

# EXPLORING STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY IN CLASSROOM

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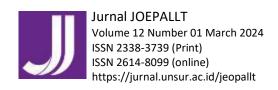
### **ABSTRACT**

This research discusses students' speaking anxiety in English classroom. The aims are to investigate the factors that cause students' anxiety in speaking English and the strategies that students use to reduce their anxiety in speaking English. The researcher conducted this research in one of senior high schools in Cianjur and this research used a descriptive qualitative method. The participants of this research were 35 students. The data were obtained from open-ended questionnaire and interview. The techniques of analyzing data were data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion. The results revealed that there are various factors that cause students' anxiety including apprehension of verbal communication, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Furthermore, the researcher found the strategies that students use to reduce their anxiety in speaking: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, holding things, socially awkward, gesture/body language and self-entertaining.

Keywords: Anxiety, students' Anxiety, Speaking English, Factor Anxiety, Strategies to Reduce Anxiety

### **INTRODUCTION**

English is very influential in the progress of education in Indonesia. Therefore, every expert and job in the world needs people with skills in languages, one of which is English. With the ability to speak English, there are great opportunities and possibilities for students to continue their education abroad and achieve their goals. Therefore, English is also necessary for students who want to work or continue their education abroad. Apart from that, one of the main goals of learning English is for students to communicate in English. For messages to be received correctly, they must be able to use English accurately and fluently. Thus, there are no misunderstandings. To achieve communicative skills, students must

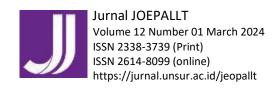


master all English skills, namely writing, speaking, listening, and reading. Sodik and Wijaya (2013), cited in Indahsari (2020) stated that English is a required major in Indonesia. English classes, as a core subject, include tests and examinations. There are various types of exams, such as national or final exams and mid-semester exams. English exams are typically divided into four skills: listening, writing, reading, and speaking. Each school may use a different examination model.

Speaking skill is important for students, as it plays a crucial role in their overall development. It not only helps them effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas but also enhances their confidence and self-esteem (Nurrina et al., 2018). By improving their speaking skills, students are able to express themselves articulately, engage in meaningful discussions, and participate actively in various academic and social settings. Moreover, strong speaking skills enable students to deliver impactful presentations, share their knowledge with others, and effectively convey their message to a wider audience. Seeing the importance of speaking skills in a foreign language in this research in English, English learners should be able to speak English confidently and competently. However, in reality, there are a lot of English learners experiencing the anxiety in speaking English in the classroom. It supported by Hanifa (2018), he mentioned that most students experience anxiety when speaking and communicating in a foreign language.

One of the things that has an impact on learning in the classroom is emotion. Students' abilities are strongly influenced by emotions due to processing information and accurately understanding what they are learning. In other words, emotional states can promote or hinder learning. For example, students who feel safe, happy, and enthusiastic in class will be able to learn and perform more successfully in class (Wijaya & Helmie, 2019). On the other hand, students who experience negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, or boredom may struggle to engage with the material and retain information. Emotions are essential in the classroom because they affect learning. They impact learners' ability to process information and comprehend what they encounter. Brown (2004) claims that emotions profoundly impact learning because they are the foundation for learning strategies and techniques.

According to Wahyuni & Umam (2017) as cited in Quvanch & Kew (2022), stated that anxiety happens in all primary skills (speaking, listening, writing, and listening) of a foreign language. According to Riadil (2020) Speaking is more important than the other abilities since being able to communicate in a foreign language shows that a person is knowledgeable. Speaking English in an English classroom is difficult because students must speak a new language confidently. Speaking fluently demonstrates proficiency in learning a foreign language. Students frequently experience nervousness, lack of confidence, and anxiety. This is referred to as foreign language anxiety (Asysyfa *et al.*, 2019).



#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research presents a brief of theories related to this research. It includes the nature of anxiety types of anxiety, possible factors of the foreign language anxiety, the strategies to reduce students' anxiety, the effect of anxiety, speaking, the basic types of speaking, the relationship between anxiety and speaking class.

# The Nature of Anxiety

Nur et al. (2022) Anxiety is a feeling and behavior that occurs when a person is anxious, trembling, and fearful while learning a foreign language. Angellia & Listyani (2019) believe that anxiety is not a disease, it is simply a response to an impending unpredictable situation. Anxiety is a negative emotion that has intrigued the interest of educational researchers for decades due to its potential adverse effects on academic performance and the learning process.

