

## Exploring Of Students' Speaking Anxiety Among Third-Grade Junior High School Students'

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### Abstract

*Exploring of Students' Speaking Anxiety Among Third-Grade Junior High School Students'. Students' anxiety in speaking English has become a major concern in the context of second language learning. This research aims to identify factors that influence students' anxiety when speaking English and its impact on their speaking abilities. The research focused on grade 9 junior high school students in Indonesia. selected based on their experiences in speaking English during English class. The research method involves surveys and interviews with English students at various school levels. Using a comprehensive approach, this research aims to understand the internal and external factors contributing to students' anxiety levels when communicating in English. The findings highlight the prevalence of internal factors, notably fear of making mistakes (69.6%), and external factors like limited vocabulary (87%). This anxiety correlates with students' diminished speaking skills, evident in avoidance behaviors and less coherent speech. To mitigate these challenges, tailored learning strategies are imperative to boost students' confidence in English. Proactive measures should target building self-assurance, overcoming fear of errors, and actively expanding vocabulary. By addressing these concerns, educators can foster an environment conducive to enhanced English communication skills among students'.*

**Keywords:** External factors, Internal factors, Second language, Students' speaking anxiety

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of English proficiency, particularly speaking skills, has been widely acknowledged in Indonesia. English is considered a second language and a mandatory subject in the national academic curriculum of schools and colleges (Anh Tram, 2020; Fuadah, 2020). Proficiency in English is essential for students' professional aspirations, yet many struggle with speaking English despite recognizing its importance for their careers. This struggle is often exacerbated by anxiety, which can significantly impact students' performance in classroom-based learning (Maysari, 2020).

Anxiety in speaking English is a common issue among students. Bashori et al., 2022 highlight that anxiety can hinder students' ability to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings in a new language. When students participate in speaking activities, their awareness of their limitations can lead to heightened anxiety and distress, resulting in disinterest and lack of success in speaking English (Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Wörde, 2003). This anxiety is often linked to concerns about pronunciation, fear of making mistakes, and negative perceptions from teachers and peers (Adam, 2017; Asysyfa et al., 2019). Several factors contribute to speaking anxiety, including

lack of preparation, nervousness, misunderstandings, teacher treatment, and peer pressure Salamah, (2019). Students' inadequate preparation and focus, along with fear of judgment and negative teacher behaviors, can exacerbate anxiety. Burden, (2004) suggests that teachers can help reduce this anxiety by adopting a supportive and advisory role rather than solely being authoritative. Previous studies have primarily focused on university-level students' perceptions of English-speaking anxiety and the role of teachers in mitigating this anxiety. However, there is limited research on speaking anxiety among junior high school students, particularly third graders.

Given the critical formative stage of language learning during junior high school, exploring and

addressing speaking anxiety in this demographic is essential to improve their English proficiency and overall learning experience (Deswani, 2015; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013).

The significance of speaking skills in the acquisition and proficiency of a second language, particularly English, cannot be overstated. Speaking is not only fundamental to communication but also critical in everyday interactions and professional settings. Despite its importance, English language instruction often

relegates speaking to the background, emphasizing drills and memorization rather than practical usage and conversational practice (Ilham et al., 2020). This gap in teaching methodology highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach that prioritizes speaking skills, ensuring that learners can use the language effectively in real-life situations (Asri, 2017; Asyasyfa et al., 2019). Effective speaking skills encompass a variety of components, including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, confidence, and fluency (Asyasyfa et al., 2019). However, many students experience anxiety when speaking English, which can severely hinder their ability to communicate confidently and effectively. This anxiety is often compounded by factors such as fear of public speaking, lack of preparation, and inadequate vocabulary, all of which can impede a student's progress and motivation (Deswani, 2015; Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2020). Anxiety about speaking English as a foreign language is a well-documented phenomenon, impacting students' performance and overall language acquisition (Marpaung & Fithriani, 2023). This anxiety can be categorized into trait anxiety, a stable personality trait, and state anxiety, a temporary emotional state triggered by specific situations (Saviola et al., 2020). Both types of anxiety can disrupt students' learning processes, affecting their mood, behavior, and cognitive functions (Almokhtar A. et al., 2019). Teachers and educators must recognize the pervasive nature of this anxiety and implement strategies to mitigate its effects, thereby creating a more supportive and effective learning environment (Erdiana et al., 2020; Fitriah & Muna, 2019).

