

# Indonesian Pre-service English Teacher Education Students' English-speaking Anxiety in Asking Questions

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## ABSTRACT

There is a recognized need to investigate the factors contributing to speaking anxiety when asking questions in class from the viewpoint of fifteen Indonesian pre-service English teachers. Several studies have documented students' speaking anxiety from elementary school to the university level. Despite the wealth of research on this topic, there is a gap in the literature related to exploring the factors contributing to speaking anxiety among Indonesian pre-service English teachers when asking questions in the classroom. **To fulfil the gap in the literature**, the present study aimed to investigate the factors contributing to speaking anxiety when asking questions in class from the viewpoint of fifteen Indonesian pre-service English teachers. The study included a qualitative approach that employed semi-structured interviews to obtain information from the participants. The data from the semi-structured interviews were then analyzed using thematic analysis to identify the themes that emerged from the participant's responses. The study's results revealed three factors contributing to anxiety when asking questions in class among Indonesian pre-service English teachers: psychological, educational, and socio-cultural factors. Psychological factors included a lack of confidence and negative attitudes towards asking an unqualified question. Educational factors included previous experiences when asking questions, which left them with trauma and a lack of familiarity with the dialogic classroom atmosphere. Finally, socio-cultural factors, such as shyness and traditional cultural values and beliefs about asking questions of the lecturers, were also identified as contributing to pre-service English teachers' anxiety.

*Keywords: Speaking anxiety, asking the question, pre-service English teacher.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

By enrolling in the pre-service English teacher education program, students can equip themselves with a wealth of knowledge about English, giving them an edge over other students who may be in a different educational program. In addition, pre-service students must develop strategies for managing a classroom, such as using positive reinforcement and incorporating different learning styles. **Pre-service English teacher education programs do not only provide students with the academic knowledge and skills they need to be successful educators but also the tools necessary to engage students effectively and create a positive learning environment.** Pre-service students must still overcome the same obstacles to learning English that any student in an educational program face, such as grammar rules, pronunciation, and building vocabulary. They experience double challenges with English,

namely challenges in understanding the knowledge about English and how to transfer it to students in an effective manner. To achieve the goal of learning and teaching the language, students' active participation is essential in the future teaching process. [1] defines participation as "a process of taking part in something and [...] the relations with others that reflect the process. A complex process that combines doing, talking, feeling, and belonging" (p. 55). According to this definition, students must actively participate in the learning process by engaging in different activities, such as speaking and writing, with their peers and teachers. Not only to support their learning but to get familiar with the active environment, students' participation will also influence their way of thinking and conducting their future classroom because the pre-service teacher education program comes with the "oft-repeated mantra in higher education that faculty teach the way they were taught." [2, p. 30] says that many teachers are aware that they were once students but tend to reproduce whatever practices they experienced as students, which directly informs their attitudes about teaching. This belief is particularly true in the pre-service teacher education programs, as students are still learning, and their experiences will heavily shape how they develop and practice their teaching style. As a result, providing opportunities for students to actively participate in the learning process has significant implications for teachers and students.

Participation encourages active learning, helps build confidence, and provides students with a greater understanding of the subject matter, and it is advantageous to the learning process [3]. Participation also provides a platform for students to ask questions and get feedback from their peers and teacher, in addition to offering an opportunity for them to express their ideas. Moreover, it encourages social learning, a critical aspect of the academic environment, as it provides a space for students to engage in dialogue and stimulate each other's thought processes. However, class participation is often a challenging effort. Even though students know the value of involvement, many remain mute throughout the class for various reasons [4]. Anxiety and discomfort, a lack of self-confidence and preparation, or even cultural differences influence students' passivity in learning. According to [5], "anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p. 125). This type of anxiety has a direct relationship with students' level of participation, as it often leads to feelings of apprehension that make it difficult for them to deliver their ideas or even contribute to class discussions. In learning a language, this type of anxiety is called foreign language anxiety (FLA). FLA is experienced by language learners when they are exposed to real or perceived communication difficulties that threaten their self-esteem. Numerous research studies on FLA have focused on the four language abilities of hearing, reading, writing, and speaking, which are heavily relied upon in the language learning process. Consequently, the learning process can be impaired and negatively affect language proficiency when anxiety exists. Anxiety about learning a foreign language seems to be associated with speaking more than other three abilities [6]. This research suggests that language learners may experience communication difficulties that can hinder their language development when exposed to anxiety-inducing situations. [7] uses the term "second/foreign language anxiety" to refer to the learners' unfavorable emotional responses to learning a foreign language, which describes the anxiety connected to studying a foreign language. This anxiety has been studied extensively and is associated with a wide range of communicative difficulties, such as a fear of making mistakes, a lack of self-confidence, avoidance behavior, and reduced speaking proficiency.