# Possible Factors of the Foreign Language Anxiety

Anxiety is often experienced by students in class, especially when they are faced with challenging assignments or exams. Students who are learning a foreign language in class may experience self-conscious about making mistakes or not understanding the material. This can lead to a fear of speaking up or participating in class discussions, which further exacerbates their anxiety (Helmie & Susilawati, 2018). Additionally, the pressure to perform well and meet academic expectations can contribute to feelings of anxiety. Students may worry about their grades, comparing themselves to their peers, or feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work they have to complete (Helmie, 2019). Horwitz et al. (1986) argued that there are three influential affecting factors: apprehension of verbal communication, test anxiety, and the fear of negative evaluation.

# a. Apprehension of Verbal Communication

It is based on personal experience. When a person is too nervous or shy to speak with others, they may experience difficulty and worry about whether or not their partner will understand what they have stated. Learners who show fear of communication do not feel it comfortable communicating in the target language (TL) in front of other people because of their limited knowledge of the language, especially concerning speaking skills (Horwitz et al. 1986). An example of apprehension of verbal communication is when someone is about to give a presentation or speak in public. The nervousness and unease that come with speaking in front of a large audience can lead to apprehension. This apprehension can manifest in various ways, such as forgetting one's lines, stumbling over words, or even experiencing physical symptoms like sweating or trembling.

# b. Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is described as a sort of performance anxiety caused by a fear of failing in academic evaluation environments. Some students may suffer anxiety while performing spoken English in front of an audience, making it difficult for them to provide a great oral presentation. When students majoring in English Language Education face such anxiety, the stakes are higher since they are the future. In this job, they must be self-assured enough to demonstrate their skills in front of an audience: their peers (Horwitz et al., 1986). The example of this factor is when students feel afraid of being wrong or afraid of failing when asked to speak English in class.

# c. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Negative feedback from teacher and classmates can occur when learning a foreign language. As a result, students feel anxious when they make an excellent impression their teachers or classmates. (Horwitz et al., 1986). An example of this factor is when students feel anxious when speaking English in class because they are afraid of being evaluated negatively by friends and teachers in class, such as being laughed at, being judged, and so on.

# The Strategies to Reduce Students' Anxiety

Strategies are important for reducing anxiety, but it is equally important to remember that everyone's experience is unique. What works for one person may not work for another, thus it is crucial to find the strategies that resonate with us personally. Kondo & Ling (2004) argued that there are five strategies that students use to reduce their anxiety in speaking. These strategies are preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation.

# a. Preparation

In this strategy, students attempt to engage in self-control by enhancing their learning and study strategies (for instance, by studying carefully and trying to obtain excellent summaries of lecture notes). By employing these strategies, students' subjectively appraised mastery of the subject matter is expected to increase, while their anxiety regarding language class will decrease (Kondo & Ling, 2004).

### b. Relaxation

The second strategy is relaxation, this strategy is related to tactics that aim to reduce somatic anxiety symptoms. It relaxes the body through physical activity. As an illustration, inhale deeply and attempt to calm down when speaking (Kondo & Ling, 2004).

### c. Positive Thinking

This strategy refers to efforts to "divert attention from a stressful situation to positive and pleasant cues to calm anxious students." Some apprehensive students attempt to develop a positive self-image. They use a variety of techniques, such as attempting confidence, visualizing a fantastic

performance, focusing on something pleasant, or ignoring the consequences (Kondo & Ling, 2004).

# d. Peer Seeking

Students who engage in peer seeking are those who are willing to look for other students who appear to be having problems understanding the class or regulating their anxiety (Kondo & Ling, 2004).

# e. Resignation

According to Kondo & Ling (2004), this is characterized by the unwillingness of students to take any action to reduce their language anxiety. Resignation appears as an attempt to minimize the effects of anxiety by refusing to face the issue (for example, giving up or napping in class).

# The Effect of Anxiety

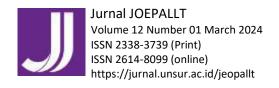
According to Hasriani et al. (2021), anxiety has negative and positive effects on students. Anxiety may have a negative effect on a student's mental performance and have an impact on others. And the add statement was connected to a lack of listening comprehension, limited vocabulary development, a lack of pronunciation, a low test score, a low grade in the language of the course, or a combination of these things. Apart from those, anxiety is a variable that is both a cause and a result of poor language learning. Meanwhile, anxiety might have a positive effect on students' motivation. Anxiety may be both debilitating and beneficial. Students might be motivated by stress. That may increase their motivation. In contrast, stress may be debilitating and cause students to forget important information during exams. It was labeled positive facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety.

