

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ANXIETY IN ENGLISH SPEAKING

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Abstract: This paper, titled "Senior High School Students' Anxiety in English Speaking", discusses the anxiety experienced by senior high school students in speaking English, which is one of the essential skills in foreign language learning. The objective of this paper is to examine the forms, causes, and impacts of students' anxiety when speaking English. The discussion in this paper shows that speaking skills involve not only linguistic knowledge, such as vocabulary and grammar, but also affective factors such as self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety. Many students experience anxiety, nervousness, or fear of making mistakes when asked to speak in front of the class, which leads to a decrease in speaking performance quality. This anxiety stems from social pressures, lack of mastery over the material, and concern about negative evaluations from both teachers and peers. Symptoms of anxiety experienced by students include trembling voices, stumbling speech, and loss of focus while speaking. The conclusion of this paper emphasizes that anxiety in English speaking is a significant barrier in the learning process. Therefore, teachers need to create a supportive and enjoyable learning environment to help students feel more comfortable and confident in using English in oral communication.

Keywords: Speaking Anxiety, Senior Students, English Learning

Abstrak: Makalah ini berjudul "Senior High School Students' Anxiety in English Speaking", yang membahas tentang kecemasan siswa sekolah menengah atas dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris sebagai salah satu keterampilan utama dalam pembelajaran bahasa asing. Tujuan penulisan makalah ini adalah untuk mengetahui bentuk, penyebab, dan dampak dari kecemasan siswa saat berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris. Pembahasan dalam makalah ini menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan berbicara bukan hanya soal penguasaan kosakata dan tata bahasa, tetapi juga melibatkan faktor afektif seperti rasa percaya diri, motivasi, dan kecemasan. Banyak siswa merasa cemas, gugup, atau takut melakukan kesalahan saat diminta berbicara di depan kelas, yang mengakibatkan penurunan kualitas performa berbicara. Kecemasan tersebut bersumber dari tekanan sosial, kurangnya penguasaan materi, serta kekhawatiran terhadap penilaian negatif dari guru maupun teman sebaya. Gejala kecemasan yang dialami siswa termasuk suara yang gemetar, bicara terbata-bata, hingga kehilangan fokus saat berbicara. Simpulan dari makalah ini menegaskan bahwa kecemasan dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris merupakan hambatan yang signifikan dalam proses belajar. Oleh karena itu, guru perlu menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang suportif dan menyenangkan agar siswa merasa lebih nyaman dan percaya diri dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris secara lisan.

Kata kunci: Kecemasan Berbicara, Siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

I. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that plays a vital role in everyday life, both for global communication and for future employment opportunities. In Indonesia, English has been taught from the elementary level to higher education. In learning English, there are four main skills that must be mastered: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Among these four skills, speaking is considered the most complex and challenging to master because it involves not only linguistic aspects such as vocabulary and grammar, but also affective factors such as self-confidence, anxiety, and fear of speaking.

At the senior high school level, students' English-speaking ability is often still low. Many students struggle to express their ideas orally due to various obstacles, especially speaking anxiety. This anxiety makes students feel afraid, nervous, and embarrassed to speak in public, causing them to avoid speaking activities and show low participation. This factor significantly affects their speaking achievement because students become less focused and lack confidence to perform in class activities.

Research shows that anxiety has a negative correlation with students'

speaking achievement. Students with high levels of anxiety tend to have poor speaking skills, while those with lower anxiety levels tend to perform better in speaking. The anxiety experienced by students is usually triggered by fear of making mistakes, lack of knowledge, and concerns about negative evaluation from others. This indicates that affective factors, particularly anxiety, play a crucial role in hindering the development of speaking skills in English as a foreign language.

Therefore, understanding the relationship between speaking anxiety and students' speaking ability becomes essential, especially in the context of senior high school learning. By identifying the level of anxiety experienced by students, teachers can design appropriate learning strategies to create a comfortable and supportive learning environment. A supportive classroom atmosphere and teaching approaches that reduce psychological pressure can help boost students' confidence in speaking English and ultimately improve their achievement in speaking skills.

Based on the background above, the purpose of this scientific paper is to investigate Senior High School Students' Anxiety in Speaking English. It is hoped

that the findings of this discussion can contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies in improving students' speaking skills at school.

