

## **EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

**By:**

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to find out the description of the students' speaking anxiety and to find out the factors that influence the students' speaking anxiety. The researcher used a mixed method to obtain the data. For a quantitative sample, the researcher involved 80 students in the eighth grade of SMP Lematang Lestari. In collecting the data, the researcher used the PSCAS questionnaire instrument from Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) to obtain quantitative data and interviews to obtain qualitative data. From the results of the questionnaire, the anxiety level category was determined to be 3 categories, namely high (7.5%), medium (65%), and low (27.5%) anxiety level. The researcher used a homogeneous sampling approach to take samples. After that, for a qualitative sample, six students who had a high level of speaking anxiety were selected to be interviewed to find out the factors that influence students' speaking anxiety. To analyze quantitative data, the researcher used descriptive statistics and to analyze qualitative data the researcher used thematic analysis. In conclusion, the results of the study show that the description of students' speaking anxiety at SMP Lematang Lestari Muara Enim is mostly at a medium level of anxiety, namely 65%. Furthermore, after identifying the results of the interviews, from the things that were felt by the students, the researcher then drew 3 themes that became factors that influenced the eighth-grade students' speaking anxiety at SMP Lematang Lestari Muara Enim, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

**Keywords:** factors of speaking anxiety, speaking, students' speaking anxiety

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the four language skills is speaking skill. According to Al-Roud (2016), speaking skills are the capacity to communicate orally with others to

convey ideas accurately and ensure that the audience understands what is being said. Meanwhile, according to Munawar (2015), the ability to share and express feelings and thoughts through spoken sounds is known as

speaking skills. Then, according to subsequent experts, Setyonegoro (2013) stated that speaking is one of the abilities to communicate with the other person. Speaking, in general, can be interpreted as a skill to convey one's ideas, ideas to others by using spoken language (Rahmayanti et al., 2017). Thus, it can be said that speaking is a skill that involves pronouncing strings of words in a way that allows learners to master a language.

However, mastering speaking skills is not an easy task. According to Afshar and Asakereh (2016), the primary difficulties that students encounter when they speak in English can be categorized as affective-related difficulties, social-related difficulties, and linguistic-related difficulties. The affective-related difficulties include issues with attitude, motivation, self-

assurance, anxiety, the length of language exposure, the classroom setting, family history, and the skills of the students and teachers. Understanding in speaking classes and comprehension of English practice outside of the classroom are socially related difficulties. Vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and pronunciation are among the linguistic-related difficulties. Due to several factors, such as worry, lack of confidence, and anxiousness, students frequently experience affective-related difficulties when speaking. To avoid making mistakes, they will probably speak more slowly. Alyan (2013) found that speaking difficulties occurred because students found words they did not understand, word forms they did not know how to use, or found that they could not express the intended meaning. Difficulties that

arise in students' speaking are the lack of confidence and anxiety. They may be faced with certain feelings that usually affect them when speaking English such as insecure, shy, anxious, nervous, and worried. From some of the opinions above, it can be concluded that speaking difficulties in students arise, one of which is due to anxiety.

Indeed, there is a chance that someone will feel anxious when speaking. According to Asma (2019), in general, anxiety is a physical reaction to a certain circumstance. In short, anxiety is defined as a sensation of tension, worry, or apprehension. Jiwo (2012) argued that anxiety is a mental health disorder that requires treatment in some situations. For example, persistent (permanent) anxieties about huge or little concerns indicate a generalized anxiety

disorder. Panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are examples of anxiety disorders with more specific triggers and symptoms. Based on some of the aforementioned viewpoints, it can be inferred that anxiety is a reaction to the dread of or in the presence of mental health disorders that require treatment and originates as a result of psychological symptoms as a result of newly discovered situations.

In fact, in the preliminary study that the researcher did, the teacher confirmed that there was a phenomenon of anxiety in his students when speaking. His students were found feeling nervous like stuttering, speaking less, and pointing at each other to volunteer to speak (Teacher K, personal communication, October 19, 2022).

Numerous similar studies were previously conducted on the topic of students' anxiety in speaking English. According to a study conducted by Azhari (2020) 80% of students experience anxiety when speaking English. Meanwhile, Pirnawati (2020) stated that 87% of students experience high anxiety when speaking in front of an audience. Student anxiety has had a significant impact on their performance in English-speaking classes. In line with previous related studies, Hidayati et al. (2022) revealed that taking part in speaking exercises, question and answer sessions, and learning English in class causes students to experience FLSA. In addition, Santoso and Perrodin (2022) claimed that concerns about grammar and accuracy are the main causes of students' speaking anxiety. Badriyah and Novita (2022) showed that three

types of anxiety affect students, namely: state anxiety, trait anxiety, and specific state anxiety. Test anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation are other elements that influence student anxiety. However, most of the research was carried out only based on descriptive research or only based on qualitative research which focused only on one thing, namely to find out only the descriptive or to find out the factors that influence students' speaking anxiety but did not look at both. While, this research is to look between the two, namely to find out the description and also to find out the factors that influence students' speaking anxiety.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research study used a mixed-method research design.

