EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety in Indonesian Senior High School

Kecemasan Berbicara Siswa Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing di SMA di Indonesia

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Abstract

One of the essential abilities in learning English is speaking. However, most students believe that speaking English is challenging because they lack vocabulary and are reluctant to express their opinions. Anxiety is a mood that includes fear, hesitation, and worry about events both in the present and the future. This research aimed to find out the factors causing students' speaking anxiety, the effects of students' speaking anxiety, and the students' strategies to reduce their speaking anxiety. The researchers applied a qualitative research design and used observations and interviews. The population of this study was 90 students in the first grade at at a public senior secondary school in Pangkep Regency, and nine students interviewed by the researchers. The results show that two elements contributed to students' speaking anxiety: linguistic issues (poor pronunciation, vocabulary, and ideas) and non-linguistic issues (lack of self-confidence, lack of preparation, shyness to their peers, and afraid of being laughed at). Speaking anxiety has two different effects on students' speaking abilities: a facilitating influence that encourages them to talk and a debilitating effect that causes them to stutter, blank out, become afraid, or stumble. The students' use of preparation, avoidance of eye contact, and peer assistance help them to reduce their speaking anxiety.

Keywords: speaking anxiety, speaking skill, students' strategies.

Abstrak

Salah satu kemampuan penting dalam belajar bahasa Inggris adalah berbicara. Namun, sebagian besar siswa percaya bahwa berbicara bahasa Inggris itu menantang karena mereka kekurangan kosakata dan enggan mengungkapkan pendapat mereka. Kecemasan adalah suasana hati yang mencakup rasa takut, ragu-ragu, dan khawatir tentang peristiwa baik di masa sekarang maupun di masa yang akan datang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui faktor-faktor penyebab kecemasan berbicara siswa, pengaruh kecemasan berbicara siswa, dan strategi siswa untuk mengurangi kecemasan berbicara mereka. Peneliti menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif dan menggunakan observasi dan wawancara. Populasi penelitian ini adalah 90 siswa kelas I di sebuah SMAN Kabupaten Pangkep, dan 9 siswa diwawancarai

oleh peneliti. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada dua unsur yang berkontribusi terhadap kecemasan berbicara siswa: masalah linguistik (pengucapan yang buruk, kurangnya kosa kata, dan ide) dan masalah non-linguistik (kurang percaya diri, kurang persiapan, rasa malu kepada teman sebayanya, dan takut ditertawakan). Kecemasan berbicara memiliki dua efek berbeda pada kemampuan berbicara siswa: pengaruh memfasilitasi yang mendorong mereka untuk berbicara dan efek melemahkan yang menyebabkan mereka gagap, tidak memiliki ide, takut, atau tersandung Ketika berbicara. Penggunaan persiapan, penghindaran kontak mata, dan adanya bantuan teman sebaya dapat membantu mereka dalam mengurangi kecemasan dalam berbicara.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking creates, exchanges, and transmits thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Bailey (2006) mentioned that speaking is the productive oral or aural ability that comprises methodically making verbal utterances to convey meaning. In the form of talking, discussing, expressing ideas, telling stories, and other language functions; it aids pupils in developing their grammar and vocabulary. Burns and Joyce (1997) also stated that speaking was described as an interactive process of meaning, including the production, reception, and processing of information. Hence, speaking is the best way to express ideas, thoughts, and meaning verbally. Speaking is regarded as one of the essential English language abilities. However, many students need help speaking in front of the class. Pollard (2008), for example, claims that speaking is one of the most challenging abilities for pupils to master. The students sometimes feel stressed, frightened, or anxious while speaking the target language and claim to have a mental barrier to learning (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020; Woodrow, 2006). It is supported by Liu (2005) that many students, particularly those in Asia, are quiet in the classroom because they find it difficult to express their ideas and answer the teacher's questions. Furthermore, Sarwar et al. (2014) said that even intelligent students who perform well on written tests could also not communicate verbally in English. The students enjoy speaking a lot, but sometimes they also have anxiety when speaking in front of the class. Next, Oxford (1992) said that among the factors that contribute to the phenomenon's occurrence is anxiousness. For EFL students, it becomes one of the essential factors in speaking ability.

