



## **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE ANXIETY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this research is to describe the primary factors contributing to high school students' anxiety when speaking English and to identify strategies that can help improve their confidence. This study employs a qualitative design with a case study approach, focusing on students at SMA 1 Kuta Baro. The sample for this study consists of six individuals selected using purposive sampling technique. And data was collected through semi structured interviews and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework. The findings reveal that the main causes of students' anxiety when speaking English include fear of speaking in public, lack of solutions for managing self-anxiety, and concerns about being mocked by peers. Additionally, students face difficulties due to forgetting vocabulary and fearing mispronunciations, which are often exacerbated by poor study habits and a strong Acehese accent. These factors contribute to their struggles with speaking English fluently, frequently leading to reluctance to speak in public out of fear of making mistakes or disappointing their audience. Identified strategies to help students overcome this anxiety include expanding vocabulary, building self-confidence, preparing before speaking, using relaxation techniques, and enhancing knowledge. This research may serve as a reference for future studies on similar issues. Further research is encouraged to include classroom observations to better understand students' anxiety management and to refine interview techniques to gather more comprehensive responses.*

**Keywords :** *Anxiety, speaking English, high school students.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Mastery of English is one of the most important skills in today's globalization era. English is not only an international communication tool, but also an important criterion in education and employment. In Indonesia, some subjects are taught in English, and many companies also require English language skills for prospective employees.

Especially for high school students, mastery of English will make them easier to access information and knowledge from around the world. This will enrich their horizons and improve their competitiveness. English is one of the compulsory subjects in the national exam, a good command of English will certainly help high school students in obtaining the best score in the national exam. This is important for continuing their education to the university level. English proficiency is necessary for continuing education, especially if students want to study abroad. Most of the lectures in international universities are in English. Good English language skills will support

them study abroad smoothly.

Since the end of the 18th century, well-known English teaching methods such as the direct method, audiolingualism, communicative language teaching, and task-based language teaching. language teaching have adopted a monolingual approach. This approach discourages the use of learners' first language (L1) in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes by either banning it, minimizing its use, or maximizing the use of the target language (L2) in the classroom (Alshehri, 2017).

Especially in high school, students often struggle with speaking English because they primarily use their L1 (first or native language) in daily life, they only encounter English in the classroom for about 4 hours a week, which limit their opportunities to practice and apply the language effectively. In addition Language learners often exhibit anxiety, worry and stress when learning a new language. Language anxiety can arise from the learner's sense of "self", self-related perceptions, language learning difficulties, differences between the learner's culture and the target language, differences in the social status of speakers and interlocutors, and fear of losing their identity (Hashemi, 2011).

Anxiety in speaking English also happens to students in schools in Indonesia. Based on observation the Senior High School students experience anxiety in speaking English. The anxiety can hinder their ability to actively participate in learning and take important English exams. Therefore, it is important to conduct an in-depth analysis of the factors that contribute to the problem of anxiety in English among the students. Anxiety is one of the emotional factors that affect foreign language learning, especially speaking. Anxiety is considered an important factor in the progress of language learning because it hinders learners' oral performance (Woodrow, 2006).

Speaking is one of the skills that must be mastered by English learners because language is used to communicate with others in everyday life. It is not only about delivering ideas with the right intonation but also related to how to deliver the contents of the conversation. Furthermore, speaking skill requires the speaker to recognize how to interact as about speaking turn. It is an undeniable fact that students should practice their English frequently. (suryani, 2024).

Dewaele (2020) states that foreign language anxiety encompasses feelings such as anxiety, fear, and worry that students encounter while learning or using a foreign language. However, they often encounter "mental blocks" when it comes to speaking the foreign language, especially in public or in front of the class. Consequently, the focus of attention on foreign language learning tends to center on speaking, particularly in front of a crowd, although other language skills are also important.

Fadilah (2021) argues that foreign language learners often exhibit feelings of anxiety, worry, and nervousness when speaking the language they are learning in public. These feelings are considered negative and have a detrimental impact when students communicate in their language.

Furthermore, Aniyar (2022) states that not a few students who do not know or have not used English in everyday life. In fact, the mother tongue used by students is the local language. Therefore, it is possible that their

tongue is hard and strong when speaking English. These things need to be analyzed carefully to understand the cause of this problem and find the right solution. Through this research, it is hoped to uncover important factors that contribute to the low confidence in speaking English at High School.