Understanding the factors contributing to speaking anxiety is crucial for developing targeted interventions. These factors can be both internal, such as lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation, and external, such as inadequate preparation, limited vocabulary, and the influence of peers (Nur et al., 2021). Internal factors, particularly lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes, are significant barriers that prevent students from engaging fully in speaking activities (Adam, 2017; Putra, 2018). External factors, including lack of preparation and grammatical errors,

further exacerbate students' anxiety, making it difficult for them to articulate their thoughts clearly and accurately (Kanar, 2011; Liu, 2007). Previous studies have explored various dimensions of speaking anxiety, offering insights into its causes and potential solutions. Hidayati et al. (2022) focused on the causes and solutions for speaking anxiety among junior high school students in Indonesia, finding that students were less anxious when questions were posed in their native language. Sinaga et al. (2020) identified fear of negative evaluation as the most influential factor contributing to speaking anxiety. Erdiana et al. (2020) categorized students' anxiety levels into low, moderate, and high, providing a framework for understanding the extent of anxiety among learners.

This study aims to build on these findings by investigating the specific causes of speaking anxiety among ninth-grade junior high school students using qualitative methods. By examining both internal and external factors, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by students and propose effective strategies to enhance their speaking skills and reduce anxiety. The conceptual framework for this research is based on Putra (2018) model of language anxiety, guiding the design of questionnaires and categorization of findings to ensure a thorough and systematic analysis. Through this study, we hope to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on speaking anxiety and offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to improve the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. By addressing the root causes of anxiety and fostering a more supportive learning environment, we can help students overcome their fears and achieve greater proficiency in speaking English.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate the causes of students' anxiety when speaking English. According to Cohen et al. (2000), a qualitative approach was chosen because it begins with individuals and seeks to understand and interpret their experiences of a particular phenomenon.

This method was selected to capture the diverse experiences of the subjects. Lambert (2012) emphasizes that the goal of a qualitative descriptive study is to draw comprehensive conclusions about daily and specific events experienced by individuals or groups. This approach enables researchers to understand the factors causing speech anxiety and how individuals cope with it.

The data was collected through data categorization and questionnaires. Creswell (2015) notes that qualitative research is descriptive as it focuses on processes, meanings, and understandings obtained through words or pictures, and it is inductive because researchers build abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from the data. The study aimed to identify and describe the phenomenon of speaking anxiety among grade 9 junior high school students. The results included excerpts from the data to illustrate and support the findings, using observation checklists and questionnaires. The researcher did not attempt to isolate or manipulate phenomena, and the data collected was in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (Ningsih, 2017).

The study used convenience sampling with 23 third-grade junior high school students (6 female, 17 male) from Banten, aged 14-15. The researcher used one class for questionnaires and interviews. The school uses English and Arabic for daily dialogue, resulting in varied English proficiency levels. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions with "yes" or "no" answers to identify factors causing speaking anxiety. Students provided personal data and answered questions about their anxiety. Five students, identified through their questionnaire responses and class participation, were interviewed for 5-10 minutes each using an unstructured format to clarify and support the questionnaire data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings are divided into two categories in this section: internal factors and external factors. Each of these categories has indicators, for internal factors are divided into 4 indicators, namely 1) lack of confidence, 2) shame, 3)

motivation, 4) fear of making mistakes. meanwhile, external factors are classified into four indicators: 1) lack of preparation, 2) limited vocabulary, 3) grammatical errors, and 4) friends/classmates.

### A. Internal Factors of Speaking Anxiety

#### 1. Lack of confidence

A study on students' lack of confidence in speaking English in class revealed that 52.2% of 23 ninth-grade students felt unconfident responding to teachers, while 47.8% did not. Interviews with five students highlighted reasons for this lack of confidence, including feelings of panic, embarrassment, and fear of making mistakes. One student mentioned feeling nervous and afraid of speaking incorrectly in front of classmates and teachers.