II. DISCUSSION

The Concept of Speaking

Speaking skills are an essential component of language teaching curricula, especially in the context of English as a foreign language (Luoma, 2009, p.1). Similar to writing skills, speaking is a productive skill that requires a thought process before delivering information. Teaching speaking is challenging because it involves various aspects such as vocabulary mastery, accurate pronunciation, and grammatical structure (Haryudin & Jamilah, 2018).

Many experts define speaking as the process of conveying ideas orally (Eliyasun, Rosnija, & Salam, 2018, p.1). If students are not taught speaking from an early stage in the classroom, they may lose interest in learning English. Zuhriyah (2017, p.122) emphasizes that speaking is a means of self-expression and social communication that is essential in everyday life, as humans are inseparable from interaction with others.

Based on the explanations above, it can be concluded that speaking skills are a fundamental aspect of English language

mastery, encompassing various linguistic components such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and sociolinguistic competence. Speaking is not only the primary tool for communication but also a key indicator of overall success in language learning.

Factors of Speaking Effectiveness

The effectiveness of speaking in English is influenced by various factors such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, as well as psychological aspects including self-confidence, anxiety, and motivation. Environmental factors such as opportunities for interaction and feedback from listeners also greatly affect speaking ability. Haris (1974, p.28) states that the key aspects of speaking include pronunciation, grammar, fluency, vocabulary, accuracy, and comprehension. These aspects are interrelated and support effective speaking skills. In addition, learners also need to understand the appropriate social and cultural norms in communication to make their speaking skills more contextual and socially acceptable.

Abbaspour (2016, p.146) explains that speaking effectiveness is strongly determined by linguistic competencies such as grammar, discourse, sociolinguistics, strategies, interaction, as well as accuracy and fluency. Grammatical competence

helps students construct correct sentence structures, facilitates comprehension of meaning, and improves the listener's reception of communication. In terms of discourse, students must be able to maintain cohesion and coherence in speech and possess discourse structures and devices to express ideas logically. Meanwhile, sociolinguistic competence enables students to understand the social and cultural contexts that influence language use, including how to respond, ask questions, and communicate nonverbally.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of speaking in English is significantly influenced by a combination of linguistic factors (such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation), psychological factors (such as motivation and anxiety), and contextual factors (such as culture and interaction). Mastery of these aspects will enhance students' ability to speak effectively, both in terms of content and fluency in message delivery.

Concept of Anxiety

In learning English as a foreign language, anxiety is an important psychological factor that influences students' success or failure. Anxiety is part of the affective variables, along with self-esteem, willingness to communicate, and motivation. Horwitz (2001, p.113) defines

anxiety as a subjective sensation of tension, uncertainty, and worry caused by the activation of the autonomic nervous system. Brown (2007, p.123), as cited in Handayani and Rahmawati (2017, p.217), adds that anxiety arises when students feel that their speaking performance is incorrect or unclear. Meanwhile, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) emphasize that language anxiety specifically occurs in the context of second language use, such as speaking, listening, and learning.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) explain that foreign language anxiety is a combination of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that arise in the language learning process in the classroom. This type of anxiety can be a major barrier in speaking activities, as it affects mental well-being and decreases comprehension. In situations such as oral exams, anxious students often hesitate, repeat words, and speak with a lack of fluency due to fear of making mistakes.

Anxiety is common among high school students and is often triggered by academic pressure, social dynamics, and uncertainty about the future. Low self-confidence and fear of negative evaluation further worsen this condition. Some students experience anxiety only when speaking English, while others suffer from general anxiety that affects all aspects of learning. If left unmanaged, anxiety can

negatively impact students' fluency and speaking effectiveness.

In conclusion, anxiety is a negative emotional condition that stems from the perception of errors in speaking, which can trigger physical reactions and hinder communication fluency in English language learning.

Effect of Anxiety

In the process of learning English, anxiety has a significant impact on students' abilities, especially in speaking skills. Many students fail to master English because they feel anxious, which subsequently hinders their learning process (Wijanarko & Sembodo, 2018, p.2). Horwitz and MacIntyre, as cited in Wijanarko and Sembodo (2018, p.2), emphasize that anxiety in English learning has negative effects. Furthermore, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986, p.125) explain that learning a foreign language carries substantial psychological risks, as it can affect students' self-perception and confidence. Anxiety also impacts students' motivation and their ability to speak effectively in class (Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2001, as cited in Sari, 2017, p.180).

