
STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AT SMP NEGERI 35 MEDAN

Aisyah Purnama Nasution¹, Miranda Simangunsong²,

Johannes Jefria Gultom³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Negeri Medan

¹purnamaaisyah381@gmail.com, ²mirandasmsgunimed@gmail.com,

³johan_nes81@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Students at SMP Negeri 35 Medan experience a lack of confidence in speaking English, especially during classroom speaking activities. They often feel nervous, afraid of making mistakes, worried about negative evaluation, and hesitant to express their ideas. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing students' lack of confidence in speaking English. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method involving five students for interviews and seven students for open-ended questionnaires selected through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. The findings reveal that students' lack of confidence is influenced by psychological factors, such as anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, as well as linguistic factors, including limited vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation difficulties. These factors cause students to remain silent and avoid speaking activities in class.

Keywords: speaking confidence, anxiety, linguistic factors

ABSTRAK

Peserta didik di SMP Negeri 35 Medan mengalami kurangnya rasa percaya diri dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris, terutama saat kegiatan berbicara di kelas. Mereka merasa gugup, takut melakukan kesalahan, khawatir terhadap penilaian negatif, dan ragu menyampaikan ide. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi kurangnya rasa percaya diri peserta didik dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan lima peserta didik untuk wawancara dan tujuh peserta didik untuk kuesioner terbuka yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif dari Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, dan Johnny Saldaña. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurangnya rasa percaya diri dipengaruhi oleh faktor psikologis, seperti kecemasan dan ketakutan terhadap penilaian negatif, serta faktor linguistik, seperti keterbatasan kosakata, tata bahasa, dan pengucapan. Faktor-faktor tersebut membuat peserta didik cenderung diam dan menghindari aktivitas berbicara di kelas.

Kata kunci: kepercayaan diri berbicara, kecemasan, faktor linguistik

A. Introduction

English is one of the most important international languages used for communication, education, technology, and global interaction. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language from junior high school to higher levels of education. One of the main goals of English learning is to help students communicate effectively through speaking. Speaking is considered an essential skill because it allows students to express ideas, opinions, and feelings directly. However, many students still experience difficulties in speaking English confidently during classroom activities.

At SMP Negeri 35 Medan, many students show low confidence when they are asked to speak English in front of the class. Based on preliminary observation, students often feel nervous, afraid of making mistakes, worried about negative evaluation, and hesitant to express their ideas. Some students prefer to remain silent rather than participate in speaking activities. These conditions indicate that psychological and linguistic problems influence students' speaking performance. Similar findings were also found in interview and questionnaire results, where students reported anxiety, fear of being laughed at, limited vocabulary, grammar difficulties, and pronunciation problems as the main causes of their lack of confidence.

According to Elaine K. Horwitz, foreign language anxiety consists of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. These factors can reduce students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. In addition, Stephen Krashen proposed the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which explains that anxiety, low self-confidence, and low motivation can block language acquisition and reduce students' speaking performance. Linguistic limitations such as lack of vocabulary, grammar difficulties, and pronunciation problems also increase students' anxiety and hesitation when speaking English.

Several previous studies have discussed students' speaking anxiety and lack of confidence in learning English. However, many studies mainly focus on general speaking difficulties without deeply analyzing the interaction between psychological and linguistic factors in junior high school students. Therefore, this study focuses on

analyzing the factors influencing students' lack of confidence in speaking English at SMP Negeri 35 Medan.

This study aims to analyze the factors influencing students' lack of confidence in speaking English and to identify how psychological and linguistic factors affect students' participation in classroom speaking activities. The findings of this study are expected to provide benefits for teachers, students, and future researchers. For teachers, the study may help create supportive and low-anxiety speaking activities. For students, it may increase awareness of the importance of practicing speaking confidently. For future researchers, this study can serve as a reference for further research related to speaking confidence and foreign language anxiety.

B. Research Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the factors influencing students' lack of confidence in speaking English. This method was chosen because the study focused on understanding students' experiences, feelings, and difficulties during speaking activities in the classroom. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 35 Medan involving eighth-grade students as the participants.

The participants were selected based on characteristics and experiences related to the focus of the study, namely students who experienced lack of confidence in speaking English during classroom learning activities. The study involved five students for interviews and seven students for open-ended questionnaires.

The data collection techniques used in this study were semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The interviews were conducted to obtain deeper information about students' experiences when speaking English in the classroom, such as feeling nervous, fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, and linguistic difficulties. In addition, open-ended questionnaires were used to support and strengthen the interview data so that the researcher could obtain more complete and varied information.