According to [8], there are two kinds of anxiety. They are 1) communication anxiety, which occurs when a student wants to share adult thoughts and ideas but lacks the necessary communication skills, and 2) test anxiety, which occurs when a student feels overwhelmed by the pressure of performing well on tests. This anxiety can result from self-doubt, fear of failure, and a sense of helplessness. Test anxiety is pervasive among students, as it arises from the fear of being judged, evaluated, and possibly embarrassed in front of an audience. Both communication and test anxiety can have serious consequences

for students. Unlike Price, who defined test anxiety as anxiety caused by an exam or test, some studies have discovered that research participants considered every moment of using English as a part of a claimed or unclaimed test situation and experienced anxiety due to the feeling of being judged and evaluated. Thus, asking questions in English contributes to more anxiety than in any other language, leading to increased difficulty in communication, reduced confidence, and impaired performance [6]. Their research also finds that students' speaking anxiety influences class participation, which hinders the students from asking questions or engaging in class conversations. This speaking anxiety has a devastating effect on the learning process since it makes it harder for the students to comprehend and retain the material and diminishes their interest in speaking or understanding the language. Consequently, test anxiety significantly impacts the learning process and performance of students who use English as their foreign language. Test anxiety has been an ongoing issue among English language learners, particularly in their native countries. This research reveals the importance of reducing test anxiety and improving communication skills.

There has been a plethora of research about the contributing factors to foreign language anxiety from a different point of view. [9] categorized the contributing factors of speaking anxiety into 1) psychological, 2) educational, and 3) socio-cultural. Psychological factors include test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and feelings of helplessness. In this light, psychological factors are closely related to emotional perspectives, as learners experience negative affective states during foreign language learning, such as low self-esteem, worries, and negative attitudes. To minimize these psychological factors and increase student speaking confidence, educational institutions must strive to create a supportive and encouraging learning environment for students [6], [7], [9]–[13]. To facilitate this, teachers should focus on providing a stress-free environment for language learners to encourage speaking, provide a variety of meaningful learning opportunities for their students, and use positive feedback. Fear of negative evaluation among students includes the fear of negative evaluation due to perfectionist tendencies as well as the fear of inadequate evaluations due to a poor impression of language ability [confidence] as measured by the closed-ended questionnaire, misunderstandings, and the fear of not understanding or misunderstanding the teacher's questions and statements. To reduce these fears and insecurities, teachers should take the time to explain activities in detail and answer any questions the students may have. In addition, teachers should provide students with plenty of positive feedback to help increase their confidence in the language learning process. Furthermore, students who did not have the opportunity to practice their target language felt anxious when they had to use it in class, which added to their nervousness and increased anxiety. Teachers should also provide students with opportunities to practice the target language in class so that they can become more confident and overcome their fear of negative evaluation [11].