“gak percaya diri sih kak grogi karena panik, semua temen aku ngeliatin aku gitu jadi aku malu takut salah ngomong kalau aku ngomong gitu sama guru pake bahasa inggris.”

This lack of confidence leads to students becoming inactive in class and disrupts their learning. All students lacked confidence in speaking English during class due to nervousness, panic, and fear of making mistakes. Difficulty in pronouncing English words also contributes to their anxiety. This common phenomenon of decreased self-confidence when speaking in front of others leads to students becoming inactive in class, disrupting their learning.

The findings show that anxiety affects students' ability to speak English in class, with 52.2% of students lacking confidence when responding to teachers. This percentage differs from Putra (2018), who reported 65.33% of students felt anxious and unconfident. Consistent with previous studies by Nur et al. (2021) and Adam (2017), anxiety complicates the learning process, while confident students tend to excel in language lessons. Lack of self-confidence is crucial in determining learning success.

#### 2. Embarrassment

This indicator pertains to the feelings of embarrassment or discomfort experienced when individuals feel anxious or nervous, particularly when speaking in a foreign language such as

English. In statement 2, 60.9% of students acknowledged feeling embarrassed and hesitant to respond to the teacher in English, while 39.1% did not. Statement 3 further explores how some students, despite preparation, still feel awkward and refrain from actively participating in English-speaking interactions in class, with 30.4% feeling embarrassed.

Interviews with five respondents supported these findings, revealing that students fear being ridiculed by peers for making mistakes when speaking English in class. For instance, one student expressed hesitation due to difficulty understanding English words and pronunciation challenges, which deterred them from participating actively.

Students: "engga aktif sih kak, soalnya aku takut salah kurang ngerti sama bahasa inggris, kata - katanya juga susah diucapkan terus juga kalo jawab takut ditanya yang lain lagi sama guru". Embarrassed anxiety in speaking English reflects a common form of anxiety ranging from mild discomfort to severe panic. Students find note-taking helpful in their learning process but struggle without notes, which hinders their confidence in responding to teachers in class.

The findings show differences in the embarrassment indicator related to speaking English in class. While Putra (2018) found that 98% of students felt embarrassed, the current study showed 60.9% in one statement and 30.4% in another among 23 students. This embarrassment significantly impacts their willingness to speak. (Nur et al., 2021) also emphasized the role of embarrassment in student anxiety, aligning with these findings.

### 3. Motivation

Motivation plays a crucial role in overcoming or reducing speaking anxiety, particularly in using a foreign language like English. Statement 4 explores students' lack of interest in

speaking English and reluctance to respond to teachers' questions in class using English, with 38.8% affirming this sentiment. In contrast, statement 5 reveals that some students believe using English does not improve their speaking skills due to difficulties in understanding the language, with 38.8% agreeing.

To support these findings, interviews with five students provided deeper insights. Students 1, 2, and 4 expressed that without notes, they feel anxious and find it challenging to formulate sentences in English. For instance, Student 1 mentioned, "aku gak merasa meningkat sih kak karena panik dan takut soalnya sulit merancang kata - kata kalau gak ada catatan." Conversely, students 3 and 5 noted improvements in their English speaking skills through practice, despite occasional confusion with vocabulary.

Student 3 shared, "iya sih kak membuat kemampuan aku meningkat tapi terkadang aku masih suka bingung sama kata - kata nya ada yang sama tapi gak tahu artinya."

These dialogues illustrate students' diverse experiences and perceptions regarding their English speaking abilities and the factors influencing them. Lack of motivation hampers students from practicing and enhancing their language skills effectively, especially in English speaking contexts. Encouraging consistent practice is vital for students to develop and refine their English language proficiency comprehensively.

The findings show motivation as an indicator of students' willingness to speak English in class, finding 34.8% in two statements. This contrasts sharply with Putra (2018), who reported a much higher percentage of 123.33%. The discrepancy highlights significant differences in findings. Zua & Li (2008) and Yaikhong & Usaha (2012) emphasized that students with high motivation tend to achieve better academically. Thus, fostering student motivation is crucial.