Anxiety is the feeling of being fearful, tense, uneasy, and worried about something that might have happened in the present and the future. Ferreira and Murray (1983) defined anxiety as a subjective feeling of pressure, apprehension, uneasiness, and tension connected to the arousal of the autonomic sensory system. Either a positive or negative effect has an impact on how well someone speaks. In addition, Horwitz et al. (1986) defined anxiety as a discrete complex of self-perceptions, feelings, and behaviours associated with the classroom language acquisition process. Students cannot avoid speaking anxiety because they have negative symptoms when speaking, such as sweating, muscle tension, and feeling confused. Tseng (2012) claimed that self-perception, social context, cultural differences, social standing, gender, and classroom environment are all elements that contribute to speaking anxiety. Thornbury (2012) mentioned that limited vocabulary, poor grammar, and a fear of making mistakes refer to speaking anxiety. Besides, Young (1991) mentioned several potential causes of language anxiety, such as interpersonal and personal aspects, students' perceptions of language learning,

instructors' perceptions of language teaching, student-teacher interactions, procedures in the classroom, and language exams.

Three researchers have carried out some studies on speaking anxiety. Hasibuan and Irzawati (2019) investigated students' speaking anxiety on speaking performance. This study aimed to find out how speaking anxiety affected students' speaking abilities. The researchers used a correlation study to determine how two or more variables relate. Based on their study, it is shown that speaking performance and speaking anxiety were significantly correlated. Students with high speaking abilities also have speaking anxiety. Therefore, as speaking anxiety affects students' speaking performance, teachers and students should be able to deal with it collaboratively. Self-reflection exercises are a helpful way to deal with public speaking nervousness because self-reflection can help students identify their strengths and weakness, overcome problems, and develop confidence in speaking.

Next, Tridinanti (2018) conducted a study on the correlation between speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and speaking achievement of undergraduate EFL students in Palembang. The researcher used correlation design to determine whether there was a significant correlation between students' speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and speaking achievement. The researcher used speaking tests, interviews, and questionnaires. The result shows that speaking anxiety has no significant correlation with speaking achievement, while self-confidence has a significant correlation with speech achievement. It means that students with high self-confidence would have higher speaking achievement. Therefore, teachers and lecturers must encourage students to practice speaking English in front of the class to improve self-confidence when communicating in English.

Hanifa also (2018) conducted a study on anxiety factors when learning speaking skills. She analyzed the phenomena of speaking anxiety in the context of learning foreign languages. The main three themes identified from a review of pertinent literature, namely cognitive, affective, and performance factors. Cognitive elements include knowledge of the subject, speaking styles, interlocutors, and process requirements. In contrast, emotional elements concern how learners feel and behave toward the subject or the other participants in the conversation. The students' self-consciousness is also addressed by affective factors, such as being put on the spot or being aware that they are being evaluated. In comparison, concerns about performance factors include mode, level of collaboration, discourse control, planning, rehearsals and having time for rehearsals, time pressure to talk, and environmental factors. It should be easier for teachers and students to gain a greater understanding and develop strategies to deal with anxiety in EFL classrooms if they comprehensively understand the nature of this anxiety. It implies that speaking anxiety is still a complicated issue.

Horwitz et al. (1986) divided the factors contributing to language anxiety into three categories: communicative apprehension, exam anxiety, and worry about negative evaluation. First, communication apprehension is a form of shyness marked by fear or nervousness when speaking to others. Speaking in public will be challenging for those who are anxious. According to McCroskey (1978), communication apprehension is the degree of worry or anxiety a person experiences with actual or prospective communication with other people. It may be brought on by a person's general personality qualities, such as silence, shyness, and reluctance. Second is the exam test, where Brown (1994) mentioned that when someone has a speaking test, they feel anxiety about passing it. It implies that pupils may have had a negative exam experience, affecting their perception of future tests. According to Tsai

& Chang (2013), some students will experience anxiety under pressure. Their uncertainty regarding the outcome of their test will make them fearful of making the same errors when taking the test. The last is the worry of negative evaluation. Horwitz et al. (1986) stated that negative assessment and communication anxiety are closely related to students' doubt of their learning capacity and influenced by their environment. When they attempt to communicate with others using a second language, they are concerned about whether the grammar is correct and worry about how other people will evaluate them.