The educational factors relate to the student's current and pre-university learning experiences and their perceptions of the value and utility of these experiences in the form of skills, knowledge, and values. Sometimes, a teacher's unconscious treatment and behavior trigger anxiety as an educational factor, which can significantly affect students' performance in the university. Students may be afraid of asking questions due to fear of embarrassment or fear that their peers may think they are not smart enough to understand the lesson. [11], who investigated 279 pre-service English teachers, found that teachers' unclear instructions led the students to incorrect responses, which triggered fear of embarrassment and a sense of being singled out. All these examples show how a teacher's unconscious treatment and behavior can affect student performance. As a result, this can lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety among students in the university environment. As a result, the teacher's feedback on their performance left them traumatized and struggling to find the courage to ask questions and actively participate in class. Nonetheless, according to [11], student embarrassment is rooted not only in the potential judgement of their peers but also in the teacher's instructional behaviour. An interesting finding that teachers do not usually realize is

that their interruptions when students speak increase their level of anxiety and further decrease the likelihood of students expressing themselves in the future. According to [14], students become increasingly aware of the teacher's ability to grade their performance in class, which causes them to be hesitant to express themselves in front of them. It disturbs the student's focus when speaking and leaves them with a feeling of making a grave mistake while attempting to express their opinion. According to [6], teachers must provide a safe environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of being judged or graded. Even though some teachers might view interruptions as a way to control their students and help them stay on track, research has indicated that this method can have the opposite effect [6], [7], [9], [11]. A limited teacher-student talk and the dominant role of the teacher in the teaching and learning process contribute to students' interpretation. When receiving comments or being interrupted during their speaking, they assume that their teacher does not trust in their capabilities, which, in turn, creates an atmosphere of tension and discouragement [15].

The last factor which leads to speaking anxiety is socio-cultural factors. Socio-cultural factors can lead to anxiety because of societal expectations, norms and judgments, leading to a fear of speaking in public or feeling inadequate when speaking. [9], whose study context is Asia, found that Asian students who are shy tend to avoid speaking out loud in front of the class, which adds to their anxiety because they feel under pressure when they are asked to speak up. Furthermore, in the same study, the researcher highlighted that some Asian countries, such as China and Japan, have strict norms and expectations of their students, leading to more speaking anxiety because they fear the judgment and criticism of their peers and teachers if they make a mistake. [6] brings up an issue of power relations between teacher and student where the participants in their study see the point of asking questions as challenging the teacher's authority. Even with the increased presence of Western values, socio-cultural factors still affect how people feel about speaking in public and can significantly contribute to speaking anxiety.

In recent years, scholars in higher education institutions have conducted a large number of studies on anxiety in the field of language learning, examining topics such as how anxiety affects language learning motivation and whether there are gender differences in language learning anxiety [9]–[13], [16]–[20]. Meanwhile, more previous studies concentrated on speaking anxiety in general, exploring the correlation between foreign language speaking anxiety and students' academic performance and the extent to which they experience test anxiety. Only one study from [6] investigated speaking anxiety in asking questions; however, the research was conducted in a UK university setting, exploring the effects of speaking anxiety in asking questions on seven Chinese learners, which may not be generalizable to other contexts. Furthermore, research on students' anxiety in Indonesia focused on speaking anxiety in an Indonesian context without paying particular attention to language learners' anxiety when asking questions [17], [19], [21], [22]. However, little is discussed in the literature regarding pre-service English teachers' anxiety about asking questions in the Indonesian context. Therefore, it is essential to explore the anxiety of pre-service English teachers by asking questions, particularly within the context of Indonesia.

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1 Rationale for qualitative research**

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a subjective feeling that differs from person to person and is often related to a lack of confidence and a fear of embarrassment when trying to communicate in a foreign language. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the participants interpret the source of their speaking anxiety in asking the questions by recalling their experiences and how they see a possible solution to their anxiety. A qualitative method was seen as an effective technique for capturing the varied range of students' perspectives since "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world of the

participants, being particularly sensitive to how individuals perceive their experiences and construct meaning from them" [23]. Through its interpretive nature, it allows us to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences and think and feel about them and how they talk and act. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning that individuals have formed, that is, how people make sense of their environment and experiences. This method is valuable to education research in particular as it takes into account the individual student's perspective, which can give researchers a much more detailed understanding of students' lived experiences [24]. Furthermore, prior FLA research was mainly quantitative, using closed-ended questionnaires, with few studies undertaken to investigate anxiety in qualitative research. Qualitative research provides a unique opportunity to explore FLA anxiety as experienced by students and their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and opinions around it.