### 4. Fear of making mistakes

Fear of making mistakes in speaking, especially in a foreign language like English, significantly impacts individuals' confidence and communication skills. Statement 6 addresses students' anxiety about pronunciation errors when speaking English in class, with 69.6% indicating they experience such anxiety. This fear stems from a desire to speak fluently and concerns that mistakes might affect how others perceive their English proficiency. Conversely, 30.4% feel confident despite these challenges.

In statement 7, students express anxiety when expected to answer spontaneously during quizzes, with 56.5% feeling nervous in such situations. This anxiety is exacerbated by time constraints and the pressure to provide correct answers promptly to earn grades.

To substantiate these findings, interviews with students revealed consistent concerns. All students expressed fear of being corrected in class, citing embarrassment over language difficulties and worries about peers' reactions to their mistakes. For instance, one student remarked, "takut karena malu, kata -katanya sulit dan takut diejek teman kalau salah bicara."

Students' anxiety about making mistakes in English-speaking contexts reflects broader challenges in language learning. Addressing these concerns through supportive learning environments and strategies can help students build confidence and proficiency in English communication.

The findings show that students are afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. In the questionnaire, two statements addressed this fear, with scores of 69.6% and 56.5%. These results differ from Putra (2018), who reported a lower score of 40%. The higher fear of making mistakes

found in the current study suggests that many students are significantly affected by this internal factor. According to

Adam (2017), students feel anxious about losing prestige in class, leading them to prefer staying silent until required to speak. This fear of mistakes causes embarrassment in front of peers and teachers, becoming a major barrier to students' participation and interaction in speaking English.

## B. External Factors of Speaking Anxiety

### 1. Lack of preparation

The indicator of lack of preparation refers to the anxiety students experience when speaking, particularly in a foreign language like English, due to inadequate readiness. Statement 8 explores students' anxiety when speaking English without notes in class, where 56.5% expressed feeling unprepared, while 43.5% did not share this sentiment. This anxiety arises from uncertainties in word choice, grammar usage, and the absence of visual aids during speaking tasks, highlighting the challenges of communicating effectively without written support.

In statement 9, students reported feeling anxious during quizzes or spontaneous oral assessments, where 43.5% acknowledged feeling unprepared. Conversely, 56.5% felt more confident when equipped with notes to aid their responses.

The pressure to perform well for grades intensifies these anxieties, particularly when faced with unexpected questioning without adequate preparation. Interviews further substantiated these findings, revealing students' fears of answering incorrectly or inadequately without notes. For instance, one student shared, "cemas karena takut menjawab, takut salah jawab." These anxieties stem from concerns about making mistakes, uncertainty in responding effectively without written prompts, and the potential impact on their academic assessment. Addressing students' anxiety related to lack of preparation in speaking English is crucial for fostering a supportive learning environment. Strategies that provide adequate preparation, encourage practice, and reduce the fear of mistakes can enhance students' confidence and proficiency in speaking English effectively.

The findings show percentage scores for

external factors related to students' anxiety about speaking English due to lack of preparation, compared to Putra (2018). The current study found 56.5% and 43.5% for two statements, whereas Putra reported 74.66%. This notable difference highlights the significant impact of preparation on anxiety. Kanar (2011) and Liu (2007) observed that inadequate preparation is a major trigger for speaking-related anxiety, hindering student participation and effective learning. Adequate preparation, including material knowledge, speaking skills, and understanding of communicative situations, is crucial for reducing anxiety and enhancing the overall learning experience.

## 2. Limited vocabulary

Anxiety due to limited vocabulary is a significant issue for students learning English as a foreign language. In statement 10, 87% of students feel nervous when they struggle to understand their English teacher's instructions, which underscores the impact of vocabulary limitations on their class participation. Additionally, statement 11 reveals that 56.5% of students have difficulty recalling English vocabulary when answering teacher questions, hindering their fluency and causing frustration.

