

ELT STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN LEARNING SPEAKING

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Abstract

Mastering the skill of speaking is vital for students, and it demands a combination of ample practice, confidence, absence of anxiety, and a genuine interest in communication. Unfortunately, many students grapple with excessive worry and reluctance when it comes to developing their speaking abilities. Some rush through speaking exercises to avoid extended participation, while others prefer not to speak at all. One contributing factor is that teachers often lack a deep understanding of their students' individual personalities, leading to the inadvertent coercion of unprepared students into speaking roles. Consequently, when faced with speaking in front of the entire class, these students become overwhelmed. The focus of this study was on students' anxiety related to learning English, specifically among seventh grade English Foreign Language (EFL) students at Himmatun Ayat Junior High School in Surabaya. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach and involved the participation of twenty anxious students. Data collection methods included questionnaires and observations. The study's findings highlighted various factors contributing to students' apprehension in the context of English speaking, such as speaking in front of the class, the fear of ridicule, students' beliefs about language learning, teacher personality, and inadequate preparation.

Keywords: Students' Anxiety, Learning English Speaking

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the fundamental abilities in acquiring a foreign language, alongside listening, reading, and writing. It is introduced as a subject in elementary education. Nonetheless, for students to effectively communicate in English presents its challenges. When speaking in English, they are required to put extra thought into constructing accurate sentences and selecting appropriate vocabulary, all while maintaining good pronunciation (Davies & Pearse, 2000). In simpler terms, they must develop the capability to use English as a learned foreign language for communication.

Indeed, when acquiring English speaking skills, some students frequently encounter difficulties, including feelings of anxiety. If these negative emotions persist, they can hinder students from effectively expressing their thoughts, ideas, and emotions in the new language they are learning. According to (Horwitz, 154-156), anxiety is a psychological issue affecting students' willingness to engage in language practice.

Numerous factors contribute to students experiencing anxiety while learning English, as explained by (Lucas, Miraflores, & Go, 2011). He asserts that anxiety in English language learning has been identified as a factor that can detrimentally affect success in second or foreign language acquisition. In this context, a student's anxiety can influence their academic achievements. Greater confidence in learning English corresponds to a higher level of comprehension, ultimately leading to improved academic performance.

When anxiety is experienced, the body responds to this emotional state. As explained by Horwitz, he defines anxiety as "The subjective sensation of stress, unease, jitters, and concern linked to the activation of the autonomic nervous system" (Sabbah, 2018)

Horwitz posits that these emotional responses are closely tied to our bodily functions, particularly the autonomic nervous system. These sensations can trigger various physical reactions, such as perspiration, trembling of the hands and feet, and nervousness when attempting to speak. Students typically encounter anxiety when they are tasked with presenting assignments or facing examinations. When anxiety sets in within the classroom, it can lead to memory lapses regarding previously learned material and can have a detrimental impact on English language learning skills.

Anxiety can also undermine students' confidence when it comes to speaking. As Horwitz points out, "Students who experience anxiety often tend to avoid participating in speaking activities as a manifestation of their negative anxiety response. This occurs because anxiety can hinder students' comprehension and their ability to convey messages through spoken language" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986)

Students who grapple with anxiety while learning English encounter difficulties in grasping vocabulary and comprehending sentence structures. The anxiety they experience creates a sense of insecurity, leading them to withdraw from English-speaking activities. According to (Dewi, Rukmini, & Mujiyanto, 2020), "Speaking skills are closely intertwined with listening skills,

There are numerous reasons behind students' apprehensions about language learning, with a primary factor being their lack of self-assurance. It's widely acknowledged that students often feel a lack of confidence when they perceive that their communication partner doesn't comprehend them or when they struggle to understand others. In such situations, they tend to stay silent while others converse, revealing their insecurity in communication. (Nunan, 1999) that students lacking confidence, both in themselves and in their English proficiency, frequently experience shyness in communication. This underscores the significance of educators in nurturing student confidence. Consequently, teachers should equip themselves with both theoretical knowledge and practical strategies for bolstering students' self-assurance.

Moreover, the dearth of encouragement from teachers is another factor contributing to students' lack of confidence, as noted by Brown (Brown, 2001)

In this regard, many instructors do not prioritize instilling belief in their students' ability to speak English. As Brown further suggests, this leads to students finding the learning process less motivating and more demotivating. Therefore, the role of encouragement becomes pivotal in fostering student confidence. Hence, offering support to students and demonstrating their competence in English communication significantly contributes to their academic achievements.