According to Creswell (2015), combining several approaches to answer research problems in a suitable and morally sound way is known as a mixed methods research technique. For the quantitative method, the researchers collect the data by distributing questionnaires to students, and for the qualitative method, the researchers conduct interviews with students who experience speaking anxiety with a high level of speaking anxiety. The type of mixed methods that the researchers applied in this study was sequential explanatory. Sequential explanatory is a type of mixed methods research in which the research is carried out at different times and sequentially starting with quantitative research first then qualitative, where the purpose of this sequential explanatory design is to test hypotheses with facts in the field.

SMP Lematang Lestari Muara Enim became the focus of the research. The researchers used a homogeneous sampling approach to take samples. This sample was administered a questionnaire which was distributed to 80 eighth-grade students at SMP Lematang Lestari. Then to collect qualitative data, the researchers selected six students who had a high level of speaking anxiety at SMP Lematang Lestari Muara Enim to be interviewed.

To collect quantitative data the researchers used questionnaires and to collect qualitative data the researchers conducted an interview. Then, To analyze quantitative data, the researchers used descriptive statistics and to analyze qualitative data the researchers used thematic analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following is a detailed distribution of the students' speaking anxiety levels.

**Table 1**  
**The Distribution of the Students' Speaking Anxiety Level**

Level of Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage
High	6	7,5 %
Medium	52	65 %
Low	22	27,5 %
Total	80	100%

After collecting the results of the questionnaire responded by 80 students, the researchers grouped the level of anxiety according to the level of anxiety. The results of the questionnaire were 6 students had high anxiety levels (7.5%), 52 students had medium anxiety levels (65%) and the last 22 students had low anxiety levels (27.5%).

In this case, interviews were conducted with six students who have a high level of anxiety in speaking English. Interviews were conducted to

determine the factors that influenced students' anxiety in speaking English.

It was found that several factors influenced the eighth-grade students' speaking anxiety at SMP Lematang Lestari Muara Enim. It is divided into three factors, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

### Communication Apprehension

Based on the data obtained through interviews, it showed that students felt anxious, nervous, afraid, palpitations, embarrassed and insecure. They also don't actively participate in class and are not excited when they have to speak English in front of the class. The results from interviews showed that students said *"When speaking English, I feel very anxious, embarrassed, nervous, stammering, my heart is pounding and I forget things that I know because I*

*am not confident when speaking English”, and “I have never been comfortable speaking English because I am shy”* (AF, personal communication, March 20, 2023).

### **Test Anxiety**

Another cause that played a big role in influencing anxiety in speaking English is test anxiety. Based on the data obtained through interviews, most of the students’ performances during the English speaking test were not fluent when speaking because they were afraid of making mistakes, stammered, worried, nervous, panicked, and forgot things they knew mostly because of a test being administered. A student named AAS said, *“When appearing to speak English in front of the class I often stutter, panic, and anxious. Since I have to do it for my English score I did it involuntarily in front of the class”*

(Personal communication, March 20, 2023).

### **Fear of Negative Evaluation**

Based on the data obtained through interviews, showed that the next factor that influenced students’ anxiety in speaking English was fear of negative evaluation. The researchers found that when they made mistakes while speaking English, their friends would laugh and mock them. A student named AF stated, *“When I made a mistake while speaking English, my friends would laugh at me, some even mock me”* (Personal communication, March 20, 2023).

This study aimed to describe the students’ speaking anxiety and to find out the factors that influenced eighth-grade students’ speaking anxiety at SMP Lematang Lestari Muara Enim. In this section, the researchers discuss the whole the research results obtained

to answer the research questions in this study, namely: the description of students' speaking anxiety and the factors that influenced students' speaking anxiety. From the research results, from a total sample of 80 students, it was found that there were as many as 22 students with scores below 50 which meant they had a low level of anxiety, then as many as 52 students scored between 50-68 which indicated they were at a medium level of anxiety, and as many as 6 students get a score above 68 which showed they were at a high level of anxiety.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the results of the data analysis, the researchers found that the anxiety of speaking English of the eighth-grade students at SMP Lematang Lestari was included in the category of medium anxiety level.

From a total sample of 80 students, 52 (65%) students had a medium anxiety level, 6 students (7,5%) had a high anxiety level and 22 students (27.5%) had a low anxiety level. Besides, from the results of the interviews, the researchers found that students claimed they felt anxious, afraid, nervous, heart pounding, lack of confidence, and feel embarrassed when speaking English during class activities and tests. Then, from the things that were felt by the students, the researchers found that the factors that influenced the eighth-grade students' speaking anxiety at SMP Lematang Lestari were communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

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