## 2.2 Participants

Since one of the researchers in this study was not staying in Indonesia when the participants were recruited, communication with them was done via an online platform, which provided a safe and secure way for the participants to express their feelings and experiences (i.e., via email and zoom). Official emails were sent to 100 pre-service English teachers from five different universities in Indonesia, inviting them to participate in the study and informing them about the study's purpose, aims, and confidentiality agreement. The initial email started by introducing the study and asking whether they had encountered FLA, especially in asking questions, and whether they were willing to voluntarily share their answers to the questions posed by the researcher. In the emails, the researcher emphasized that all information provided would remain confidential and that their participation was entirely voluntary. In the same email, participants were asked to give their consent for the researcher to record their voices if they agreed to participate in the study. As a result, 27 pre-service English teachers were willing to participate in the online, one-on-one, semi-structured interview. However, since the interviewer is one of the researchers who live in Australia, which has a four-hour time difference from Indonesia, twelve pre-service English teachers missed the Zoom call, which was conducted at 6 a.m. Indonesian eastern time. Due to the early start time of the interview, these participants could not join and had to be excluded from the study. Thus, there were a total of 15 participants who participated in this study. The time difference made it difficult for some participants to attend the interview. The participants were pre-service English teachers from Islamic universities in Indonesia who had completed at least one semester of English language teaching courses. All of the respondents were between the ages of 19 and 22.

Table 1. Participants

Participant#	Age	Gender	Island of Origin
1	19	Male	Sumatera
2	19	Female	Sumatera
3	22	Male	Sumatera
4	21	Female	Sumatera
5	21	Male	Java
6	21	Male	Java
7	21	Female	Java
8	19	Female	Java
9	20	Female	Kalimantan
10	21	Male	Kalimantan
11	22	Male	Kalimantan
12	19	Female	Sulawesi
13	22	Female	Sulawesi
14	20	Female	Sulawesi

### 2.3 Data collection

An interview was employed to collect the data for this study, as it was seen to be the most effective and efficient way of obtaining the required information. We chose an interview as the data collection method because we believed an interaction during the interview enabled us to explore more with the participants and gain more detailed insights into their perspectives and experiences [25], [26]. Furthermore, the semi-structured aspect of the interview gave us a feeling of freedom in managing, exploring, adding, and lessening the interview questions according to the needs of the conversation. There is flexibility in arranging and rearranging the interview questions to ensure that all our participants can express their thoughts and experiences in detail. The flexibility is doable because the list of questions in the interview protocol was seen as only a means of organizing the interview rather than a means of standardizing the data. We also wanted to ensure that all our participants felt comfortable during the interview process, as we believed this would result in more candid and honest responses [27].

### 2.3 Data analysis

Thematic analysis techniques were used to analyze the transcripts. This was done to understand better how the participants experienced the issue being discussed and to identify overarching themes and patterns of behavior [28]. According to [28], thematic analysis is a technique "for detecting and analyzing patterns (themes) within qualitative data" (p. 79). The stages for this analysis are as follows: (1) familiarization; (2) coding; (3) theme generation; (4) theme review; (5) theme definition and naming; and (6) writing up. Step 1 included reading and reviewing the data (i.e., interview transcripts, focus group discussions, and reflective diaries) in order to gain an understanding of the topic, as well as its contextual environment. The data was then coded, meaning relevant ideas were identified and given a label or short description. This process also facilitated the categorization of information and the development of initial themes, which were then reviewed and refined. The data were then coded, meaning distinct thoughts were identified and classified using the previously established categories. Data were then analyzed for overarching themes and patterns, which enabled the identification of shared perspectives, experiences, and interpretations among participants. The lesser concepts were then grouped into larger-level topics that allowed for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. These topics were then divided into two categories: macro and micro themes. The macro themes provided a broad overview of the collective experiences and perspectives of the participants.