# **Speaking**

Speaking is an essential skill that students should master because it requires oral communication, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension (Yusan & Aminatum, 2022). Speaking in a classroom entails interaction between teachers and students, or among students, depending on how classroom activities are organized. Speaking differs from writing and reading skills (commonly assumed to be written language and receptive skills) s. Speakers typically do not speak complete sentences and use less specific vocabulary than written language (Brown, 2004).

### The Relationship Between Anxiety and Speaking Class

MacIntyre & Gardner (1991), cited in Damayanti & Listyani (2020), stated that Students who are anxious in class are less likely to respond to teacher questions and participate in speaking activities in class. When students spoke, they were terrified that everyone would hear them. As a result, they fear being corrected if they use incorrect grammar. Also, they had a smaller vocabulary while utilizing a foreign language. Furthermore, Udomkit as cited in Habiburrahim et al., (2020)



claims that communication anxiety in the English classroom is caused by a lack of opportunities for students to participate in classroom communication, a lack of confidence when speaking English, and other affective factors such as interpersonal evaluation, classroom activities and methods, and self-esteem. According to Gregersen (2003) as cited in Gregersen (2020), the relationship between error and LA (Language Anxiety) is cyclical: learners make errors and become more anxious, and the more mistakes they make, the less willing they are to communicate in language to preserve their public persona. Without participation, the anxious learner maintains the cycle of negative emotional attenuation and poor performance. Anxious students tend to focus on the negative, believing that their language contains more mistakes than they actually make.

### **METHOD**

This research will be conducted by using descriptive qualitative as a research method. Ary et al. (2014) stated that descriptive research studies are designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena. This is directed toward determining the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of the study. Besides, Creswell (2018) stated that qualitative research is descriptive in what the researcher is interested in, the process, meaning, and understanding gained through word or picture and conducted in a natural setting. The researcher used Creswell (2018) theory as an instruments. The research has used open-ended questionnaire results to know the students feelings on their speaking performance to investigate the factors of students' anxiety in speaking English and the strategies to reduce their anxiety in speaking English. The research used the interview to get the data about the factors that cause students' anxiety in speaking English and the strategies the students use to reduce their anxiety in speaking English. The research had interview by face to face. The research asked five questions of five students. Furthermore, the interview and questionnaire used the Indonesian language to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity between the interviewer and interviewee. In collecting data, some procedures did by research to be collected the data as follows: (1) researcher attended the English class of the participant. (2) the researcher explains how to answer the questionnaire. (3) the research gives the paper of questionnaire to the students in eleven grade. (4) the students answer and collect the questionnaire to the research. (5) after conducted the questionnaire, in the next day, interview has done. (3) and the last, the researcher presented the data in qualitative descriptive method. Miles & Huberman (1994) provides three techniques for qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is related to the interpretation of the research finding through questionnaire and interview. In this research, the data were obtained on March  $06^{th}$  until March  $07^{th}$ , 2023.

# 1. The Factors Cause Students' Anxiety in Speaking English

The first problem is the factors causing students anxiety in speaking. Based on the data obtained from questionnaire and interview, there are at least three main factors causing students' anxiety in speaking, they were apprehension of verbal communication, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

# a. Apprehension of Verbal Communication

Based on the findings, apprehension of verbal communication was one of the factors of anxiety that the students experience in speaking.

### Data 1

Presentasi di depan kelas, trus kalo misalkan tiba-tiba ditanya sama guru saya tiba-tiba ga bisa mikir apa-apa. Terus kalo misalkan sekarang ngobrol sama ayah, ayah tu kan orangnya suka menjudge, jadi agak takut ngomong sama orang yang pinter bahasa Inggris (Student 1/Interview)

### Data 2

Saat berpresentasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris / membaca dialog Inggris (Student 21/ Questionnaire)

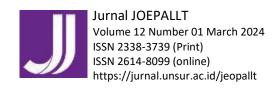
The first data was obtained through an interview. Student 1 reported experiencing anxiety when presenting in front of the class and conversing with others. The second data was collected through a questionnaire. Student 21 reported feeling apprehensive when delivering an English presentation or reading an English dialogue.

The researcher shows that there are 32 students were experiencing this factor of anxiety when they presenting in front of the class or conversing with others. It can be seen from Horwitz et al., (1986), theory that learners who show fear of communication do not feel it comfortable communicating in the target language (TL) in front of other people because of their limited knowledge of the language, especially concerning speaking skills.

