Anxiety in English Speaking Experienced by Students in a Designated Private Junior High School

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Abstract

In the process of learning English, students often encounter speaking anxiety as a significant challenge. This type of anxiety involves various concerns when speaking a foreign language, such as nervousness about communication, fear of tests, and worry about being judged negatively. The primary objective of this study was to assess the extent of speaking anxiety experienced by students. Data was gathered from 83 seventh-grade students at a designated private junior high school in Minahasa Utara, Indonesia. The study employed a quantitative approach and utilized a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire adapted from Natalia (2014), originally developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), to measure students' English-speaking anxiety. The results indicated that, overall, students had a moderate level (M = 2.87; SD = 0.50) of speaking anxiety. Notably, the most prevalent form of speaking anxiety among students was the fear of negative evaluation (M = 2.99; SD = 0.67). It was recommended, among others, that the English teachers create a non-judgmental classroom environment to encourage voluntary student participation, provide test preparation to ease test-related anxiety, and future research should aim for larger and more diverse samples to gain a deeper understanding of student speaking anxiety.

Keywords—English speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, junior high school

Abstrak

Dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, siswa sering menghadapi kecemasan berbicara sebagai tantangan besar. Jenis kecemasan ini melibatkan berbagai perasaan cemas saat berbicara dalam bahasa asing, seperti rasa gugup dalam berkomunikasi, ketakutan akan ujian, dan kekhawatiran tentang penilaian negatif. Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menilai sejauh mana kecemasan berbicara yang dialami oleh siswa. Data dikumpulkan dari 83 siswa kelas tujuh di sebuah sekolah menengah pertama swasta yang ditunjuk di Minahasa Utara, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert 5 poin yang diadaptasi dari Natalia (2014), yang awalnya dikembangkan oleh Horwitz, Horwitz, dan Cope (1986), untuk mengukur kecemasan berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa secara keseluruhan, siswa memiliki tingkat kecemasan berbicara yang sedang (M = 2,87; SD = 0,50). Yang paling umum adalah bentuk kecemasan berbicara di antara siswa adalah ketakutan akan penilaian negatif (M = 2,99; SD = 0,67). Disarankan, antara lain, bahwa guru bahasa Inggris menciptakan lingkungan kelas yang bebas penilaian untuk mendorong partisipasi sukarela siswa, memberikan persiapan ujian dengan memberikan sumber daya tambahan guna mengurangi kecemasan ujian, dan penelitian masa depan sebaiknya menggunakan sampel yang lebih besar dan lebih beragam untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang kecemasan berbicara siswa.

Kata kunci—kecemasan berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris, ketakutan akan penilaian negatif, sekolah menengah pertama

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an essential component of language, enabling individuals to communicate and exchange information. Nunan as cited in Indrianty (2016), underscores its significance in foreign language acquisition and how it reflects one's fluency and accuracy in their native language, making it a valuable skill to assess. Depdiknas, as mentioned in Yulianti dan Sulistyawati (2021), emphasizes the importance of speaking skills as a means for students to articulate their thoughts and opinions effectively. In essence, the ability to converse fluently in English becomes a crucial benchmark for success in English language learning, as highlighted by Kamalisari and Amrizal (2021). Thus, English language education should prioritize the development of speaking proficiency.

Speaking is the primary medium through which individuals establish communication, necessitating the expression of thoughts and emotions effectively. Gert and Hans as cited in Harris (2019) define speaking as conveying a statement with the expectation of mutual comprehension and response. Oktavia (2021) reinforced the idea that speaking serves as a means for students to convey knowledge and emotions. However, despite some language comprehension, students often grapple with speaking English fluently, a challenge frequently rooted in anxiety. Anxiety emerges as a significant factor impacting English speaking performance, affecting students' ability to communicate effectively.