In contrast, micro themes were more specific, delving deeper into the individual aspects of these shared experiences. The macro theme is intended to name broader, overarching concepts, while the micro theme is intended to describe smaller ideas that are contained within the broader macro theme. Finally, the final selection of topics assisted in answering the research questions and provided an understanding of the collective experiences and perspectives of the participants.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result and discussion are presented following factors contributing to anxiety and solutions to overcome the anxiety when asking questions in the classroom. The results showed that students' anxiety levels increased when they had to ask questions in the classroom. The following codes are used to aid in tracking references in the data: P stands

for the participant. For example, (P3) indicates that the reference comes from the third interviewee. All interview data references are taken straight from transcripts using transcription norms, such as maintaining specific paragraphing and word format for interviewee utterances.

### 3.1 Psychological factor

The following are the results of data gained from the student's perspective regarding psychological factors that make the participants hesitant to ask questions in the classroom. The data revealed that the top three factors that made the participants hesitant to ask questions in class were 1) fear of looking or sounding stupid, 2) lack of confidence in their abilities and 3) lack of knowledge or clarity on a topic. Surprisingly, when the interviewer asked the interviewee to mention the first factor that they felt contributed more to their hesitation in asking the questions, all of the participants in this study gave similar answers. These results suggest a strong psychological factor at play when it comes to asking questions in class. They said that lack of confidence was the first and most important thing that kept them from speaking up in class.

They mentioned similar trends in their answer. They classified the factors that contribute to a lack of confidence into three categories: 1) quality of questions, 2) right or wrong English, and 3) nervousness. For starters, they were concerned that the questions were obvious to everyone but themselves and him, which caused them to doubt their knowledge of the subject. In other words, they were worried that their questions were not qualified. As one interviewee said:

*P#14: "Before I raised my hand to ask for a question, I would think twice, even millions of times. Is it necessary to ask this question? What if this question is very easy for all of my friends? What will my friends think about me? They might think that I am so stupid for raising my hand only for those questions."*

Interestingly, one of the participants expressed his belief that he has to ask only a qualified question; otherwise, people might not be appreciated for their answers (P#5). All participants echoed this belief with various reasons and points of view, for example, P#12, who talked about the danger of asking questions to the supervising teacher. P#12 suggested that if the questions were not qualified, the teacher might take it as a sign of disrespect, and ultimately the student's chance of receiving an answer would diminish.

*P#12: "I am not sure whether it is an assumption, presupposition or a myth, but we all believe that you have to ask only a qualified question. It is better to remain silent than seeing as a ridiculous student in front of your lecturers and friends. Especially when you are a pre-service teacher who is doing an internship in the school, it is better to keep your questions in mind rather than being underestimated by your supervising teacher. We agreed that not all of the supervising teacher appreciates us. They most likely to underestimate us as a newbie in teaching and treat us as their maid to do all their responsibility."*

What is surprising is that participants' beliefs about "only asking a qualified question" not only hinder them from participating actively in the process of learning to be teachers but also keep them from engaging with other teachers and gaining an understanding of different ways of teaching [29]. However, there is a possible danger of identity formation for them as future teachers. Based on this belief, they might expect their students to ask them only qualified questions. This expectation could lead to an unbalanced dynamic between student

and teacher, where the student might feel unable to voice their valid opinion or ask questions that are not framed in a certain way.

The complicated concept of asking questions, as well as the participants' anxiety, added to the way a question should be delivered, could make it difficult for the student to understand or even voice their questions. As a result, students and teachers feel inhibited in asking and answering questions, which is not conducive to learning. One of the participants suggested that instead of asking direct questions, they should provide background information to demonstrate their understanding. They used this strategy to avoid making a preliminary judgement by asking because of a limited understanding of the subject matter. This is an example of how asking questions can be tricky, and understanding a situation's context is essential when formulating questions.