In interviews, students expressed challenges with understanding English words and pronunciation. While some find pronunciation manageable, others struggle with vocabulary retention. Addressing these challenges through targeted learning strategies is crucial. Improving pronunciation and comprehension can alleviate anxiety and enhance students' English communication skills effectively.

Dialogue excerpt:

Student 1: "Iya susah, soalnya setiap baca bahasa Inggris aku bingung kata-katanya sama pengucapannya juga sulit. Karena bahasa Inggris kan punya banyak arti jadi aku bingung sama kosakata nya."

Other answers were different from the other four students, this student answered that there was an increase when they often spoke English

Student 3: "Engga terlalu sulit sih kak kalo pengucapannya."

These responses illustrate the varying difficulties students face in English learning, emphasizing the need for tailored support to enhance vocabulary and pronunciation skills.

The findings show that a lack of vocabulary is a significant external factor impeding students' ability to engage in English communication effectively. This finding is consistent with previous research by Ridwan Nurmansyah (2018) and Tanveer (2008), which highlighted that speaking anxiety stems from various factors beyond language skills, including limited speaking experience, insufficient confidence, and uncertainty about grammar and vocabulary. Environmental factors, such as classroom atmosphere and peer responses, also influence fear levels. The researcher found 87% and 56% for two statements on vocabulary deficiency, contrasting with Putra (2018), who reported 100%. Students view limited vocabulary as a major barrier to speaking proficiency, affecting their confidence and fluency. Understanding these multifaceted influences is crucial for developing effective solutions to help students overcome their fears and improve their speaking skills.

## 3. Grammatical error

Anxiety related to grammar and word order errors significantly impacts students learning English as a foreign language. Statement 12 highlights that 47.8% of students struggle with understanding English tenses, affecting their ability to construct grammatically correct sentences. This difficulty leads to hesitancy in speaking due to fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, statement 13 reveals that 73.9% of students feel anxious about English speaking due to uncertainties in sentence structure. This lack of confidence stems from an inadequate understanding of proper word order, hindering fluent communication.

In interviews, students expressed mixed feelings about grammar's impact on their speaking ability. Some find grammar rules confusing and forgettable, while others see grammar, especially tenses, as helpful in organizing their speech.

Dialogue excerpt:

Student 2: "Aku makin bingung sih kak karena banyak yang harus dihafal dan

banyak banget kosa kata sama materinya juga jadi suka lupa."

In contrast to the statements explained by students 1 and 5.

Student 1: "Kalo tenses memudahkan sih kak jadi aku tau kalo ngomong buat waktu sekarang pake apa gitu, tapi buat rumusnya itu kadang aku suka lupa terus juga aku gak hafal sama bahasa Inggrisnya jadi agak sulit sih."

These responses underscore the challenges students face with English grammar, impacting their confidence in spoken English. Addressing these challenges through structured learning approaches is crucial to enhancing students' grammatical proficiency and alleviating speaking anxiety effectively.

The findings show that grammatical errors are a significant external factor influencing students' anxiety when speaking English. Brown, (2000) highlighted the importance of grammar in constructing sentences accurately and reducing speaking anxiety. In the current study, 47.8% and 73.3% of students indicated that grammatical errors contribute to their anxiety, differing from Putra (2018), who reported 70.66%. Understanding and applying grammatical principles can help students feel more confident and at ease when speaking English.

#### 4. Friends/classmate

The influence of peers on speaking anxiety in English is a significant factor highlighted in statements 14 and 15. Statement 14 reveals that 39.1% of students feel anxious about potential ridicule or laughter from classmates when speaking English in class. Similarly, statement 15 shows that 39.1% of students also experience anxiety when comparing themselves to classmates who speak English better. These feelings stem from the pressure of comparisons and the fear of judgment among peers.

Interviews corroborate these findings, with students expressing concerns about being laughed at by classmates if they make mistakes in English. However, some students also mentioned receiving support and assistance from friends during class discussions, which alleviates their anxiety.