Amid the challenges of English language learning, speaking anxiety stands out as a prominent obstacle. Woodrow as cited in Fadhilah (2022), acknowledges that this anxiety hinders students' English-speaking abilities. Anxiety, encompassing stress, fear, and apprehension, is a common emotional state during English communication, as elucidated by Tanver as cited in Indrianty (2016). This anxiety profoundly affects students, leading to discomfort, reduced confidence, and impaired speaking performance, as noted by Ritonga et al. as cited in Ngingi (2021). The fear of making errors and facing negative judgments from peers (Sinadia & Ngingi, 2023) exacerbates this anxiety, as classmates play a significant role in language learning and can undermine students' confidence in speaking English.

Students in English language classes come from diverse backgrounds, each with unique characteristics shaping their classroom experiences. When students attempt to communicate in English, they often encounter difficulties and pervasive anxiety, particularly when speaking in front of peers or friends. This collective challenge necessitates attention and resolution, highlighting the need to address and overcome speaking anxieties to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students can confidently engage in English language communication.

Anxiety, characterized by fear, worry, frustration, and self-doubt, significantly obstructs the language learning process (Fadhilah, 2022). Student anxiety is a prominent challenge in the learning journey, with profound implications for their educational outcomes. Horwitz and Cope as cited in Pahargyan (2021) underline that both students and educators perceive anxiety as the primary hurdle in acquiring English speaking skills. High levels of anxiety can hinder students' performance, as observed by Oktaviani et al. (2013). This anxiety in English learning often stems from concerns about peer and teacher assessment, with students fearing negative evaluations Basri as cited in Ngingi (2021). Consequently, addressing these anxiety-related challenges is crucial to creating a more supportive and inclusive learning environment, empowering students to engage confidently in English language communication.

The anxiety experienced by students significantly influences their speaking abilities in the process of learning English. Horwitz as cited in Lamila & Wijayanto (2020) identifies three distinct perspectives on speaking anxiety: "trait anxiety," representing a long-lasting tendency toward anxiety; "state anxiety," referring to momentary apprehension triggered by specific circumstances; and "situation-specific anxiety," arising exclusively in particular

contexts. Understanding these facets of speaking anxiety can illuminate the intricate relationship between anxiety and language learning.

Two significant factors contribute to speaking anxiety, as outlined by Adler and Rodman (2020). The first is "Negative Experience," wherein past encounters significantly impact confidence, with unpleasant experiences often breeding apprehension about future situations. The second factor, "Irrational Thinking," is equally crucial, as it stems from a lack of self-belief and excessive worry about unlikely outcomes, ultimately affecting performance. Addressing these factors is essential to help students overcome speaking anxiety and cultivate a more conducive learning environment.

In a research endeavor by Utami (2020), titled "Assessing Speaking Anxiety Among Secondary Students in an Islamic Private School," the study focused on eleventh-grade students in an Islamic Private Senior High School and employed questionnaires as the primary research instrument. The study revealed that students exhibited a notably high level of speaking anxiety, primarily characterized by communication apprehension, garnering an average score of 3.48. Conversely, students demonstrated a relatively lower level of anxiety concerning the "Fear of Negative Evaluation," registering an average score of 2.87. These findings underscore that students often experience anxiety and tension when required to speak in a foreign language, particularly in front of their peers, without thorough preparation, or during discussions with teachers and classmates.

Furthermore, Horwitz and colleagues, as cited in Sutarsyah (2017), have identified three distinct forms of anxiety closely associated with the process of learning a foreign language: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension reflects a sense of shyness and unease when speaking with others, particularly in the presence of a larger audience, often arising from limited proficiency in the target language. Within the context of foreign language classes, students are required to actively engage in speaking and listening activities utilizing the new language, a prospect that can trigger anxiety and frustration as they grapple with the belief that they may struggle to comprehend others or effectively convey their thoughts.

Test anxiety, on the other hand, is rooted in the fear of subpar performance in examinations. This anxiety can manifest both during the challenging tests themselves and afterward when students receive their results. Remarkably, even well-prepared students can succumb to anxiety-induced mistakes, particularly when confronted with English language assessments, as the pressure and unease associated with these tests can lead to faltering and underperformance, despite their diligent preparation.