*P#8: You have to be aware that asking a question might mean showing the world you do not understand. Thus, we have to have a strategy for asking questions. You have to show your understanding by providing a background of your question before you really go with your question. It is easy in Bahasa Indonesia as it is my language, but you know how hard to do it in English. So, the final decision is to pretend you understand and keep your mouth.*

However, the findings of the current study do not support [29] early research that realized the importance of questions as a means of communication and interaction between lecturers and their pre-service English teachers, as the results showed that a higher proportion of pre-service English teachers preferred lectures as a teaching method. Moreover, Thompson illustrates the importance of questions from students to teachers in the classroom, similar to questions from patients to doctors, which help maintain health and further enhance the learning and teaching process. However, this study showed that the pre-service English teachers' perceptions were contrary to this research.

Secondly, they mentioned that their biggest fear of asking questions was that they needed to be sure whether the English expressions in the questions were right or wrong. Despite the evidence from early research, pre-service English teachers prefer lectures over questions as a teaching method. Sometimes, they also wanted to ask questions but finding the right English question or statement was very hard. This is particularly alarming, as one of the essential roles of a teacher is to help foster an environment in which students feel comfortable expressing their ideas and asking questions. Specifically, one of the participants mentioned that realizing their limited knowledge of Grammar made them hesitant to ask questions, even though they wanted to. Many questions appeared right before they raised their hands, but because they felt like their Grammar needed to be more accurate, they ended up not asking any of them. Questions regarding the correct Grammar or vocabulary choice came after a struggle to convince themselves that their questions deserved to be asked. It was clear from the participants' accounts that their lack of confidence in their Grammar had led to self-doubt, which prevented them from feeling comfortable enough to ask questions.

*P#5: "Grammar is always my problem in English, especially when I have to speak up in front of the class. I will always be in doubt. Should I use the present, past, or future tense to ask this question? Struggling with this question in mind always makes me end up in forgetting my intention to ask questions. It made me feel like I need to be a good student who comes, sits, is silent, and pretends to understand all."*

This finding seems to be consistent with a finding in [30]. [30] investigates the sources of FLA motivation in 85 females Saudi EFL university students without referring to the students'

difficulties in asking questions. The data from the questionnaire and interview showed that a lack of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary mastery were the two primary sources of their anxiety.

However, it was surprising that even their careful use of qualified questions and lack of confidence in Grammar made them even more nervous.

*P#9: " Actually, asking the question to the teacher after she/he was done with his/her explanation would be fine for me, but I did not know what was wrong with me. Whenever I wanted to ask my teacher, I felt like I forgot all vocabulary in English, even the English vocabulary "book (buku) ".*

*P#10: "First, I am creating a great question to be asked. When I have one, I have to arrange the sentence, which makes me doubt whether my grammar is right and my vocabulary is correct. It is not the end...when I speak up to ask my question, I suddenly forget the words, even the question. What a mess!"*

This finding is consistent with the finding from [7], [9]–[11], [21], [30], [31] who confirm that anxiety leads to tension and adds stress, which reduces concentration, which suggests that anxious people cannot focus as effectively on the task at hand. Besides, [30] has demonstrated that "their lack of vocabulary and grammar affected their speaking performance negatively; they feel anxious and nervous" (p. 61). It has been consistently demonstrated that anxious people have difficulty focusing on the task. Half of the [9] participants claimed that a lack of confidence made them remain silent and not participate in the conversations. This is likely due to their fear of making mistakes and being judged.