One of the keys to success in speaking is self-confidence. Students must possess the confidence to showcase their abilities in front of prospective students. As individuals destined to become educators engaging with diverse groups, such anxiety commonly arises, and failure to address it exacerbates the challenge. According to Prayudiana (2023), anxiety manifests in specific situations and can be induced by factors linked to social interactions. Additionally, by strengthening their self-confidence, students are expected to gather the courage to excel in English speaking.

In fact, English speaking is a skill that often causes anxiety for students. However, it is also considered an important skill to master and is crucial for English language learners. During this time, teachers act as role models for their students. Given the crucial role of English proficiency in academic and professional success, it was essential to address the anxiety that high school students in Indonesia faced when speaking English. This anxiety, often stemming from limited practice opportunities and cultural differences, significantly hindered their language learning and performance.

By analyzing these contributing factors, this research aimed to develop strategies to boost students' confidence and proficiency in English, ultimately empowering them to overcome challenges and achieve their full potential in their educational and career pursuits..

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following explanation shows the analysis of factors contributing to anxiety in speaking English among senior high school students.

In a previous study conducted by Hawa (2021) the uses of mother tongue (L1) in foreign language classes is still a controversial issue. There are three approaches: 1) Prohibiting L1, 2) Minimizing L1, 3) Maximizing the target language.

Prohibiting or limiting the use of the first language (L1) aims to improve students' ability in the target language as well as creating a classroom environment that uses the target language maximally for communicative purposes.

This is expected to encourage students to be more accustomed to interacting and thinking in the target language, thus accelerating the learning process and improving their language fluency.

A previous study conducted by Latif (2015) argues that anxiety is one of the things that affects six parts of a person's success in learning English. Anxiety is associated with feelings of frustration, Doubt, pessimism, and anxiety when speaking English is not permanent. But that alone can cause learners to fail in their attempts to learn English. To overcome anxiety in language learners, language teachers should be able to use good language teaching methods.

Previous research from MacIntyre (1991) reveals that speaking a second language is something that students

often worry about and half of the worry is using speaking skills as a confidence-boosting experience. My own experience supports this, many students admit that they do have ideas, but find it difficult to express them orally. Many of them say it is because of fear, confusion due to speechlessness, embarrassment or other reasons. It is even more stressful if they speak a second or foreign language before they can learn it.

Research on speaking anxiety was also conducted by Salamah (2019) with the title "Analysis of Students' expressing concerns that Schools for the younger generation through small group discussions". The result of this study is that students' lack of preparation during English lessons is the cause of what makes them most anxious.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative method, in which the researcher acts as the main instrument to explore in depth the factors that cause students' anxiety when speaking English.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted directly with students for 10–15 minutes. The interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy and ease of analysis.

Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which includes five stages: data collection, grouping, reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. This technique was used to find patterns and themes from the collected data..

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the researcher addresses the answers to two research objectives. The first objective is "What are the factors that contribute to high school students' anxiety in speaking English?", and the second objective is "How can students overcome their anxiety in speaking English?" This section also aims to discuss the key findings from the analysis of students' anxiety in speaking English. The findings are presented from the perspective of relevant theoretical and empirical studies to examine how this research relates to existing theories and similar studies. To achieve the research objectives, data from interview analysis was discussed.

### **1. Causes of Anxiety when Speaking English**

As previously highlighted, research on student anxiety in speaking English has increasingly attracted attention from scholars in recent years, including Prayudiana (2023) and Woodrow (2006). This is due to the significant impact that such anxiety has on students' speaking abilities. To further explore the issue, this research aims to examine the factors contributing to anxiety in English-speaking of high school students, as identified in these studies. Prayudiana (2023) points out that anxiety often results from emotional factors such as fear of making mistakes and lack of vocabulary mastery.

Similarly, Woodrow (2006) discusses how anxiety can lead to frustration, doubt, and pessimism, all of which adversely affect language learning. This study seeks to delve into these underlying causes and their implications for students' speaking performance in English.

According to the results of the interview data, there are several factors contribute to anxiety when speaking English. The first factor is pronunciation mistakes, which causes respondents A, B, C, E, and F to feel nervous

because it affects their confidence and ability to communicate effectively (See Quote 13). The second factor is limited vocabulary, which makes it challenging for them to express themselves clearly (See Quote 13).