Moreover, the fear of negative evaluation transcends the realm of tests and encompasses a broader apprehension about receiving unfavorable judgments and criticisms from peers and teachers. This fear often prompts anxious students to avoid participating in English interactions and performances to evade the potential for criticism. Regrettably, this avoidance strategy hampers their progress in developing English-speaking skills, ultimately impeding their overall language proficiency enhancement.

Returning to the issue of speaking anxiety, a prevalent challenge in the realm of English language learning, Ningsih and Fatimah (2020) conducted a study involving 59 third-grade students specializing in tourism and hospitality at SMKN 6 Padang. The primary objective of their research was to discern the root causes and the severity of speaking anxiety among these students. To accomplish this, the researchers employed two research instruments: interviews and the administration of questionnaires. Specifically, they used Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's FLCAS questionnaire, consisting of 33 items per question. The findings of the investigation shed light on the fact that the foremost cause of students' speaking anxiety revolves around their apprehension regarding speaking tests. This insight underscores the need for targeted interventions to alleviate this specific source of anxiety and promote more confident English language communication among students in this context.

In another study conducted by Mariam (2018), involving second-grade students at SMA Islam Sudirman Bringin, several key findings emerged. Among the participants, 2 (12%) students reported experiencing a "Very Anxious" level of anxiety, 6 (35%) students were categorized as "Anxious," 7 (41%) students fell into the "Mildly anxious" category, and only 2 (12%) students exhibited a "Relaxing" level of anxiety. A closer examination of the data, grouping students based on the types of anxiety assessed by the FLCAS, revealed that "Fear of Negative Evaluation" was the predominant factor contributing to students' anxiety, affecting 11 (65%) students. Following closely behind was test anxiety, affecting 10 (59%) students, while communication apprehension had the lowest impact, affecting 9 (53%) students. In summary, the study concluded that most students experienced a "Mildly anxious" level of anxiety, with "Fear of Negative Evaluation" emerging as the primary contributing factor.

Furthermore, in a separate investigation conducted by Oktaviani, et.al. (2013) at SMAN 7 Padang, which involved students from two classes, namely X and XI, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The results of this study echoed the findings of Dewi Mariam's research, indicating that "Fear of Negative Evaluation" was the predominant aspect of English language anxiety experienced by students engaged in English language learning. This consistency underscores the significance of addressing this specific type of anxiety to enhance students' confidence and proficiency in English language acquisition.

The pervasive issue of speaking anxiety among English language learners is a multifaceted challenge that demands careful consideration and targeted interventions. The studies discussed shed light on the varying levels of anxiety experienced by students at different educational levels and contexts. The common thread among these studies is the prominent role played by the fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety in fueling speaking anxiety. Understanding these factors and their impact on language acquisition is crucial for educators and institutions to design effective strategies that nurture students' confidence and competence in speaking English. By fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment that addresses these anxieties, we can empower students to embrace language learning with confidence, ultimately promoting successful English language communication and proficiency.

Understanding the various dimensions of speaking anxiety and the factors contributing to it is crucial for creating a supportive and effective English language learning environment. This approach empowers students to overcome these barriers, enabling them to confidently engage in language learning and communication. Addressing speaking anxiety is pivotal in empowering students to confidently engage in language learning and communication, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and effective English language education landscape.

The primary objective of this study was to assess the extent of speaking anxiety among students attending a specific private junior high school in Minahasa Utara. In addition to determining the overall level of speaking anxiety, this research delved into a detailed examination of each individual item comprising the construct of speaking anxiety experienced by these students. By focusing on each item within the construct, the study aimed to gain comprehensive insights into the specific anxieties and concerns faced by students in relation to speaking activities. This approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the various dimensions of speaking anxiety within the context of the selected junior high school, contributing to a more thorough exploration and interpretation of the research findings.