Many researchers have formed their ideas about anxiety by studying the relationship between anxiety and performance. Alpert & Haber (1960) distinguished between debilitating anxiety and facilitating anxiety. They stated that encouraging anxiety makes a learner more focused on a task, motivates students to make more effort, and is beneficial in completing a task. Scovel (1978) also mentioned that encouraging anxiety keeps students motivated and encourages them to work harder in unfavorable situations. Therefore, anxiety can be somewhat beneficial. For instance, when a student feels nervous before giving a speech, this nervousness may encourage him to learn and prepare the speech well. Thus, facilitating anxiety can enhance or facilitate learning when students have the time to prepare and are more concerned about a task. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety is bad since it causes a pupil to become too nervous and possibly perform below average or even get scared off task. Oxford (1999) stated that debilitating anxiety is bad because it will affect negative students' performance in speaking and students' self-confidence. Therefore, debilitating anxiety is unfavorable emotions, including worry, discomfort, aggravation, doubt, and tension. It is characterized by a lack of self-confidence and a fear of failing.

Related to the issues of students' speaking anxiety in class, Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) proposed five techniques for reducing speaking anxiety, namely: preparation (by studying hard and making a summary of the lecture by taking notes), relaxation (by taking a deep breath, trying to calm down, and controlling their anxiety), positive thinking (by imagining their performance will be better), peer seeking (looking for other friends who seem to have the trouble with controlling their speaking anxiety), and resignation (refusing to face the problem like not doing anything in class, giving up, sleeping in the class).

Many scholars explore the problem of students' speaking anxiety, but fewer studies focus on Senior High School. In this study, the researchers chose SMAN 13 Pangkep because this school is one of the most favorite Senior High Schools in Pangkep Regency. However, based on the first observation of first-grade students at SMAN 13 Pangkep, the researchers found that students have anxiety to express their words in speaking English. Therefore, speaking anxiety is still an interesting topic to the researchers because many students struggle to speak English, especially first-grade students at SMAN 13 Pangkep Regency in South Sulawesi Province. The issues were: (1) the majority of students claimed that speaking is harder than the other skills where the students frequently have ideas, but it is hard to express their ideas (2) most students were shy and discomfort to talk, and (3) they have the poor vocabulary or knowledge about the topic. Therefore, this study focused on factors causing students' speaking anxiety, the effects of students' speaking anxiety, and the students' strategies to reduce their speaking anxiety. The result of this research is expected to give knowledge of students' speaking anxiety and speaking proficiency in English teaching and learning. The researchers formulated three research questions as follows.

1) What are the factors causing students' speaking anxiety?
2) What are the effects of students' speaking anxiety?
3) What are the students' strategies to reduce their speaking anxiety?

METHOD

This study used the qualitative descriptive research design because the researchers wanted to find out the factors causing students' speaking anxiety, the effects of students' speaking anxiety, and the students' strategies to reduce their speaking anxiety. The first grade at one of the Senior High Schools in Pangkep became population of this study which is located in South Sulawesi Province at Pangkep Regency. The researchers randomly selected two classes as the sample, namely first-grade students and and nine students interviewed by the researchers.