This phenomenon is common among high school students. Research by Pontillas and Rodrigo (2024) shows that the level of speaking anxiety among high

school students is relatively high. This is caused by nervousness when unprepared to answer the teacher's questions and fear of being judged by peers. The study also reveals that students have low self-efficacy due to a lack of English proficiency and fear of social evaluation from their surroundings.

Liu and Cheng (2014), as cited in Sari (2017, p.180), found a strong relationship between anxiety and motivation among English language learners. Students with high motivation tend to have lower anxiety levels, whereas anxious students are more likely to lose motivation to learn. Therefore, anxiety not only affects speaking ability but also influences students' overall enthusiasm for learning. It is essential for teachers to create a positive and comfortable learning environment so that students can be free from anxiety.

In conclusion, anxiety negatively affects students' speaking ability, motivation, and the overall English learning process. To reduce these effects, teachers should create a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable and confident using English.

Speaking Anxiety

English speaking skills are an important ability that needs to be developed by high school students. At this level,

students are expected to be able to use English orally for various communication purposes, such as introducing themselves, expressing opinions, engaging in discussions, and sharing personal experiences. Although students already have a basic understanding of vocabulary and sentence structures, they often still make mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. Additionally, a lack of confidence is a major barrier that makes students reluctant to speak in English. Therefore, effective teaching strategies are needed to improve students' speaking skills, such as role-playing, short presentations, group discussions, storytelling, and simple debates. These activities not only train fluency but also help students develop vocabulary and sentence structures contextually (Brown, 2004).

One of the main obstacles to mastering English speaking skills among high school students is speaking anxiety. This anxiety arises when students are afraid of making mistakes, being laughed at, or feeling insecure about speaking in English. This causes students to be reluctant to speak even though they understand the material and have ideas they wish to express. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) stated that speaking anxiety is a specific form of communication anxiety that occurs in the context of foreign language learning, and it is often a major barrier to developing

speaking skills. To overcome this anxiety, teachers need to create a supportive learning environment, provide gradual speaking practice, and encourage students to be confident without the fear of making mistakes.

Speaking anxiety is a psychological condition commonly experienced by students when required to speak English, especially in front of others. This anxiety may manifest as nervousness, fear of making mistakes, increased heart rate, or even losing words while speaking. Among high school students, speaking anxiety is usually triggered by several factors such as a lack of vocabulary mastery, fear of being mocked by peers, pressure from teachers or the environment, and previous negative experiences. This anxiety not only affects speaking ability but also hinders the overall learning process because students become passive and reluctant to participate in class activities. Tanveer (2007) explains that speaking anxiety can stem from internal factors such as low self-confidence, or external factors such as teaching methods that are too pressure-filled. Therefore, it is important for teachers to recognize the signs of this anxiety and apply a more communicative and supportive teaching approach, such as role-play techniques, group work, or activities that emphasize comfortable communication rather than grammatical perfection.

In conclusion, English speaking skills are an essential ability that high school students must possess to communicate effectively. However, speaking anxiety, triggered by both internal and external factors, can prevent students from speaking confidently and disrupt their learning process. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to implement supportive and communicative teaching strategies to help students feel comfortable and confident when speaking, so they can overcome their anxiety and gradually improve their speaking skills.

Factors Causing Learners' Anxiety

There are several factors that cause anxiety in students when speaking English. Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013, p.12–13), in their research conducted at a university in Malaysia, identified three main factors influencing language learning anxiety: fear of speaking in public and embarrassment, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of speaking incorrectly. Embarrassment and fear of speaking in front of others can hinder students from speaking, even though they understand the material they want to convey. Additionally, fear of negative judgment from teachers or peers is also a source of anxiety, where students worry about being ridiculed or criticized for their speaking ability (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Furthermore, Handayani and Rahmawati (2017, p.221) categorize six factors that cause foreign language speaking anxiety. The four categories most influencing students' anxiety in English classes are students' belief in the language they are learning, interaction between teachers and students, personal and interpersonal anxiety, and language testing. The fear of speaking incorrectly, such as making pronunciation errors, grammar mistakes, and using limited vocabulary, is also a strong reason for students to feel anxious. They fear negative judgment and worry that they will not be able to speak correctly, which ultimately makes them reluctant to speak.