RESEARCH METHODS
Research Design
　　This study adopted a descriptive quantitative design, a method that entails analyzing numerical data and utilizing mathematical operations to investigate their attributes, as outlined by Nicholas as cited in Walliman (2017). Descriptive design, as defined by Sebastien (2016), constitutes a set of propositions aimed at offering a comprehensive depiction of a specific phenomenon. In the context of this research, the descriptive design was specifically employed to furnish a comprehensive overview and detailed description of the anxiety levels experienced by student respondents in the context of learning English. By leveraging this approach, the study aimed to capture and elucidate the various facets and nuances of anxiety experienced by students within the scope of English language learning, providing valuable insights into this psychological phenomenon within an educational context.

Respondents
　　The participants in this study were selected purposefully from the seventh-grade student cohort attending a Junior High School during the second semester of the 2022 / 2023 academic year. The original population comprised 142 students spread across different classes: 36 students in class 7A, 35 in 7B, 35 in 7C, and 36 in 7D. However, for the scope of this research, a questionnaire was distributed to a subset of 83 students. This sample was chosen based on their availability in the classroom during the survey administration and their expressed willingness to engage actively in the study. The selection process aimed to capture a representative group of participants from the larger student population for meaningful analysis and interpretation of the study's objectives.

Instrument
　　The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire about student foreign language anxiety which was adapted from Natalia (2014) which had been originally developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). There were 29 items in the original questionnaire. This study picked out 15 items (See Table 3), since they were considered relevant and suitable for junior high school students. The questionnaire items were classified in three categories with five items for each. The first part was communication apprehension which consists of six items, 2, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13. The second part was test anxiety consisting of four items, 3, 5, 8, 9. And the last part s fear of negative evaluation consists of five items, 1, 7, 10, 14, 15.
　　The entire questionnaire underwent a rigorous process of validation and reliability testing to ascertain the Cronbach alpha value. In conducting the scale reliability analysis, the resulting Cronbach Alpha value was determined to be .760, a level of reliability that met the acceptable threshold as suggested by Gross (2015). Consequently, the questionnaire items were deemed valid and reliable for the purpose of collecting data in this study. This comprehensive validation and reliability assessment ensured the robustness and trustworthiness of the questionnaire as a data collection instrument.

Procedures of Data Collection
　　To gather crucial data for this study, a series of steps were meticulously executed. Initially, permission was sought from the principal of the chosen Private Junior High School in Minahasa Utara, Indonesia. Subsequently, collaboration was established with the school's curriculum department to facilitate the distribution of questionnaires. Upon reaching consensus with classroom teachers, the questionnaires were disseminated to the students, accompanied by detailed instructions for completion. Emphasis was placed on maintaining the confidentiality of respondents' responses, as the questionnaire did not require any personal identification information. These systematic procedures were employed to ensure

the smooth execution of data collection while prioritizing ethical considerations and participant privacy.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study was predominantly comprised of numerical values, rendering it highly amenable to statistical analysis. This research predominantly employed a descriptive analysis approach, focusing on the calculation of mean scores for each of the 15 items included in the dataset. These 15 items were thoughtfully grouped into three distinct sub-scales: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, enabling a more nuanced examination of various dimensions within the research. Furthermore, an overall mean score was calculated to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire dataset.

In the process of interpreting these mean scores, a five-point Likert scale served as the foundational framework. This Likert scale, which is commonly employed in social research, encompassed a range of responses, allowing participants to express their sentiments and life experience on a spectrum. The scale's five-point nature facilitated a nuanced understanding of the data, enabling the research team to discern not only the central tendency but also the degree of agreement or disagreement among respondents regarding each item, with interpretation of the score as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Interpretation of Mean Scores

Mean Score	Rounded as	Interpreted as
4.50 – 5.00	5	Very High
3.50 – 4.49	4	High
2.50 – 3.49	3	Moderate/Average
1.50 – 2.49	2	Low
1.00 – 1.49	1	Very Low