The researchers conducted observations to observe the symptoms of anxiety that occur when the students speak during the teaching and learning process such as nervousness, sweatiness, heartbeat speed faster than usual, and so on. Observation is essential because the researchers could see the real condition of the students when they try to speak English in a class by using a video recorder. Besides observation, the researchers also interviewed to get data about factors causing students' speaking anxiety, the effects of students' speaking anxiety, and their strategies to reduce their speaking anxiety. In interview questions, the researchers adapted the interview guideline from Jurmasari (2017) where there are eight questions written in Indonesian and English. The researchers used Indonesian to interview the students because they still have a low proficiency level in speaking. In selecting the interviewee, the researchers divided the students' speaking anxiety from high to moderate, moderate to moderate, and moderated to low. The researchers interviewed the students face-to-face using an audio recorder and took some notes during the interview. The interview involved factors causing the students' speaking anxiety (linguistic and non-linguistic factors), the effect students' speakin g anxiety (facilitating and debilitating effects).

To validate the data from the interview, the researchers selected nine students who have speaking anxiety based on the observations, namely 3 students who have high to moderate speaking anxiety, three students who have moderate to moderate, and three students who have moderate to low speaking anxiety were chosen to be interviewed by the researchers. For analyzing the data, the researchers used Miles, Huberman, and Sadana's (2013) techniques, namely data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Specifically, this part was meant to elaborate on three primary points: the causes of students' speaking anxiety, the effects of students' speaking anxiety, and the students' solutions for reducing their anxiety when speaking.

1. Factors Causing Students' Speaking Anxiety

The elements that lead to students' nervousness when speaking English were gathered through interviews and observations. Two factors were identified as contributors to English language learners' anxiety about speaking:

Table 1. Anxiety Inducing Factors

Anxiety Inducing Factors	The Items
a. Linguistic Factors	a) Low pronunciation b) Lack of insight c) Insufficient vocabulary
b. Non-linguistic Factors	a) Lack of self-assurance b) Inadequate planning c) Peer Shyness d) Fearful of Social Rejection

This section talks about what makes students anxious about speaking English. The researchers discovered two types of reasons for student speaking anxiety, namely linguistic and non-linguistic factors.

Linguistic factors become the key reason for students' anxiety in learning English because their pronunciation is poor, they do not have enough insight, and they have a short vocabulary. It is congruent with the findings of Liu (2018), who discovered that students were reluctant to speak English and were afraid to make errors for a variety of reasons, including a lack of self-confidence, inadequate preparation, the fear of being the focus of attention, a restricted vocabulary, and incorrect pronunciation. Because they are unfamiliar with the subject matter, students may choose to avoid participation or become inactive in the classroom to deal with speaking anxiety. Hakim (2019) claims that a lack of fluency in the target language may also play a role in the development of linguistic anxiety. Language learners' difficulties in acquiring and using the target language may be at the root of this issue. That is, it could happen due to difficulties with the language, namely when learning and utilizing a foreign language.

Interview excerpt 1:
> I am not confident with my pronunciation and vocabulary, so I feel nervous and shy to speak. I also feel blank whenever I want to start a conversation, I am totally confused to organize the information in my head (Shanty: minute 9.05).
> I am totally anxious when I want to involve myself in a conversation. I think I need to get used to engage in conversation, so I will have opportunities to practice my speaking skill. Sometimes, I have a lot of information in my head, but I have trouble to express them out. I am also afraid of making mistakes that influence my motivation to speak up (Deni: minute 6.07)

In the interview excerpts, Shanty and Deni, two EFL students, share their experiences with speaking anxiety. Shanty expresses a lack of confidence in her pronunciation and vocabulary, leading to nervousness and shyness while speaking. She also struggles with initiating conversations and organizing her thoughts. Similarly, Deni feels anxious when engaging in conversations and believes that more practice is necessary to improve his speaking skills. He often has a lot of information in mind but finds it challenging to express it verbally, and the fear of making mistakes affects his motivation to speak up. These excerpts highlight common themes of lacking confidence, nervousness, difficulty initiating and organizing thoughts, the need for practice and exposure, and the fear of making mistakes among EFL students.

Addressing these concerns through targeted instruction and creating supportive learning environments can help alleviate speaking anxiety and enhance students' speaking abilities.

