Breaking The Silence: Speaking Anxiety Among Tenth Graders at SMAN 1 Luwu Utara

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Speaking anxiety is a common barrier that students face in language learning, particularly in situations requiring verbal communication. This study investigates the factors, causes, and strategies to overcome speaking anxiety among tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Luwu Utara. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected through interviews and questionnaires. Findings revealed three primary forms of speaking anxiety: communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Key causes included limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes, and low self-confidence. To address these issues, students adopted strategies such as preparation, positive thinking, and relaxation techniques. This research highlights the urgency of fostering a supportive classroom environment that reduces anxiety and promotes active participation, offering valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance student engagement and communication skills. By identifying both the root causes and coping strategies, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how to effectively support students facing speaking anxiety. *This is an open access article under the* <u>CC BY-SA</u> *license.*

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INTRODUCTION

English speaking skill plays a crucial role in foreign language learning because it enables learners to communicate ideas, express opinions, and actively participate in academic and social interactions. In the Indonesian EFL context, speaking is often regarded as the most challenging skill to master, particularly for senior high school students. Many students experience anxiety when they are required to speak English in front of others, which negatively affects their fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate. Recent studies have shown

that speaking anxiety remains a persistent issue in EFL classrooms and often becomes a major barrier to successful oral communication (Çagatay, 2015; Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019).

Speaking anxiety is influenced by various psychological, linguistic, and classroom-related factors. Students often feel anxious due to limited vocabulary, fear of making grammatical mistakes, incorrect pronunciation, and fear of being negatively evaluated by teachers or peers. In addition, teacher-centered instructional methods, excessive correction, and high-stakes speaking assessments can intensify students' anxiety levels (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Baran-Łucarz, 2017). Learners with high levels of anxiety tend to avoid speaking activities, remain silent during class discussions, and show low participation, which eventually hinders their overall language development (MacIntyre, 2017).

Although the Indonesian curriculum emphasizes communicative competence, the reality in many classrooms shows that students are still reluctant to speak English. This phenomenon is also observed among tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Luwu Utara, where many learners display signs of nervousness, hesitation, and lack of confidence during speaking activities. Previous studies have examined foreign language anxiety in general; however, limited research has specifically explored the forms, causes, and coping strategies of speaking anxiety at the senior high school level in this context. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety and the strategies they use to overcome it, in order to provide insights for improving English teaching and learning practices (Hanafiah et al., 2023; Saito et al., 2018).

Despite the emphasis on communicative competence in the Indonesian EFL curriculum, speaking anxiety remains a significant barrier for senior high school students, negatively affecting their confidence, participation, and speaking performance. If left unaddressed, this anxiety may hinder students' oral language development and prevent them from demonstrating their actual speaking ability. Therefore, investigating speaking anxiety is urgent to identify its contributing factors and to support more effective and emotionally responsive English teaching practices. The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Luwu Utara, a context that has received limited scholarly attention. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine foreign language anxiety in general or at the tertiary level, this research explores the forms, causes, and coping strategies of speaking anxiety at the senior high school level, offering context-specific insights and practical implications for EFL teachers in similar educational settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative method. The participants of this study were students of class X SMA Negeri 1 Luwu Utara. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The instrument was designed to reveal the types and causes of anxiety, as well as students' strategies to overcome it.

278 | E L T M

Basitha et al (Breaking The Silence: Speaking Anxiety Among Tenth Graders At Sman 1 Luwu Utara)
English Language Teaching Methodology

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study used a descriptive qualitative design to examine the speaking anxiety of students in class X.1 at SMA Negeri 1 Luwu Utara. The participants of this study consisted of 35 students selected from one class, with data collected through observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The instruments used included an observation checklist, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986), and open-ended questions based on Young's (1991) anxiety factors. Data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using Likert scale ratings to classify anxiety levels. The study was conducted over two days, from November 12-13, 2024, at SMA Negeri 1 Luwu Utara. This methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to students' speaking anxiety and the strategies they use to manage it. To explore the causes of students' speaking anxiety and the strategies they use to cope, the researcher utilized three instruments: observation, questionnaires, and interviews.

1. Result of Observation

The researcher observed students' speaking anxiety by using the observation list. The researcher as an observer and assessor. The researcher observed the symptoms of speaking anxiety in all tenth grade students proposed by (Ansari, 2015: 42). For the results of these observations, the researcher knew that almost all students experienced speaking anxiety in English class. It could be seen in appendix 1. See on table 4.1 the list of observations produced by the researcher showed that students of class at SMA Negeri 1 Luwu Utara experienced symptoms of anxiety when attending speaking class.