The third factor is a lack of skill and experience with English, as noted by Respondent D, who feels anxious due to insufficient practice and reliance on Acehnese (See Quote 14). These factors often prevent students from speaking English confidently and can hinder their progress in learning the language. Regular practice and engagement with English are crucial for overcoming these challenges and reducing anxiety.

## 2. Strategies for Overcoming English-Speaking Anxiety

Based on the results of the interview, there are some strategies commonly used by students to cope with the anxiety they feel when speaking English. The strategies are mentioned below:

### a. Having self-confidence

The importance of boosting self-confidence is evident from research indicating that self-confidence plays a crucial role in overcoming anxiety when speaking English Woodrow (2006) and Prayudiana (2023). This is demonstrated in Respondents B and D, where students who possess self-confidence feel less nervous and more comfortable when speaking.

### b. Avoiding Speaking Situations

Some students choose to stay silent to avoid being mocked or feeling embarrassed, as seen in Respondents A, E, and C. By opting not to speak, they aim to protect themselves from potential ridicule or discomfort. However, this approach often leads to missed opportunities for practice and ultimately results in lower performance. The lack of speaking practice prevents them from improving their English skills, reinforcing their anxiety and perpetuating a cycle of avoidance and decreased confidence Smith (2021).

### c. Relaxation Techniques

Deep breathing is an effective technique for managing anxiety and calming the mind, which can help students handle speaking situations more effectively. By taking deep breaths, students can reduce their nervousness and approach their speaking tasks with greater composure. This method, as demonstrated by Respondent F, helps mitigate anxiety and allows for a more relaxed and confident presentation during English-speaking scenarios.

### d. Collecting a lot of vocabulary

Collecting a lot of vocabulary is crucial for improving English speaking skills. Having a wide range of vocabulary helps students avoid interruptions in their speech and maintain fluency, even if they struggle with expressing themselves. As noted by Adelina M. (2017) without sufficient vocabulary, students may find it difficult to speak and may experience anxiety. This is evident from Respondent E's experience, where infrequent use of English and a lack of memorized vocabulary contribute to their speaking difficulties and anxiety.

In summary, Students at SMA 1 Kuta Baro experienced anxiety when speaking English due to a lack of vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and self-confidence. Strategies to address this anxiety include expanding vocabulary, improving preparation, and building self-confidence. It is recommended that students become more aware of their weaknesses and apply effective strategies to reduce their anxiety. Educators should also understand

the challenges faced by students and find more effective methods to assist them. Future research is encouraged to include classroom observations and more in-depth interviews.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusion**

This study reveals that students at SMA 1 Kuta Baro experience significant anxiety when speaking English due to several factors, including pronunciation difficulties, fear of making mistakes, and reliance on Acehnese. Pronunciation issues, exacerbated by limited practice opportunities and a non-supportive environment, are a primary cause of this anxiety. Additionally, some students fear forgetting pronunciation and worry about being mocked by peers, even though these fears are often disproportionate to the actual situation.

Poor study habits and continuous use of Acehnese further contribute to the anxiety. To address these issues, several strategies have been identified, including building self-confidence through regular practice and positive social support. Higher self-confidence has been shown to reduce anxiety and improve speaking performance.

Other effective strategies include employing relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, and adequate preparation before speaking to help manage anxiety. However, some students choose to remain silent to avoid anxiety, which reduces their practice opportunities and exacerbates the problem. Overall, the study highlights the importance of addressing both emotional and practical aspects of language learning to help students overcome anxiety and improve their English-speaking skills. Future research is encouraged to include classroom observations and more in-depth interviews to provide more effective support.

### **Suggestion**

With this research, the author hopes to assist educators in gaining a more detailed understanding of students' issues with speaking English. This, in turn, will enable educators to identify new methods to help students improve their English language skills in a way that specifically addresses the challenges they face.

This research also can serve as a reference for future researchers interested in studying similar issues in this field. Future researchers may also include classroom observations to gain deeper insights into why many students are unaware of how to manage their anxiety. Additionally, it is recommended that future studies employ more effective interviewing techniques to ensure that students' responses are more comprehensive rather than fragmented

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