Another factor for students' speaking anxiety is non-linguistic factors such as lack of self-assurance, inadequate planning, peer timidity, and fear of social rejection. It arises because students are embarrassed by their peers' observations. In addition, students feel worried because they fear ridicule from their classmates, mainly if they are aware that the classmate presenting has low proficiency. In line with Tian (2019), who revealed that Korean students experienced varying degrees of anxiety during in-class presentations, common reactions to this anxiety included recurrent subconscious behaviours, silence, speech disruptions, a slowed speaking rate, and so on. Students with this issue may experience more anxiety while learning a second or foreign language. It is also backed by Adamson (2022), who claims that students also mentioned a lack of confidence, anxiety about being viewed as stupid, and friction in interactions with their peers when discussing fear and humiliation. Teachers' and classmates' laughter was among the most discussed and feared reactions. Moreover, Bragg (2017) defined Communication apprehension as a person's worry or anxiety associated with actual or projected communication with others. Individual personality qualities such as silence, shyness, and reticence can contribute to it.

2. The Effects of Students' Speaking Anxiety

Students' speaking anxiety has two effects: facilitating and debilitating. Facilitating anxiety is viewed positively since it helps students focus on the topic, propels them to exert more significant effort, and improves their overall performance. On the other side, students who do not perform a task to the best of their abilities are more likely to experience debilitating anxiety as a negative result of the situation.

Table 2. Effects of Students' Speaking Anxiety

Effects of Students' Speaking Anxiety	The Items
a. Facilitating Effect	1) Self-motivation 2) Self-confidence
b. Debilitating Effect	1) Blank 2) Stammer and Afraid 3) Nervous 4) Stumble

Facilitating anxiety, as described by Lowe (2019), acts as a positive force that motivates students to overcome their worries and perform effectively. This type of anxiety does not burden students excessively but rather pushes them to become more articulate, confident, and engaged in the learning process. Students with facilitating anxiety learn to manage and minimize their fears, which can contribute to their overall growth and development. Ying and Liying (2018) highlight that a certain level of anxiety can be beneficial in maintaining students' efforts and pushing them to excel. Additionally, Scovel (1978) notes that facilitating anxiety can motivate learners, help them process new information, and encourage them to put in extra effort to counteract the negative effects of anxiety.

On the other hand, debilitating anxiety, as discussed by Andrea (2022), has a detrimental impact on students. It manifests as stammering, forgetfulness, blanking

out, being unable to express oneself, nervousness, and fear of being ridiculed by peers. Debilitating anxiety acts as a barrier to learning and inhibits students from fully utilizing their talents. It is the most commonly encountered type of anxiety among researchers. Oxford (1999) further emphasizes that debilitating anxiety is harmful because it restricts student participation, limits their performance, and leads to overt avoidance of using the language. These two outcomes demonstrate the varying effects of speaking anxiety on students' language learning experiences. Facilitating anxiety, when managed appropriately, can spur students to perform at their best and engage actively in the learning process. It enhances motivation and encourages students to overcome their fears. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety severely hampers students' ability to communicate effectively, hindering their language development and causing negative emotional and cognitive effects.

Understanding the distinction between facilitating and debilitating anxiety is essential for educators and language learning practitioners. They can design interventions and create supportive environments that promote facilitating anxiety while mitigating debilitating anxiety. By addressing debilitating anxiety through targeted interventions, such as providing opportunities for gradual exposure to speaking situations and implementing relaxation techniques, educators can help students overcome their anxieties and unlock their full potential in language learning. Further research could delve into the factors influencing the development of facilitating and debilitating anxiety, explore effective strategies to promote facilitating anxiety, and develop interventions to alleviate debilitating anxiety among students. By deepening our understanding of these two outcomes, educators can tailor their teaching approaches to foster a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages students to overcome their speaking anxieties and thrive in their language learning journey.

3. Students' Strategies to Reduce their Speaking Anxiety

Preparation, avoiding eye contact, and peer assistance are some of the strategies employed by students to alleviate their public speaking anxiety.