### **3.2 Educational factor**

Almost all participants in this study claimed that their silence was due to their trauma and that speaking up would cause them to relive the trauma again and potentially cause further emotional and psychological damage. The trauma is caused by their own experiences, friends, and the story they heard from others. In this way, the trauma was passed from generation to generation, showing how an individual's experience can impact an entire community. Some of them said that at their young ages when they had a very high eagerness to ask questions, especially at the age of kindergarten and elementary school, they experienced that the teachers did not respond to the questions they asked. Hence, they started to be silent and kept their questions to themselves. Later, when they grew older, their silence became a habit, stopping them from speaking up and voicing their opinions, even when necessary.

*P#11: "I read an article about the importance of reflection for teachers. I realized that I need to reflect on what is happening to me. Thus, I can learn from them. When I tried to find the root of my fear of asking questions and speaking, I remember my experience in first grade. You know, as a kid, it is not easy for us to understand and control our sense of curiosity about something. Thus, I kept asking my teacher why we had to read "ini ibu Budi". Instead of getting an answer, my teacher asked me to keep silent and sit. It was an easy and light memory for you and others, but for me, it left me with the impression that a good student should sit and remain silent, not asking a question"*

*P#7: "Not to mention the subject and teacher's name who gave me trauma in asking a question, I once asked my teacher to repeat her instruction. However, the teacher yielded and accused me of being an inattentive student. I was okay then, but my*

*friends labelled me as "an inattentive student". I was so embraced and regretted why I asked the questions"*

*P#13: "That morning a few years ago, I went to my secondary school with a big question about "reproduction". I kept this question for a week until the next meeting. Unfortunately, when I asked this question, my teacher told everyone about the importance of preparation before class started. She made me an example of a student who came to the class without reading the material at home. Didn't she know that she had accused the wrong person? I asked because I read and prepared. I asked because I wanted to learn more.*

*R#1: "The teacher blamed me that I did not listen to his explanation because I asked him about the thing he already explained.*

These traumatic experiences may not only impact these pre-service English teachers' classroom participation but also influence their future teaching style when they become classroom teachers. According to [32], a classroom constantly puts pupils in a quandary. On the one hand, they need to be wary of their teacher's authority and follow the rules and regulations. On the other hand, it is a place where they need to express their opinions and ideas to develop critical thinking skills. On the other side, it is a site where people monitor and try to correct you. They will occasionally hold you accountable for whatever faults you have made. It can be challenging to balance all these competing pressures, and students often feel overwhelmed by the different expectations placed upon them in a classroom setting [14].

### **3.3 Sociocultural factor**

According to the participants, another factor contributed to speaking anxiety when asking about some sociocultural issues. Four out of fifteen participants claimed they were very anxious to ask questions because they worried that the lecturer might consider them challenging the lecturer's authority or expertise. This was represented by P#4, P#7:

*P#5: " My father told me not to challenge the teacher with questions as they know all about the lesson, not you".*

*P#7: " I saw how my teacher caught my clever friend challenging her with a question. What happened to that teacher? She felt humiliated and offended. If you asked me what about my friend, he had to receive the fact that he was cursed to fail as long as the same teacher taught him. The teacher had all the power, and students were enslaved".*

Another eleven participants addressed an issue related to their shyness, which included problems with speaking in public, making eye contact with strangers, and initiating conversations. Their introverted personalities contribute to their speaking anxiety when asking questions. They felt like people turned their attention to them when they started speaking, which caused them to become very self-conscious.

*P#12: "I am aware that I am an introverted person. I am used to listening, not asking. I am a receiver, not a provider. It also influences how I see an invitation from my lecturer when he/she says, "Do you have any questions?" I prefer turning my head left and right or suddenly looking at my table"*