# b. Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is a sort of performance anxiety caused by a fear of failing. Test anxiety is believed to be one of the most significant factors contributing to negative motivation. It is an unpleasant feeling or emotional state with physiological and behavioral conditions that are experienced in formal testing or other evaluative situations.

Based on the findings, test anxiety was the most factors that the students experienced in their speaking anxiety. There were 34 students become anxious when the teacher asked them to retell the material unexpectedly. Most of them felt anxious, panic, fear of making mistakes and fear of failing the performance, as the students said:



#### Data 1

Situasi saat orang-orang focus perhatiannya kepada saya, karena saya takut ada salah di grammar atau di pronunciation (Student 22/Questionnaire)

### Data 2

Pertama di kelas, misalkan waktu disuruh bikin opini pake bahasa Inggirs nah kan kayak ngerangkai katakatanya susah, nah takut salah, terus juga waktu presentasi, kayak di pembukaan aja kadang udah degdegan (Student 2/Interview)

From the data above the students' experience anxiety when they are fearful of making mistakes in grammar or pronunciation, and they also state they're afraid of making mistakes in word composition. It can be seen from Horwitz et al., (1986), test anxiety is described as a sort of performance anxiety caused by a fear of failing in academic evaluation environments. Some students may suffer anxiety while performing spoken English in front of an audience, making it difficult for them to provide a great oral presentation.

# c. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is one of the anxiety factors that cause students to make pronunciation errors and receive negative evaluations when speaking English.

Based on the findings, the students are afraid of being laughed at and given bad advice, the teacher's response and the responses of their friends are very influential, as the students said:

### Data 1

Rasanya cemas, takut, grogi apalagi kalo misalkan bacanya tu di depan kelas kan disaksiin sama yang bisa bahasa Inggris dari kita, kadang takutnya kalo salah bacanya diketawain atau dikasih nasihatnya kurang enak ke kitanya gitu (Student 2/Interview)

### Data 2

Reaksi teman sangat berpengaruh (Student 20/Questionnaire)

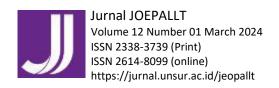
# Data 3

Reaksi guru sangat berpengaruh (Student 31/Questionnaire)

#### Data 4

Pernah, dan itu sangat sangat memalukan (Student 7/Questionnaire)

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From the data above, students experience anxiety when they being laughed at, given bad advice. According to those who have been laughed at for speaking improper English, they experience extreme embarrassment. Students also stated that the response of the teacher and classmates had a significant impact on their anxiety. It can be seen from Horwitz et al., (1986), negative feedback from teacher and classmates can occur when learning a foreign language. As a result, students feel anxious when they make an excellent impression their teachers or classmates.

# 2. The Strategies Students Use to Reduce Their Anxiety in Speaking English

This research section will concentrate on what students do to reduce their speaking anxiety. The research would include interviews and questionnaires to determine how students reduce their speaking apprehension. Students reported numerous anxiety-reduction strategies. The research will clarify the data reduction and classification strategy for five reasons. Due to the interviews and questionnaires, several strategies for reducing anxiety during public speaking have been identified. The following is the scenario:

# a. Preparation

### Data 1

Menguji kemampuan diri dengan berlatih soal atau membiasakan penggunaannya di beberapa situasi (Students 2/Questionnaire)

### Data 2

*Mencoba berlatih terus menerus* (Students 19/Questionnaire)

Based on the findings, four out of 35 students reduced their anxiety in speaking by being prepared. They said that by testing their ability by practicing or getting used to it in some situations, they could get rid of anxiety in speaking.

Based on the statement above, the researcher classify preparation as strategy that students use to reduce their anxiety in speaking English. It can be seen from Kondo & Ying-Ling (2004), preparation strategy is when students attempt to engage in self-control by enhancing their learning and study strategies (for instance, by studying carefully and trying to obtain excellent summaries of lecture notes).

### b. Relaxation

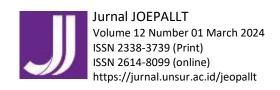
The research has found relaxation in questionnaires and interviews. The following are some answers from questionnaire and interview:

### Data 1

*Tarik nafas dalam-dalam dan mencoba menenagkan diri* (Student 3/Questionnaire)

### Data 2

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Tarik nafas, nenangin diri. Kayaknya biasanya diam dulu, apalagi kalo putus-putus di tengah. Tarik nafas terus berfikir positif aja (Student 1/Interview)

Based on the data above, the research discovered a few strategies that students use during relaxation, such as taking a deep breath and calm their minds.