Table 4.3 Students' Strategies to Reduce their Speaking Anxiety

Students' Strategies to Reduce Speaking Anxiety	The Items
a. Preparation	1) Conceptualize 2) Practice 3) Expand Vocabulary
b. Avoiding Eye Contact	1) Think nobody in the class
c. Peer Assistance	2) Ask friends

The researchers discovered three ways students used to lessen their speaking anxiety: preparation, avoiding eye contact, and peer assistance.

The first strategy mentioned is preparation, which involves presenting an outline, conceptualizing the subject matter, and practicing pronunciation. This approach allows students to familiarize themselves with the content and gain confidence through rehearsal. As highlighted by Grieve et al. (2021), practice and preparation are crucial for building confidence in speaking or presenting. Through preparation, students not only become more comfortable with the material but also expand their vocabulary, further enhancing their ability to communicate effectively.

The second strategy involves avoiding direct eye contact with others, which can help reduce students' fear of speaking. By imagining that no one else is in the room and consciously avoiding eye contact, students create a psychological barrier that allows them to feel more at ease. This strategy aligns with the findings of Gregersen and Horwitz (2002), who note that anxious students often exhibit non-verbal responses such as avoiding eye contact. This response serves as a defense mechanism to alleviate the perceived pressure of being observed while speaking. Additionally, Grieve et al. (2021) highlight various physical reactions associated with anxiety, such as reduced eye contact, voice vibrations, hand movements, and head shaking. These manifestations further emphasize the impact of anxiety on non-verbal behavior during speaking activities.

It is important to note that while these strategies may be effective for some individuals, they might not work equally well for everyone. Speaking anxiety is a complex issue influenced by various factors, and different individuals may respond differently to different strategies. Therefore, a holistic approach that combines multiple strategies tailored to the specific needs of each student is recommended. Furthermore, future research could delve deeper into the efficacy of these strategies, explore additional techniques for reducing speaking anxiety, and investigate their applicability across diverse cultural and educational contexts. Understanding the nuances of speaking anxiety and exploring a range of effective strategies will contribute to the development of comprehensive support systems for EFL learners in managing and overcoming their anxiety, ultimately fostering more confident and fluent communication skills.

The final strategy of the student is to seek assistance from peers. The students commonly inquire with their peers regarding the aspects of the topic that they do not understand when they feel anxious before studying. They frequently seek advice from their peers to reduce mistakes, which might boost students' confidence. According to Moreno (2010), there is a cognitive level when pupils cannot accomplish anything alone and require direction to solve difficulties by working with their peers. Furthermore, according to Kadir and Salija (2018), students may experience less anxiety when learning English as a foreign language when they study with their classmates since they can learn together and assist one another in their studies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted during the discussion session, it is evident that students' speaking anxiety is influenced by two main factors: linguistic factors (e.g., pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary) and non-linguistic factors (e.g., lack of confidence, poor planning, fear of social rejection). The consequences of speaking anxiety can manifest in two ways: facilitating and debilitating. Students with low anxiety levels often perceive a moderate increase in anxiety as a motivator for improving their public speaking skills and overcoming their fears. In contrast, students with high anxiety levels tend to experience debilitating effects, leading to difficulties such as speech blockages, stammering, fear, nervousness, and stumbling. Students proposed various strategies to alleviate their speaking anxiety, including thorough preparation, avoiding direct eye contact, and seeking support from peers. They emphasized the importance of outlining and understanding the subject matter, while relying on classmates to clarify uncertainties and enhance their confidence. These findings highlight the complexity of speaking anxiety and underscore the need for comprehensive interventions to address both linguistic and non-linguistic factors in order to support students in developing effective speaking skills. Finally, the

researchers would like to propose some suggestions: the students should actively convey their opinion when learning in a group. They do not need to be shy, afraid, or lack self-confidence to convey their opinion. Besides, they also need to help, support, and motivate their friends to speak and not bully their friends. For future researchers, conducting a case study and comparing the student's speaking anxiety offline and online in learning English is suggested.

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