Table 1.1 Observation Checklist

No.	Causes of anxiety	Checklist
1	Shyness	✓
2	Keeping silent	✓
3	Avoiding eye contact with teacher	✓
4	Limited vocabulary	✓
5	Inaccurate grammar	✓
6	Lack of fluency	✓
7	Imperfect pronunciation	✓
8	Feeling Inferior	✓
9	Fear of expressing certain views	✓
10	Diminishing confidence	✓
11	Dominance of hesitation	✓
12	Sweating more	✓
13	shoulders down	✓
14	Standing down	✓

15	Feet inwards and arm in front of body	✓

<div align="right">(Ansari, 2015)</div>

2. Result of Questionnaires

To find out the levels of student's anxiety in speaking English the researcher used the questionnaire. For the format of the questionnaire, the researcher adapted from the Likert scale. Likert scale is kind of closed questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 33 questions with answers response options ranged from 1 – 5 of each item. The 5 point scales are "Strongly Agree" (SA), "Agree" (A), "neither agree or Disagree" (NA), "Disagree" (D) and "Strongly Disagree" (D). For the content of the questionnaire, the researcher adapted from the causes of anxiety by Young (1991). The questionnaire was answered by 37 students of X.1 at SMA Negeri 1 Luwu Utara. To make it easier for researchers, the researcher made a table. The table is the result of the Content of Level of Speaking Anxiety on Questionnaire which is used to find out the answers of the students. The content of the level of anxiety questionnaire is personal and interpersonal anxiety, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language teaching, instructor-Learner interactions), classroom procedures and language testing.

a. **Level of Personal and Interpersonal Anxiety**

Table 2.1 Personal and Interpersonal Anxiety

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	2	0.5%
2	Disagree	11	3.0%
3	Undecided	48	13.1%
4	Agree	131	35.7%
5	Strongly Agree	175	47.7%
Total		367	100%

b. **Level of Learner beliefs on language learning**

Table 2.2 Learner beliefs on language learning

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	11	1.6%
2	Disagree	57	8.3%
3	Undecided	131	19.2%
4	Agree	218	31.9%
5	Strongly Agree	267	39.0%
Total		684	100%

c. **Level of Instructor beliefs about language teaching**

Table 2.3 Instructor beliefs about language teaching

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	12	2.70%
2	Disagree	48	10.70%
3	Undecided	85	19.00%
4	Agree	134	29.90%

5	Strongly Agree	169	37.70%
Total		**448**	**100%**

d. **Level of Instructor learning interaction**

Table 2.4 Instructor- learning interaction

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	15	3.09%
2	Disagree	55	11.32%
3	Undecided	94	19.34%
4	Agree	153	31.48%
5	Strongly Agree	169	34.77%
Total		**486**	**100%**

e. **Level of Classroom procedures**

Table 2.5 Classroom procedures

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	18	3.22%
2	Disagree	57	10.21%
3	Undecided	117	20.97%
4	Agree	164	29.37%
5	Strongly Agree	202	36.22%
Total		**558**	**100%**

f. **Level of Language testing**

Table 4.6 Language testing

No.	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	8	2.37%
2	Disagree	27	8.00%
3	Neither	62	18.41%
4	Agree	104	30.88%
5	Strongly Agree	136	40.34%
Total		**337**	**100%**

3. Result of Interviews

The interview results confirm that speaking anxiety is influenced by multiple factors, including psychological fears, linguistic challenges, and classroom dynamics. While students have developed personal strategies to cope with their anxiety, they still need structured support from teachers and a classroom environment that encourages confidence-building. Addressing these challenges can lead to improved participation, better language learning outcomes, and a more positive experience in speaking activities. Interviews align with previous research on foreign language anxiety. Anxiety in language learning is often caused by psychological, linguistic, and social factors that influence students' confidence and willingness to speak. This is suitable with the study conducted by Hanafiah et al. (2023) revealed that performance students' in oral assessments, especially when they feared that their mistakes might negatively impact their grades or how they are perceived by others. Similarly with the study conducted by Wahyuni (2015) found that students experienced anxiety specifically during speaking tests,

281 | E L T M

Basitha et al (Breaking The Silence: Speaking Anxiety Among Tenth Graders At Sman 1 Luwu Utara)
English Language Teaching Methodology

where psychological symptoms like fear of failure and fear of judgment were prevalent. This led to a significant impact on their speaking achievement.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from observations, questionnaires, and interviews, it can be concluded that speaking anxiety significantly affects students' participation and performance in English language activities. The factors contributing to this anxiety are mainly psychological, linguistic, and physical, but are strongly influenced by methodological approaches, pedagogical practices, and the role of the teacher. Methodological factors, such as a focus on accuracy rather than fluency, can increase anxiety and hinder students' ability to communicate effectively. Pedagogical practices that lack supportive strategies and engaging activities can contribute to a stressful learning environment. Finally, teacher behavior and attitudes are also highly influential - teachers who are unsupportive or overly critical tend to increase anxiety, whereas teachers who provide encouragement, constructive feedback, and foster a safe and respectful classroom atmosphere can help students gain confidence and reduce fear.

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282 | E L T M

Basitha et al (Breaking The Silence: Speaking Anxiety Among Tenth Graders At Sman 1 Luwu Utara)
English Language Teaching Methodology

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