Based on the statement above, the researcher conclude that relaxation is one of strategies that students use to reduce their anxiety in speaking. It can be seen from Kondo & Ying-Ling (2004), relaxation is related to tactics that aim to reduce somatic anxiety symptoms. It relaxes the body through physical activity. As an illustration, inhale deeply and attempt to calm down when speaking.

# c. Positive Thinking

Students most frequently use positive thinking as a strategy to reduce their anxiety when speaking. The following are some answers from the questionnaire:

### Data 1

Yakin aja sih, soalnya kalau salah pasti dikasih tahu yang benarnya (Student 20/Questionniare)

### Data 2

Dengan cara meyakinkan diri sendiri pasti bisa (Student 18/Questionnaire)

Based on the data above, students reduce their anxiety in speaking by thinking positively that they can do it and must be sure that when they make a mistake, they will definitely be told what is right.

Therefore, the researcher concludes that students tries to convincing themselves is part of strategy of positive thinking. Thus, it can be seen from Kondo & Ying-Ling (2004), they stated that positive thinking refers to efforts to "divert attention from a stressful situation to positive and pleasant cues to calm anxious students." Some apprehensive students attempt to develop a positive self-image. They use a variety of techniques, such as attempting confidence, visualizing a fantastic performance, focusing on something pleasant, or ignoring the consequences.

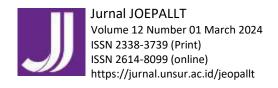
### d. Peer Seeking

Based on findings, the student use peer seeking as a strategy to reduce their anxiety in speaking. The following are some answers from the questionnaire:

### Data 1

Melihat teman dekat (Student 34/Questionnaire)

Based on the data above, shows that when student look at their friend it can minimize their anxiety in speaking English. It can be seen from Kondo & Ying-Ling (2004), they stated that peer Seeking is defined as the willingness of students



to seek out peers who have difficulty understanding the material or controlling their anxiety.

# e. Holding Things

#### Data 1

Memainkan ujung baju sendiri atau teman (Student 4/Questionnaire)

### Data 2

Melafalkan do'a atau memainkan ujung kuku/baju (Student 5/Questionnaire)

Based on the data above, shows that the above students used the holding things strategy, namely they had to carry or hold objects such as the tips of nails or clothes to reduce their anxiety in speaking.

# f. Gesture/Body language

#### Data 1

Memegangi jari-jari / menggigit bibir bawah adalah hal yang aku lakukan saat mengurangi rasa cemas (Student 7/Questionnaire)

### Data 2

Berjalan-jalan atau bergerak (Student 23/Questionnaire)

Based on the data above, shows that above students use gesure/body language strategy to reduce their anxiety in speaking. They have to bit their lower lip, move their body, and walk around.

# g. Socially Awkward

### Data 1

Ngga tau, dan saya biasanya menghindar terlebih dahulu (Student 15/Questionnaire)

### Data 2

*Melihat ke bawah* (Student 32/Questionnaire)

Based on the data above, the research discovered a few strategies that students use during socially awkward, such as looking down and avoid something that could make them feel anxious.

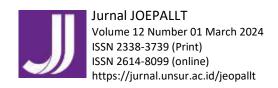
### h. Self-Entertaining

### Data 1

Ngelakuin apa aja yang penting menghibur (Student 10/Questionnaire)

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#### Data 2

*Tertawa sedikit* (Student 27, Questionnaire)

Based on the data above, it can be seen students experienced to overcome their anxiety in speaking English is do something that can make them entertained such as laughing.

### RESULT

In this section, after analyzing the data of the research, the researcher concluded of the result of the research. Related to the research questions, the result of the research is as follow:

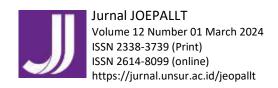
There are several factor causing students' anxiety in speaking English. The first factor is apprehension of verbal communication. Related to this factor, the students were experiencing this factor of anxiety when they presenting in front of the class or conversing with others. The second factor is test anxiety. Related to this factor, the students become anxious when the teacher asked them to retell the material unexpectedly. Most of them felt anxious, panic, fear of making mistakes and fear of failing the performance. The last factor is fear of negative evaluation. Related to this factor, the students experience anxiety when they being laughed at, given bad advice.

The researcher concludes that there are several strategies that the students use to reduce their anxiety in speaking English. There are preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, and peer seeking. In this research, the researcher found new strategies to reduce students' anxiety in speaking English, such as: holding things, socially awkward, gestures/body language, and self-entertaining.

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