Based on the explanation above, there are seven main factors causing speaking anxiety in students: 1) embarrassment and fear of speaking in public, 2) fear of negative evaluation, 3) fear of speaking incorrectly, 4) personal and interpersonal anxiety, 5) language testing, 6) teacher-student interaction, and 7) students' belief in the language they are learning. These seven factors are interconnected and can affect the level of anxiety students experience when learning to speak English.

Strategies to Overcome Anxiety

There are several strategies that students can apply to overcome anxiety

when speaking English. Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013, p.6) identified four effective strategies commonly used by students. First, maintaining silence is one of the ways often chosen by anxious students. For example, some students prefer to remain silent and only listen to the lesson rather than participate in class discussions (Prins, 1986; Bailey et al., 1999). Second, avoiding eye contact with the teacher is a nonverbal response frequently observed in anxious students. When asked a question, students are more likely to look down or focus on other activities like writing (Gregersen, 2013). Third, students tend to feel more comfortable when they are near their peers, as this provides a sense of security and reduces their anxiety when speaking (Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013). Finally, reactive expressions such as smiling or laughing are often used by students to hide their anxiety, although this does not always reflect their true feelings (Gregersen, 2013).

In addition to individual strategies, it is also important for students to identify more effective ways to cope with anxiety. Developing self-confidence and speaking skills in more relaxed situations can help reduce anxious feelings. Taking steps to avoid embarrassment and enhancing communication in a supportive environment can improve comfort when speaking the language.

In conclusion, the strategies used by students to overcome speaking anxiety include maintaining silence, avoiding eye contact, being with friends, and using expressions to hide anxiety. All of these strategies reflect students' efforts to reduce tension in speaking situations. Therefore, understanding and supporting these strategies is crucial to reducing students' anxiety and improving their speaking skills.

Teacher's Strategies to Overcome Anxiety

According to Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013, p.6) four effective strategies that teachers can apply to overcome speaking anxiety in students. The first strategy is not directly calling on students' names when asking questions. Teachers prefer to ask the entire class and give students the opportunity to respond without feeling pressured or forced to answer individually. Second, teachers can start the lesson with a joke or a light story to break the ice. This not only makes the classroom atmosphere more relaxed, but also captures students' attention and reduces their anxiety. Third, appreciating students' answers, even if they are not entirely correct, is also an effective strategy. Teachers can provide praise or positive responses, such as "That's a good opinion," to encourage students to keep speaking without fearing direct correction

that could harm their self-confidence (Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013, p.7).

Fourth, the use of positive gestures such as eye contact and friendly body language is very effective in reducing students' anxiety. Good body gestures and supportive facial expressions can create a more comfortable classroom atmosphere, making students more willing to participate. In this case, nonverbal cues like eye contact and open posture provide emotional support and strengthen communication between the teacher and students (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993).

In conclusion, the strategies implemented by teachers to reduce students' speaking anxiety are crucial in creating a positive learning environment. Through approaches such as not directly calling on students' names, making jokes to ease the atmosphere, appreciating students' answers, and using positive gestures, teachers can help students overcome their anxiety and encourage them to be more confident in speaking. All of this is important for creating an enjoyable learning experience and reducing students' speaking anxiety.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, anxiety in speaking ability among senior high school students is

influenced by various factors that affect their confidence and willingness to speak. The fear of public speaking and shyness are significant contributors, as many students are uncomfortable with being in front of others or starting conversations. This anxiety is further exacerbated by the fear of negative evaluation from peers and teachers, which often leads to concerns about prestige and social judgment. Additionally, students' fear of making mistakes and speaking inaccurately adds to their reluctance, as they worry about errors in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, which can result in public embarrassment or ridicule.

Furthermore, other factors such as personal and interpersonal concerns, beliefs about language learning, and classroom dynamics play a role in amplifying anxiety. Teachers' interactions with students and the pressure of language testing can also increase stress levels among learners. Based on these insights, it is evident that anxiety in speaking is multifaceted, involving both internal and external influences. Addressing these concerns through supportive teaching strategies and a positive classroom environment is crucial in reducing speaking anxiety and enhancing students' speaking abilities.

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