

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS SPEAKING ANXIETY IN ENGLISH FOREIGN
LANGUAGE (EFL) AT VIII TH GREADE OF SMPI DARUDDA'WAH PUNGGUR KECIL
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Abstract: *This study investigates the phenomenon of speaking anxiety among eighth-grade students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at SMPI Darudda'wah Punggur Kecil during the academic year 2022/2023. The research focuses on identifying factors contributing to students' anxiety and their impact on language learning. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Key findings reveal that speaking anxiety is predominantly caused by emotional, cognitive, and environmental factors, including fear of mistakes, low self-efficacy, and sensitivity to negative evaluation. Observable symptoms include nervousness, sweating, unstable breathing, and passivity during speaking activities. The study highlights that anxiety hinders students' confidence and participation, aligning with theories like Krashen's Affective Filter and Bandura's self-efficacy concept. Recommendations include supportive teaching strategies, such as group practice, real-life simulations, and positive reinforcement, to alleviate anxiety and enhance students' speaking skills in English. This research provides insights for educators to foster a more conducive learning environment.*

Keywords: *Speaking Anxiety, EFL Students, Self-efficacy.*

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INTRODUCTION

Mastery of the English language plays a strategic role in the era of globalization, particularly in education in Indonesia. English has become part of the mandatory curriculum in schools, with the expectation that students will acquire language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking skills are a primary assessment of students' abilities in real-life situations, as Richard stated, that speaking is a central element of communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. However, this skill often becomes the greatest challenge for students in the classroom.

The main issue faced by students in learning to speak English is anxiety. This emotional condition can hinder concentration and students' courage in speaking. Brown stated that emotions play a fundamental role in the learning process, where negative emotions, such as anxiety, can disrupt learning strategies and techniques. In the context of language learning,

anxiety often arises from the fear of making mistakes, especially when students are asked to speak in front of the class.

Speaking anxiety in English can be divided into several types, such as communication anxiety, exam anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. According to Oxford, anxiety has a negative relationship with student performance. This is evident when students are reluctant to speak for fear of being laughed at or poorly evaluated by their peers and teachers. This situation often leads students to prefer silence, which ultimately affects their ability to speak effectively.

In this study, the author observed speaking anxiety among eighth-grade students at SMPI Darudda'wah Punggur Kecil. The observation results showed that most students exhibited signs of anxiety, such as nervousness, lack of confidence, and passiveness during speaking lessons. They found it difficult to express themselves due to the fear of making mistakes, which was further exacerbated by a lack of motivation and support.

To further understand the factors that contribute to speaking anxiety, the researcher used interview, observation, and questionnaire methods. From the data collected, it was found that students' anxiety was influenced by negative self-predictions, sensitivity to threats, and low self-efficacy. In addition, environmental factors, such as peers' perspectives and eye contact with the teacher, also contributed to their anxiety levels.

This study aims to identify the factors that influence students' speaking anxiety and provide recommendations to reduce the impact of anxiety in English language learning. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for teachers in creating a supportive learning environment and alleviating students' anxiety.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the speaking anxiety of grade VIII students of SMPI Darudda'wah Punggur Kecil in the 2022/2023 academic year. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the phenomena that occur in the subject's natural environment. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires designed to identify the factors that cause students' speaking anxiety.

The subjects of the study were 25 students, consisting of 10 males and 15 females, who were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on the needs of the study. Observations were conducted to observe students' behavior during English learning, interviews were conducted with teachers to gain perspectives on students' anxiety, and questionnaires were given to students to measure anxiety factors in more detail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

This study revealed several main findings related to the speaking anxiety of grade VIII students of SMPI Darudda'wah Punggur Kecil in learning English. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and questionnaires, speaking anxiety was found to be the main obstacle in learning. Most students showed signs of anxiety such as nervousness, excessive sweating, unstable breathing, and inability to express themselves effectively in front of the class.

The results of observations showed that students often felt insecure and tended to be passive when asked to speak in English in front of the class. Many students avoided eye contact with teachers and their friends. Factors such as fear of making mistakes and anxiety about negative evaluation contributed to this anxiety. Teachers noted that students' anxiety was often seen in the form of trembling voices, stiff postures, or silence without responding.

The results of interviews with teachers reinforced these findings. Teachers stated that students felt stressed when asked to speak in public because of low self-confidence and fear of negative evaluation. Some students asked teachers not to pay direct attention to them during presentations so that they could speak more fluently.