These sociocultural factors match those observed in earlier study from [9] which explored the causes of English-speaking anxiety among Asian university students. Shyness and quietness have a favorable meaning in Asian societies inspired by Confucianism and collectivism. At the same time, they are considered weaknesses in western societies, where the focus is on individualism and being outspoken. This idea was echoed in the study's findings, which concluded that Asian students were more likely to be anxious when speaking English due to a fear of violating cultural expectations and thus being seen as deviant by their lecturers. Furthermore, students are taught to respect rather than confront their lecturers, while in western societies, they are encouraged to be assertive and challenge authority figures [33]. Other cultural preconceptions may impede the process of English communicative acquisition. The study's findings demonstrate how cultural values can profoundly shape language learning. Chinese pupils, for example, frequently abstain from saying anything or expressing thoughts in class out of respect for their instructor. At the same time, western students are comfortable expressing their opinions, even if they contradict the teacher's or lecturer's views [34]. In Chinese tradition, a teacher has always had great power and authority, and it is considered impolite for a student to disagree with or challenge the teacher in any way. As a result, many pupils concentrate on the instructor's words rather than attempting to express their thoughts. This phenomenon is seen in many other cultures, where students may have limited ability to challenge or even question the teaching they receive [35].

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the data provided, all of the participants in this study felt anxious when they were offered the opportunity to ask questions, which influenced their active participation in the teaching and learning process. The anxious feeling is because they were concerned that their questions might be perceived as too intrusive, leading to awkward social interactions or the fear of being judged for not being knowledgeable about the topic. These findings demonstrate that offering students the opportunity to ask questions during class can cause great anxiety, negatively affecting their participation in learning activities. However, these concerns can be addressed by implementing an environment supportive of students' questions and inquisitiveness. Data from a semi-structured one-on-one interview conducted online with each participant found similar categories of hesitancy when asking questions in the classroom [9] such as psychological, educational, and socio-cultural factors. These factors are interrelated, and they can lead to a decrease in students' participation in learning activities and a lack of opportunities for them to learn and grow. Psychological factors that may occur when asking a question in the classroom are related to low confidence, which is rooted in their anxiety with the types of questions, grammar, and vocabulary choices. These findings help educators create an inclusive classroom environment, fostering a culture of inquiry, critical thinking, and open dialogue. These factors increase their nervousness, which in the end influences their whole performance, interactions with the teacher, other students, and the content being learned.

The second factor relates to trauma. The data showed that their past bad experiences with asking questions had informed their future practice as students who need to ask questions to clarify their thoughts and better understand the material. Finally, the socio-cultural factor refers to the Asian belief regarding politeness: not to challenge teachers but instead respect them and their authority in the classroom. Students of Asian background, especially those born and raised in their country of origin, often experience a heightened degree of anxiety regarding classroom participation due to this cultural conditioning. As such, the data shows that not only did Asian students experience general discomfort when it comes to classroom participation, but a mix of trauma-related factors, lack of confidence, and cultural conditioning compounded this discomfort. Thus, these pre-service English

teachers thought that remaining silent was the best way to overcome all the factors that each of them had faced and felt when raising their hands and participating in class was not polite.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION

The investigation of the factors that contribute to speaking anxiety when asking questions among pre-service English teachers has revealed various issues that can lead to nervousness. These elements include a mix of psychological, educational, and sociocultural influences that are all interconnected and can contribute to the experience of anxiety while asking questions in the classroom. According to the participant's responses and findings, pre-service English teacher lecturers may apply the following strategies to lessen speaking anxiety when asking questions in the classroom. These strategies include:

1. Create a dialogic environment where students get used to sharing and clarifying their ideas and thoughts. The dialogue should be started at the lecturers' initiative to clear up any pre-assumptions that the students bring to the programme that may lead to apprehensions when asking questions.
2. Show an appreciation for the students' questions and answers. Pre-service English teachers and lecturers can also foster a sense of confidence by offering affirmation when appropriate, expressing appreciation for students' questions and answers, and actively engaging in meaningful dialogue with their students.
3. Remind the students that there are no stupid questions. Pre-service English language teachers and lecturers can create a dialogic environment by starting conversations and taking the initiative to clear up any pre-assumptions that students may bring to the programme.
4. Create more opportunities for the students to interact with them outside of the classroom.
5. Introduce them to the importance of asking questions and clarifying their thoughts.

### Consent

As per international standard or university standard, participants written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

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