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The incorporation of descriptive statistics within this study has proven to be instrumental in extracting valuable insights, which have been meticulously presented and expounded upon in Tables 2 and 3. These tables serve as pivotal visual tools, presenting a meticulously organized and detailed representation of the collected data. By providing a structured visual layout, these tables enable a more profound examination and interpretation of the research findings. Through the application of statistical analysis, a comprehensive understanding of key metrics such as the number of respondents (N), minimum score (Min), maximum score (Max), mean score (M), and standard deviation (SD) within the dataset has been achieved. This detailed statistical overview establishes a robust foundation for subsequent in-depth analysis and discussion, facilitating a nuanced exploration of the dataset and enhancing the clarity and depth of the research findings and interpretations. The strategic use of descriptive statistics not only illuminates key trends and patterns within the data but also supports informed conclusions and insights, contributing significantly to the overall rigor and comprehensiveness of the study's analytical framework.

Table 2 presents the outputs of a descriptive statistics analysis conducted on three distinct sub-scales: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The results from this analysis indicate an overall mean score (M = 2.87; SD = .50), placing the level of speaking anxiety within the moderate range. Among the sub-scales, fear of negative evaluation emerges as the most influential factor contributing to this anxiety, with a mean score of 2.99 (SD = .67), followed closely by test anxiety at 2.84 (SD = .67), and communication apprehension at 2.78 (SD = .62). These mean scores collectively suggest that student respondents experience a neutral stance toward speaking anxiety, exhibiting fluctuating emotions between feelings of anxiety and non-anxiety. This nuanced

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Anxiety Components

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Communication Apprehension	83	1.33	4.17	2.78	.62
Test Anxiety	83	1.25	4.00	2.84	.66
Fear of Negative Evaluation	83	1.60	4.60	2.99	.67
Overall Mean Score	83	1.73	3.80	2.87	.50

comprehension underscores the intricate and multifaceted nature of their emotional responses within the context of English language communication, revealing deeper insights into the complexities involved in their communicative experiences.

In a comprehensive exploration of student speaking anxiety, a detailed descriptive statistical analysis was conducted for each item within the construct. It is essential to highlight the top six items, each with a mean score precisely at or above 3.00, as presented in Table 3. Among these, three items from the fear of negative evaluation subscale stood out: "I feel that other students can speak English better than I can" (item no. 10; M = 3.30; SD = 1.05), "I feel shy to voluntarily answer in English class" (item no. 7; M = 3.10; SD = 1.02), and "I get anxious when my English teacher asks questions that I haven't prepared answers for in advance" (item no. 15; M = 3.00; SD = 1.23). Additionally, the subscale of test anxiety featured the item "I'm concerned about failing in English class" (item no. 5; M = 3.10; SD = 1.21), while the subscale of communication apprehension included two items: "I get anxious when I have to speak without preparation in English class" (item no. 4; M = 3.27; SD = 0.91) and "I'm embarrassed to speak English in front of the other students" (item no. 11; M = 3.03; SD = 1.03).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Anxiety Items

No	Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	I become nervous when I know I'll be called upon in English class.	83	1.00	5.00	2.90	1.03
2	I'm scared when I don't understand what my teacher is saying in English class.	83	1.00	5.00	2.27	1.11
3	I feel calm during English subject exams.	83	1.00	5.00	1.73	1.48
4	I get anxious when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	83	1.00	5.00	3.27	.91
5	I'm concerned about failing in English class.	83	1.00	5.00	3.10	1.21
6	In English class, I get nervous to the point that I forget things I know.	83	1.00	5.00	2.83	1.12
7	I feel shy to voluntarily answer in English class.	83	1.00	5.00	3.10	1.02
8	I'm afraid my English teacher will correct the mistakes I make.	83	1.00	5.00	2.67	1.32
9	The more I study for English class exams, the more anxious I become.	83	1.00	5.00	2.33	1.35
10	I feel that other students can speak English better than I can.	83	2.00	5.00	3.30	1.05
11	I'm embarrassed to speak English in front of the other students.	83	1.00	5.00	3.03	1.03
12	I get nervous when speaking in English class.	83	1.00	5.00	2.90	1.12
13	I get nervous when I don't understand every word my English teacher says.	83	1.00	4.00	2.40	1.00
14	I'm afraid other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	83	1.00	5.00	2.63	1.22
15	I get anxious when my English teacher asks questions that I haven't prepared answers for in advance.	83	1.00	5.00	3.00	1.23
	Overall Mean	83	1.73	3.80	2.87	.50

