming or an estimate of the benefit of reducing shaming. No universal R^2 threshold is applied, and R^2 is not treated as interchangeable with Cohen's f^2 . The magnitude warrants attention alongside the limited sample and measurement evidence.

Table 5. Regression ANOVA

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	105.452	1	105.452	35.312	< .001
Residual	98.548	33	2.986	—	—
Total	204.000	34	—	—	—

Note. Outcome: speaking anxiety; predictor: language shaming. The conventional model test assumes independent errors.

The overall regression was statistically significant, $F(1, 33) = 35.312$, $p < .001$. Under the ordinary regression assumptions, this rejects the null hypothesis of no linear association. Statistical significance alone does not establish model adequacy, practical effectiveness, or causal direction.

Table 6 Regression Coefficients

Term	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI for B
Intercept	45.252	5.687	—	7.958	< .001	33.682 to 56.822
Language shaming	0.558	0.094	.719	5.942	< .001	0.367 to 0.749

Note. Outcome: speaking anxiety. Approximate 95% confidence intervals use the reported rounded B and SE values and t with 33 degrees of freedom. They do not adjust for classroom clustering; confirm against the original SPSS output.

The fitted equation was predicted speaking anxiety = $45.252 + 0.558 \times$ language shaming. The slope was 0.558 (SE = 0.094), $t(33) = 5.942$, $p < .001$, with an approximate 95% CI of [0.367, 0.749]. A one-point difference in shaming score corresponded to a 0.558-point difference in predicted anxiety score within this fitted relationship. The intercept was 45.252 (SE = 5.687; approximate 95% CI [33.682, 56.822]); because zero is outside the possible and observed shaming score ranges, it has no direct substantive interpretation for these students. Intervals are reconstructed from rounded output and do not account for classroom clustering.

Discussion

Students reporting greater language shaming also reported greater speaking anxiety. This association is compatible with an interpretation in which concern about humiliating evaluation makes classroom speaking feel socially threatening. Horwitz et al. (1986) provide a conceptual basis for linking anxiety with negative evaluation, while Abeysena (2022) addresses linguistic shame in English classrooms. The present questionnaires do not test the proposed sequence from shaming to perceived threat, avoidance, and reduced participation, nor do they establish that it occurs over time.

One plausible interpretive link concerns the demands of speaking while monitoring how others may respond. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) examined language anxiety in relation to cognitive processing at input, processing, and output stages. This provides a rationale for considering whether anxious attention might compete with the demands of formulating an utterance. It does not show that such competition mediated the association reported here, because the present study did not include processing tasks, momentary attention measures, or mediation analysis. The cognitive account and the social-evaluative account should therefore be treated as complementary hypotheses for future investigation.

A distinction between constructive feedback and humiliating correction is central to interpreting the association. Feedback can draw attention to language form while preserving the learner's dignity; public ridicule or stigmatization serves a different social function. Nassaji (2015) examines interactional feedback as a means of connecting form and meaning in language learning. The present aggregate regression cannot determine whether particular correction practices were harmful, and the absence of exact item wording limits assessment of whether the language shaming scale consistently separated correction from humiliation.

Research on corrective feedback gives a further reason to separate correction from shaming. Lyster and Ranta (1997) described different feedback types and subsequent learner uptake in communicative classrooms. Lyster and Saito's (2010) meta-analysis found that oral corrective feedback can support target-language development, while Lyster et al. (2013) reviewed variation in feedback, learner responses, and classroom conditions. This evidence supports retaining pedagogically useful feedback while examining its delivery and interpretation. It would be inappropriate to infer from the present total-score correlation that teachers should eliminate correction, or that a particular feedback type necessarily humiliates learners. Future instruments should distinguish the linguistic function of feedback from the humiliating social treatment that defines shaming.