Consistent with Loan's findings, research conducted by (Hidayati, 2018) also emphasized that language anxiety had a consistent and substantial impact on learners' progress in mastering their target language. Furthermore, another study provided additional evidence by establishing a significant correlation between students' anxiety levels in learning English and their academic performance in English (Takasana & Sengkey, 2022) in their investigation, they examined 41 grade XI students in a private high school located in North Sulawesi. The study results revealed that the students' anxiety levels in learning English were of moderate intensity (Mean = 3.17), and their English academic achievement was classified as below the passing grade (71.34).

Drawing upon the definitions of anxiety discussed earlier, it is evident that anxiety can act as a hindrance, inhibiting students from actively engaging in English communication. Hence, the objective of this study is to delve into the underlying factors that contribute to students' anxiety in the process of learning to speak English, particularly among seventh-grade students at Mts Himmatun Ayat Surabaya. What sets this research apart from previous studies is its specific focus on English speaking skill development among seventh-grade students, thereby addressing a distinct gap in the existing literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted among a group of 20 seventh-grade students at Mts Himmatun Ayat Surabaya. The selection of study participants was done through a targeted sampling method. The choice of this research topic was primarily driven by two key factors. Firstly, the students displayed a lack of enthusiasm for English, particularly during speaking classes. Secondly, many students exhibited apprehension about showcasing their language abilities in front of their peers. This reluctance was evident in their reactions when asked to do so; they often displayed fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, when required to speak in front of the class, many students tended to speak rapidly due to their aversion to speaking. These considerations led to the selection of these participants, all of whom willingly agreed to take part in the study.

To examine students' anxiety levels during speaking activities, data was gathered through written questionnaires and direct observational methods. Initially, students were tasked with filling out questionnaires. To enhance the robustness and credibility of the data, direct observations were conducted on the participating students. The research methodology employed in this study is qualitative.

Qualitative data in this study were acquired via direct observations and open-ended questions derived from the questionnaire. The analysis process followed the approach outlined by (Miles & A., 1984) which involves three key phases: data reduction, data visualization, and drawing conclusions and verification.

The data collection process commenced with the distribution of written questionnaires to the participants. These questionnaires were written in Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate the participants in responding to them. Following this, direct observations were conducted by the researcher.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that 50% of the participants experience anxiety while learning to speak. When instructing speaking skills, it's crucial for teachers to remember that student anxiety represents a significant challenge in the context of speaking.

Several factors that cause to students' anxiety, including: (1) fear of making errors, (2) concerns about being ridiculed by peers, (3) a sense of inadequacy, (4) insufficient preparation, (5) limited practice, (6) vocabulary deficits, (7) low self-confidence, (8) a lack of motivation, (9) shyness, (10) aversion to course content, (11) teaching methodologies employed by instructors, (12) the attitudes and communication behavior of speakers, and (13) apprehension about facing criticism from teachers in front of classmates.

Some factors that cause students' anxiety, there are: (1) the student's fear of making a mistake, (2) the fear of being laughed by another student, (3) the student's incompetence, (4) the student's lack of preparation, (5) the student's lack of practice, (6) students lack vocabulary, (7) students lack confidence, and (8) students lack confidence, (9) students lack of motivation, (10) student shyness, (11) student dislike of the spoken material,

(12) teacher's teaching method, and (13) speaker's attitude and speaking behavior, (14) the students are afraid to be criticized by the teacher in front of their friends.

The study's findings align with earlier research. According to (Loan, 2022), students' fear of making mistakes stems from their concern that their peers may ridicule them or offer negative feedback if they make errors while speaking English. These mistakes and the apprehension of judgment, either from peers or teachers, contribute to anxiety, which in turn makes students highly nervous during English speaking lessons. In response, it's imperative for educators to foster a supportive learning environment that promotes confidence- building and cooperative learning among students, thereby reducing instances of teasing. Moreover, teachers should emphasize to students that they need not be hesitant to express their thoughts, given that English is a foreign language, and everyone in the class is in the process of learning it. So if teachers correct students at the wrong time, they lose confidence. Therefore, teachers also suggest helping students develop self- confidence so that they can express themselves in English lessons like the students mentioned above.

