

## The Correlation Between Stress Level Perceived by Sixth-Semester Students of the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah and Their Speaking Mastery

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### A B S T R A C T

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to explore the relationship between speaking proficiency and perceived academic stress among sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah University. The data were collected from 48 participants using the ETS Integrated Speaking Rubric to assess speaking proficiency and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS10) to measure perceived academic stress. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that most students experienced a moderate level of academic stress, while the majority of speaking mastery scores were classified in the "Good" category. Furthermore, Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between students' perceived academic stress and their speaking proficiency. These findings suggest that speaking performance may not be directly influenced by general academic stress but is more closely related to factors such as speaking-specific anxiety, self-confidence, and language learning experience. Therefore, this study recommends that educators place greater emphasis on reducing language-specific anxiety rather than general academic stress to improve students' speaking proficiency.

**Keyword:** *Perceived Academic Stress, Speaking Mastery, EFL Learners, Correlation, University Students*

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### INTRODUCTION

English is now widely utilized for professional mobility, academic achievement, and communication. English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia and is crucial to higher education, especially for students enrolled in English education programs who are supposed to gain useful skills for their future teaching roles. Speaking is commonly acknowledged as one of the four basic language abilities that is hardest to learn because of its cognitive, linguistic, and affective requirements. Speaking proficiency necessitates not only verbal proficiency but also the capacity to retain fluency, absorb information quickly, and handle performance related demands in communicative contexts.

At the same time, workload demands, exams, deadlines, practicum preparation, and the need to meet academic expectations often result in academic stress for university students. Students in their sixth semester are particularly burdened with additional duties like advanced coursework, microteaching, and thesis planning. These circumstances make it more likely that they will experience stress, which could have an impact on their academic performance. Speaking performance in foreign language contexts may be impacted by academic stress's effects on cognitive processing, emotional regulation, decision-making, and general learning effectiveness.

The results of earlier research on the connection between speaking performance and psychological stress have been conflicting. While some studies show that mild stress does not

always result in a drop in performance, others imply that increased worry or stress may have a detrimental effect on speaking tasks' fluency, accuracy, and confidence. These discrepancies underline the necessity of context-specific research, especially in Indonesian EFL contexts where affective, instructional, and cultural elements may influence how students cope with stress and hone their speaking abilities.

In light of these variables, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether sixth-semester UIN Raden Fatah University students' speaking proficiency is correlated with their perceptions of academic stress. Knowing this relationship can help with institutional strategies and pedagogical insights for promoting students' language development and academic well-being.

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that academic stress remains a significant issue in higher education. For example, research involving EFL university students revealed that high levels of academic stress can negatively influence language proficiency, making it a critical factor to consider in academic performance studies. Moreover, speaking mastery continues to pose challenges for EFL learners in university settings. Descriptive research on EFL students' oral production highlights that limited vocabulary, fluency issues, and affective factors such as low confidence and classroom participation barriers significantly hinder students' ability to achieve speaking proficiency.

These findings support the need for context-specific investigation into how academic stress relates to speaking mastery, particularly among English Education students experiencing demanding academic workloads.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between speaking proficiency and perceived academic stress among sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah University. The correlational design was selected to determine the degree and direction of the statistical relationship between the two variables without manipulating or controlling any conditions during the data collection process.

### Respondents

The respondents of this study consisted of 48 sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah University. A total sampling technique was applied, as all students enrolled in the sixth semester met the criteria for participation. This approach ensured full population representation and allowed for an accurate examination of the relationship between perceived academic stress and speaking mastery within the specific academic context.

### Instruments

Two primary instruments were used in this study.

First, students' perceived academic stress was measured using Sheldon Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10). The questionnaire consists of ten items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often). The PSS-10 has been widely recognized for its validity and reliability in assessing perceived stress among university students.

Second, students' speaking proficiency was assessed using the ETS TOEFL Integrated Speaking Rubric, which evaluates four core components: delivery, language use, topic development, and task fulfillment. Students' speaking performances were scored based on these criteria and then converted into a scale ranging from 0 to 100 to determine their overall speaking mastery level.