Exclusion from interaction, ridicule, and derogatory labeling are possible forms of language-related devaluation. However, the reported output contains total scores rather than item or dimension means. It therefore does not establish that excessive correction received the highest agreement, that exclusion was common, or that labels received lower agreement. These practices are discussed as conceptual examples rather than ranked findings or narrative accounts collected from participants. Even if item agreement scores become available, agreement should be distinguished from event frequency, and the separate contribution of each form would require an appropriate analysis.

Piller's (2016) account of language and social justice and Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment offer complementary perspectives on how social positioning can shape access to language practice. From these perspectives, perceived devaluation could make participation less attractive or less accessible. This is an interpretive possibility rather than a measured mechanism in the present study. Neither speaker intention nor changes in participation were assessed, so the findings cannot identify whether teachers or classmates acted deliberately or unintentionally.

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis offers a further theoretical lens by proposing that affective conditions influence access to input for acquisition. The present association is compatible with concern about an emotionally threatening learning environment, but the study measured self-reported anxiety rather than an affective filter, input processing, or language acquisition. It therefore does not directly test that hypothesis. Longitudinal evidence combining classroom interaction, anxiety measures, and learning outcomes would be needed to examine the proposed process.

The contribution of this study is a quantitative estimate of the association between two reported scores in one secondary-school sample. It complements discussion of linguistic shaming in English classrooms (Abeyseena, 2022) and teacher education (Abeyseena et al., 2024), without establishing that the same social processes operate identically across settings. The model cannot show how individual forms of shaming jointly or separately influence psychological well-being, because the reported analysis used only the aggregate predictor and outcome.

Other explanations remain plausible. Differences in vocabulary, speaking opportunities, prior learning experiences, and individual confidence may be related to anxiety, but they were not measured as covariates in this model. Tekir (2021) discusses speaking anxiety as a problem requiring attention to multiple learner and classroom factors. Anxious students might also perceive or recall negative evaluation differently, making reverse or reciprocal relationships possible. These possibilities cannot be resolved by the present design, and the unexplained variance cannot be attributed to any one of them.

The study has several limitations. The sample comprises 35 students from two classes at one school, with incomplete recruitment documentation and no reported prospective sample-size justification. Classroom clustering may affect conventional uncertainty estimates. Both measures are self-reports collected within the same period, which permits common response tendencies and possible overlap between items on humiliating evaluation and anxiety. Incomplete pilot reporting prevents a full assessment of measurement quality, and the narrow observed score ranges further limit extrapolation. Without the student-level dataset, residual diagnostics, influence checks, and class-sensitive analyses could not be verified. The findings should therefore be treated as a local observational association rather than a causal or broadly representative estimate. Podsakoff et al. (2003) identify potential sources of common method bias in behavioral research. Their review supports treating the shared respondent and measurement occasion as a limitation here, without assuming that the observed correlation is entirely a measurement artifact. Its extent cannot be determined from the aggregate results.

The association nevertheless supports careful reflection on classroom interaction. Teachers may allow students to complete a message before offering respectful, focused feedback, explain that errors are expected during learning, discourage peer ridicule, and distribute speaking opportunities equitably. Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) discuss classroom relationships and culture as relevant to learner engagement. These are pedagogical implications informed by the association and literature; their effects on anxiety or speaking development were not tested in this study.

CONCLUSION

Among the 35 eighth-grade EFL students analyzed at SMP Negeri 8 Makassar, higher language shaming scores were associated with higher speaking anxiety scores ($r = .719$, $p < .001$). The simple regression accounted for 51.7% of the sample variance in anxiety. These results describe a positive association and do not establish that shaming caused anxiety or determine the direction of the relationship. Generalization is limited by the small sample from two classes at one school, unadjusted classroom clustering, self-report, possible overlap between the scales, and incomplete instrument documentation.

Respectful corrective feedback and equitable opportunities to speak are reasonable classroom implications. Allowing a learner to finish a message before offering focused feedback is one concrete example. Such recommendations require evaluation as interventions rather than being treated as demonstrated outcomes of this study. Future work should use fully documented instruments and recruitment procedures, more classes and schools, and repeated observations to examine temporal relationships and classroom processes.

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