Students may hesitate to speak if they are uncertain of the meaning of certain words or phrases. Students have trouble communicating their ideas because of their restricted vocabulary. According to (Gebhard, 2000) this situation may make students anxious and make them reluctant to talk. Students' lack of confidence in speaking English is often rooted in their belief that they lack the necessary skills and proficiency to do so. This lack of self-assurance is further exacerbated by their limited command of the language., these feelings undoubtedly prevent them from attempting to speak English. Additionally, adds that teachers can give students frequent opportunity To enhance their confidence in speaking English, students should engage in activities that promote the practice of accurate pronunciation and intonation, while also encouraging free interaction. As a result, teachers should foster a friendly environment where students are urged to speak English and rewarded for doing so. The kids must understand that their teacher does not anticipate them to have excellent English.

The English teacher should also be aware that teaching students to communicate in English takes time and effort.

(Nunan, 1999) explained in detail The reasons behind students' diminished motivation

include factors such as disinterested teaching, feelings of boredom, the perception of irrelevant course content, and a lack of awareness about curriculum goals. Remarkably, these four elements can frequently serve as demotivators for students. For instance, uninspiring teaching has a negative impact on students' drive to learn. Specifically, the presence of monotonous teaching often leads to a decline in student motivation, as it fosters a sense of tedium among them. This shows how important it is to pay attention to these four factors. Students have reportedly also experienced a lack of motivation.

pertinent to the students is the second stage of introducing initial motivating approaches. The next step is to ensure that students' motivation is preserved and safeguarded by providing engaging activities and encouraging students' self-worth, self-assurance, and cooperation. The classroom environment plays a crucial role in students' comfort levels. A teacher who creates a safe and supportive atmosphere where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning can reduce anxiety. On the other hand, a strict or judgmental environment can increase anxiety.

Other Elements that contribute to students' anxiety when learning to speak English is their lack of confidence. The students claimed that they could not speak English languages like their classmates. They underestimate their abilities and feel inferior to their classmates. It doesn't seem to relax them in class. As mentioned earlier (Abrar, M., Failasofah, F.N., & Masbirorotni)

“Less skilled students experience higher levels of anxiety compared to proficient students when it comes to speaking English in the speaking module(s). This observation is further corroborated by a study conducted at Syiah University Kuala, Banda Aceh. Students often perceive their English proficiency to be lower than that of their peers, leading to discomfort when speaking in front of their fellow students” (Sari, 2017). Another reason why students experience worry is shyness. It can be a significant source of anxiety for students, especially when it comes to speaking English or any other second language. When students are feeling shy, it is often linked to social anxiety, which can be particularly challenging in language learning contexts. Students worry about embarrassing themselves or saying something wrong in front of the others, further intensifying their anxiety.

In relation to this, giving pupils the chance to practice a lot is one technique to help them overcome their shyness. They will speak more effectively as a result. They will undoubtedly begin to speak more as a result of this condition because that activity can reduce the anxiety of students, boost confidence for the students, and fostering a desire to communicate among students, offering positive encouragement, motivating them, and establishing a comfortable classroom atmosphere are key factors to keep in mind.

Therefore it is necessary for the teacher get attention by providing students with positive reinforcement, motivating them and creating a comfortable environment in the classroom, as this can reduce student anxiety. Students, increasing their confidence and encouraging them to be ready to communicate.

CONCLUSION

From the explanation of the result, the conclusion is that the factors which can cause students' anxiety is from internal and external. Some internal factors are learners are afraid in making mistakes, the fear of being laughed by another student, incompetent of students, lack preparation, lack practice and vocabulary, lack confidence, lack of knowledge student persuasion, student lack of motivation, student shyness, and student dislike of the topic being talked about. While external causes, specifically: Teaching methods of teachers as well as attitudes and behaviors of speakers. Depending on the condition, students are asked to manage their own emotions, thoughts and perceptions if they want to get rid of anxiety while learning to speak.

SUGGESTIONS

1. For the students the research finding can help students to be more active and confidence in Englishspeaking class. Students should be more active and keep on practicing to improve their English speaking
2. For the teacher As a result of this research, teachers will gain insight into the students' abilities and will be able to assist them in improving their English speaking skills in the classroom and teachers must be able to understand his or her students individually
3. For other researchers they can see the students' anxiety in English speaking. This study will assist them in improving their studies as well as providing academic information for future research in a same topic.

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