### Procedures

The data collection process was conducted in two stages. First, participants completed the PSS-10 questionnaire under supervised conditions to ensure independent and accurate responses. Second, the participants were administered an integrated speaking test adapted

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from ETS-style speaking tasks. All speaking performances were recorded and assessed by two independent raters to ensure scoring reliability.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to categorize students' perceived academic stress levels and speaking mastery. Inferential statistical analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation to examine the relationship between the two variables. Additionally, simple linear regression analysis was employed to investigate the predictive contribution of perceived academic stress to speaking proficiency. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 23.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

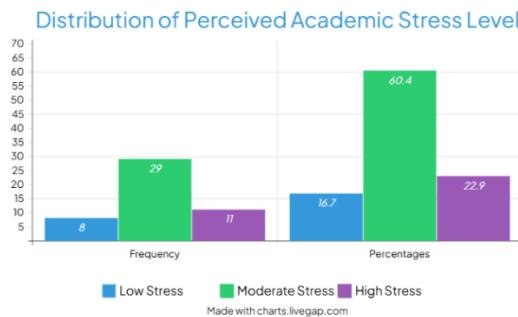


Figure 1 Distribution of Perceived Academic Stress Level



Figure 2 Speaking Mastery

The study's findings offer a descriptive summary of students' perceptions of speaking proficiency and academic stress, followed by an examination of the correlation between the two. The results are analyzed in light of previous studies to explain why respondents reported academic stress and speaking proficiency did not significantly correlate. According to descriptive analysis, the majority of students (60.4%) had moderate academic stress, followed by low stress (16.7%) and severe stress (22.9%). This pattern implies that while there is academic pressure, most students are able to handle it. University students who are getting ready for important academic assignments, like teaching practicums and thesis writing, often experience moderate stress. Pramana and Sawitri (2022) claim that university students' moderate levels of stress are frequently related to their regular academic obligations and do not always develop into incapacitating circumstances. Therefore, despite their academic obligations, the students in this study seem to be able to retain emotional stability.

According to the results, 56.3% of the students demonstrated good speaking mastery, with 20.8% falling into the excellent group, 18.8% into the fair category, and just 4.1% into the poor category. As anticipated given their extensive exposure to English in prior semesters, these results show that sixth-semester students have usually good speaking ability. Higher-semester EFL students generally exhibit improved fluency, vocabulary management, and task comprehension because speaking abilities build up over time with consistent practice, according to Rahmawati and Ningsih (2022).

Speaking proficiency and perceived academic stress did not significantly correlate, according to the correlational study. This suggests that changes in students' speaking performance were not correlated with changes in stress levels. This conclusion is supported by a number of recent studies, which indicate that linguistic proficiency, task familiarity, and instructional exposure have a greater influence on speaking mastery than do transient psychological variables. For instance, Lee and Lu (2021) discovered that stress and anxiety do not necessarily affect EFL learners speaking performance unless the emotional strain becomes unbearable. Similarly, self-efficacy and exposure to language are better indicators of speaking skill than transient emotional states, according to Alharbi (2022).

Furthermore, the majority of students in this survey reported moderate stress rather than high stress. According to recent psychological models, mild stress may improve attentiveness

rather than hinder performance (Teigen, 2023). The assumption that moderate arousal leads to good performance and that only high stress impairs cognitive processing is also supported by the Yerkes-Dodson framework. As a result, the participants speaking proficiency remained unaffected because they did not endure extreme stress.

When considered collectively, the results show that students speaking proficiency was unaffected by mild academic stress. This result supports the idea that speaking ability is primarily a long-term language skill rather than a transient psychological state.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study looked at the connection between speaking proficiency and felt academic stress in sixth-semester English Education Study Program students at UIN Raden Fatah University. According to the results, the majority of students had a moderate amount of academic stress and were classified as having good or excellent speaking proficiency. The correlational analysis revealed no meaningful association between the two variables in spite of these discernible patterns. These findings imply that students' speaking performance is not directly impacted by their perception of academic stress. Speaking proficiency seems to be more influenced by cumulative learning experiences, long-term language development, and instructional exposure than by transient emotional or psychological circumstances. Since moderate stress is frequently not harmful to performance, the prevalence of moderate stress levels among individuals rather than high stress levels may have also contributed to the lack of link. Overall, the study shows that linguistic competence and learning strategies have a greater impact on speaking competency in an EFL context than felt academic stress. These results highlight the need of sustaining steady instructional assistance, offering many chances for speaking practice, and creating environments that support language learners' academic and mental health.

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