CONCLUSIONS

The study employs descriptive statistics to analyze gathered data, providing valuable insights into research findings. Key metrics such as the number of respondents, minimum score, maximum score, mean score, and standard deviation are used to understand the dataset comprehensively. Specifically, the analysis focuses on three sub-scales: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The results indicate that overall speaking anxiety among student respondents is moderate. Fear of negative evaluation appears to be the primary contributor to this anxiety, followed by test anxiety and communication apprehension. The findings highlight the nuanced emotional experiences of students in English language communication, with their feelings oscillating between anxiety and non-anxiety. This complexity underscores the importance of understanding and addressing speaking anxiety in educational contexts.

Moreover, the study conducted a detailed descriptive statistical analysis of student speaking anxiety, focusing on individual items within the construct. Notably, six items with mean scores precisely at or above 3.00 were highlighted. Among these, three items from the fear of negative evaluation subscale stood out, indicating students' concerns about comparing themselves to others, feeling shy to participate voluntarily, and anxiety about unprepared questions in English class. Additionally, a test anxiety item regarding fear of failing in English class and two communication apprehension items related to speaking without preparation and embarrassment in front of peers were identified.

Overall, these findings reveal the top anxiety-inducing factors for students in speaking situations, spanning fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension. Students exhibited the highest anxiety levels regarding fear of negative evaluation, particularly in comparison to others and voluntary participation in class. Test anxiety and apprehension about speaking without preparation also significantly contributed to students' speaking anxiety experiences. These findings align with previous studies, emphasizing the complex nature of student speaking anxiety and providing valuable insights into its various dimensions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to address and alleviate student speaking anxiety at the designated junior high school in Minahasa Utara, Indonesia. First, it is recommended for English teachers to implement targeted interventions. English teachers should design and implement specific interventions aimed at reducing fear of negative evaluation among students while enhancing their confidence in their language abilities. Second, English teachers should promote a growth mindset. They can encourage a growth mindset approach among students by emphasizing individual progress and development rather than comparing themselves to their peers. Third, English teachers are encouraged to create a non-judgmental classroom environment. They can foster a supportive and non-judgmental classroom atmosphere that encourages voluntary student participation without fear of criticism or embarrassment.

Another reccomendation is English teachers should provide test preparation support. English teachers should offer additional support and resources for test preparation to help alleviate test-related anxiety among students. Fifth, English teachers are suggested to introduce public speaking training. They can incorporate public speaking training into the curriculum to boost students' confidence and reduce feelings of embarrassment when speaking in front of peers. Another strategy English teachers can try is that they offer mental health and counseling services to students. The school administration should provide access to mental health services and counseling for students experiencing significant speaking anxiety, ensuring their emotional well-being and readiness to learn. Seventh, the school can engage parents and peers by encouraging parental and peer involvement in supporting

students' language learning journey and fostering a supportive network that promotes language development and confidence.

Finally, acknowledging the study's limitations, such as a relatively small sample size and specific context, the future research endeavors should aim for larger and more diverse samples to gain a deeper understanding of student speaking anxiety across various educational settings and cultural contexts. These recommendations are tailored to address the specific challenges identified in the study and aim to create a more supportive and conducive learning environment for students to overcome speaking anxiety and thrive in their language learning journey.

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