ANALYSIS OF SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG TAIWANESE EFL STUDENTS

BY

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Abstract. This study addresses a problem of English language speaking anxiety in the East Asian educational settings. Eighty first-year EFL major students from a private university in Taiwan are surveyed. Respondents are asked to answer questions about the frequency of their fear of speaking in an English class and the sources of that fear. The findings show that over half of the respondents feel speaking anxiety in English classes either continuously or almost continuously. The major sources of this anxiety belong to three interrelated and intersect groups: psychological, educational, and socio-cultural. The most frequently mentioned psychological source of anxiety is fear of not understanding or misunderstanding the teacher's question or task. In the second group, lack of fluency, grammar and vocabulary errors, and insufficient oral practice are named repeatedly. As for the socio-cultural factors, the traditional shyness of the Chinese people and their dislike of speaking in public seem to largely contribute to students' English speaking anxiety. The paper concludes with recommendations for teaching and research that recognize the complexity of speaking anxiety for EFL students.

Keywords: EFL (English as a Foreign Language); foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA); English speaking anxiety.

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