Based on the results of the questionnaire given to 25 students, most students identified several factors that caused speaking anxiety. As many as 74% of students felt nervous because of the teacher's eye contact or the gaze of classmates. In addition, 71% of students reported that their bodies sweated when speaking in front of the class, and 66% of students admitted that their breathing was unstable while speaking in English. Other factors such as the inability to control emotions, lack of mastery of the material, and low motivation also emerged in the questionnaire results.

Summary Table of Data From Questionnaire

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
Do you feel confident speaking English in front of the class?	22%	78%
Are you afraid to answer a friend's question in English?	72%	28%
Do you feel nervous when speaking English in class?	79%	21%
Does your body sweat when speaking in front of the class?	71%	29%

Source: Processed by the author, 2023

These results indicate that speaking anxiety not only affects students' ability to speak, but also affects their participation in class activities. This anxiety is triggered by emotional, cognitive, and environmental factors that affect students' self-confidence when learning English.

Discussion

This study shows that speaking anxiety of grade VIII students of SMPI Darudda'wah Punggur Kecil is influenced by several factors, including emotional, cognitive, and environmental aspects. Based on the theory quoted from Horwitz (1986), speaking anxiety is often categorized into three types: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These three types are relevant to research findings that show that students face pressure when asked to speak in front of the class.

From the results of the observation, it can be seen that students have difficulty expressing their ideas in English. Several factors such as fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and sensitivity to negative evaluation are the main obstacles. This condition is in accordance with

Krashen's theory (1982) on the affective filter, which states that anxiety can form mental blocks that inhibit language acquisition.

The results of interviews with teachers strengthen the observation data. Teachers noted that students often asked teachers not to look at them during presentations. This indicates an over-sensitivity toward threat, as explained by Horwitz. The teacher also highlighted the lack of motivation of the students, which affected their courage to try to speak. The questionnaire given to the students revealed significant quantitative data. As many as 71% of students felt their bodies sweating when asked to speak in front of the class, and 79% of students admitted to being nervous. Most students stated that they felt anxious when asked to answer questions from friends or repeat material in English. This indicates a consistent pattern of anxiety.

The table below summarizes the results of the questionnaire:

Factor	Percentage of Students Agreeing (%)
Nervous when speaking in class	79%
Afraid to answer a friend's question	72%
Sweating while speaking	71%
Unstable breathing	66%

Source: Processed by the author, 2023.

In addition, speaking anxiety is also associated with low student self-efficacy. As many as 74% of students feel that their low grades affect their confidence in speaking fluently. This is in line with the concept of low self-efficacy from Bandura (1997), which states that individuals with low self-efficacy tend to doubt their own abilities.

The results of the study also showed that speaking anxiety is rooted in students' negative perceptions of their own abilities. Most students feel that limited vocabulary mastery and inability to use grammar correctly are the main causes of their fear of speaking in English. This reflects the concept of self-perceived incompetence put forward by Horwitz et al. (1986), where students often doubt their abilities even though they have prepared themselves. This condition is exacerbated by the pressure to appear perfect in front of teachers and peers.

To overcome this, it is important for teachers to encourage students to focus on the learning process rather than the end result. For example, techniques such as practicing speaking in small groups, giving project-based assignments, and simulating real-life situations can help reduce student stress. In addition, the application of positive reinforcement consistently has been proven to increase students' self-efficacy, so that they feel more confident in speaking English. These strategies are not only relevant to the research context, but can also be a reference for improving the quality of English learning in general.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the conclusions are:

1. The factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety in English include over-prediction, irrational beliefs, anxiety sensitivity, misinterpretation of body signals, and low self-efficacy. These factors hinder their practice of speaking English.
2. Seven types of anxiety were identified: lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, shyness, worry, fear, and panic. Anxiety symptoms like rapid heart rate and shortness of breath prevent students from speaking English.

Suggestion

1. For Students:

- a. Practice speaking English more to improve skills.
- b. Avoid feeling shy or afraid of making mistakes.
- c. Build confidence in speaking.
- d. Focus on improving speaking abilities.
- e. Concentrate during speaking practice for better performance.
- f. Study harder at home to enhance speaking skills.

2. For Future Researchers

Further research can explore the causes of speaking anxiety and propose solutions to help students overcome these challenges and succeed in learning English.

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