Dialogue excerpt:

Student 4: "Temen aku ngetawain aku sih aku jadi merasa gak mau ngomong lagi tapi kadang aku dapet bantuan juga dari temen aku sih kalo aku gak bisa jawab kalo lagi tanya jawab sama guru."

However, both students stated that their friends sometimes assist them in speaking English if they make mistakes or are unsure how to respond.

Student 5: "Temen aku ngetawain aku sih aku jadi merasa gak mau ngomong lagi tapi kadang aku dapet bantuan juga dari temen aku sih kalo aku gak bisa jawab kalo lagi tanya jawab sama guru."

These responses underscore the dual role of peers in either exacerbating or mitigating speaking anxiety. Creating a supportive peer environment can significantly enhance students' comfort levels and confidence in speaking English, thereby fostering a more conducive learning atmosphere.

Peer influence significantly affects students' anxiety when speaking English. Interactions with classmates can either help students overcome discomfort or increase their anxiety during English conversations. This factor was examined through two statements, showing scores of 39.1% for both, differing from Putra (2018), who reported 68.66%. Nur et al. (2021) found that students with strong English skills still face challenges due to seeing proficient peers as competitors, leading to embarrassment and reduced confidence. Farhani et al. (2020) noted that students fear peer judgment and potential ridicule for making mistakes, heightening their anxiety in speaking English.

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the study and discussion in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that there are internal and external factors influencing English language anxiety. Regarding internal factors, the most significant contributor to English language anxiety is the fear of making mistakes, which reached 69.6% as indicated in statement 6. This finding underscores that students experience anxiety when they make pronunciation errors in English-speaking classes due to concerns about being teased or laughed at by peers. This observation is

supported by interview findings revealing that students feel anxious due to challenges in sentence construction, pronunciation difficulties, and social embarrassment among classmates.

Turning to external factors, the primary source of anxiety among English-speaking students is limited vocabulary, which was reported at 87% in statement 10. This statement suggests that students feel apprehensive when responding to teachers' questions due to fears of making errors and actively strive to expand their vocabulary. Such efforts not only alleviate anxiety associated with speaking English but also enhance their language proficiency. Consequently, integrating English speaking practice into educational routines and encouraging students to engage in meaningful verbal interactions both inside and outside the classroom are essential. This supportive learning environment fosters the growth of students' language skills.

The study reveals that students' anxiety about speaking English stems from various factors, including difficulties in comprehending the language used by teachers and limited memorized vocabulary. These findings are reinforced by interviews highlighting pronunciation challenges that hinder students' understanding of communicated information.

Students should actively build confidence in speaking English and undertake concrete steps through data collection via questionnaires and interviews. However, these findings may not be generalized due to their limitations. Therefore, further research is necessary to develop effective strategies that reduce anxiety about speaking English and promote regular English speaking practice among students.

### RECOMMENDATION

The researcher conducted this research only with 9th grade junior high school students where only one class consisted of 23 students. Students who have anxiety are related to anxiety about speaking English with various existing factors. Apart from that, researchers because they do not comprehend the words the teacher is using. This finding is also substantiated by interview results revealing that students have a limited memorized vocabulary, and difficulties

in pronunciation make it challenging for them to understand conveyed information.

Therefore, students need to proactively develop confidence in speaking English, take concrete steps only collect data through questionnaires and interviews. consequently, these findings cannot be standardized. Because of these limitations, more research is needed to find solutions or strategies for students to reduce anxiety about speaking English and to practice speaking English so that students can get used to speaking English.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Allah SWT and Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam, who always gave me good health to complete this thesis. I would like to take this chance to sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr. Ria Saraswati, SS, M.Hum for her guidance, patience, and support. I would like to thank the dean of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Dr. Harlinda Syofyan, S.Si., M.Pd., and the rector of Universitas Esa Unggul, Dr. Ir. Arief Kusuma, A.P., MBA, for their support.

I would like to thank my parents, who love and encourage me to get through this hard time. I pay tribute to them since they never stop giving me advice. I am also grateful to my friends for their input, untiring support, and efforts in accomplishing this thesis. It is impossible to complete this thesis proposal without you. I also always remember each moment that we pass, especially the unforgettable memories on our campus.

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