This study used two main theories as the foundation of the analysis. The first theory was Foreign Language Anxiety proposed by Elaine K. Horwitz, which

includes communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. The second theory was the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Stephen Krashen, which explains that affective factors such as anxiety, low self-confidence, and low motivation can influence students' language acquisition and speaking performance.

The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected, simplified, and categorized the data into several themes. After that, the data were presented systematically through data display to make interpretation easier. In the final stage, the researcher drew conclusions and verified the findings to ensure the consistency and credibility of the study.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied data triangulation through two sources of data, namely interviews and questionnaires. The researcher also compared participants' responses and connected the findings with relevant theories to make the results more valid and reliable.

C. Research Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study show that students at SMP Negeri 35 Medan experienced lack of confidence in speaking English during classroom speaking activities. Based on the interview and questionnaire results, students often felt nervous, afraid of making mistakes, worried about negative evaluation, and hesitant to express their ideas in English. In addition, linguistic difficulties such as limited vocabulary, grammar problems, and pronunciation difficulties also influenced students' confidence in speaking English.

The findings were analyzed using the theories proposed by Elaine K. Horwitz and Stephen Krashen. Based on Horwitz's theory, the findings reveal three main factors of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

Table 1. Findings Based on Horwitz's Theory

Factors	Description	Students' Responses
Communication Apprehension	Students felt nervous and panic when speaking English in front of the class.	"I feel nervous and suddenly forget what I want to say."
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Students were afraid of being laughed at or judged by classmates.	"I'm afraid my friends will laugh if I make mistakes."
Test Anxiety	Students felt more nervous when speaking activities were assessed.	"I'm more nervous when the teacher asks me to speak and gives a score."

The findings indicate that communication apprehension became the dominant problem experienced by students. Most students felt nervous and anxious when speaking English in front of others. This condition often caused students to suddenly forget what they wanted to say and become hesitant during speaking activities. These findings are in line with Horwitz's theory that anxiety in oral communication can reduce students' confidence and participation in speaking activities.

Fear of negative evaluation was also found as an important factor influencing students' confidence. Many students were afraid of being laughed at or criticized when making mistakes in speaking English. Because of this fear, students preferred to remain silent rather than participate actively in classroom speaking activities. This finding shows that the classroom environment strongly influences students' confidence in communication.

In addition, students experienced test anxiety during speaking assessments. Students felt pressured when their speaking performance was evaluated by the teacher. They became more focused on avoiding mistakes than communicating their ideas. As a result, students felt more nervous and less confident during speaking activities.

Furthermore, the findings were also analyzed using the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Stephen Krashen. The findings reveal that students' lack of confidence was influenced by anxiety, low self-confidence, low motivation, and linguistic difficulties.

Table 2. Factors Influencing Students' Lack of Confidence

Factors	Description	Interpretation
Anxiety	Students felt nervous and panic when speaking English.	High anxiety reduced students' confidence.
Low Self-Confidence	Students doubted their English ability.	Students became hesitant to speak English.
Low Motivation	Students showed low interest in speaking activities.	Students avoided speaking participation.
Linguistic Difficulties	Students had problems in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.	Linguistic limitations increased students' anxiety.
Avoidance Behaviour	Students preferred to remain silent in class.	Students avoided speaking activities because of low confidence.

The findings show that anxiety became the main affective factor influencing students' speaking confidence. Most students reported that they felt panic, nervous, and afraid when speaking English. According to Krashen, high anxiety can raise the affective filter and block language acquisition. As a result, students become less confident and less willing to communicate in English.

In addition, linguistic difficulties also played an important role in influencing students' confidence. Many students explained that they lacked vocabulary, had difficulty arranging grammar, and were unsure about pronunciation. These linguistic problems increased students' fear of making mistakes and caused them to hesitate when speaking English. Therefore, psychological and linguistic factors are closely connected in influencing students' speaking confidence.

Overall, the findings indicate that students' lack of confidence in speaking English is not only caused by limited language ability, but also by psychological factors such as anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. These factors interact with each other and create avoidance behavior, where students prefer to remain silent instead of participating in speaking activities. Therefore, teachers need to create a supportive and low-anxiety classroom environment to help students improve their confidence in speaking English.

D. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, students at SMP Negeri 35 Medan experienced lack of confidence in speaking English mainly because of psychological

and linguistic factors. The psychological factors included communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, as proposed by Elaine K. Horwitz. Students often felt nervous, afraid of making mistakes, worried about being laughed at, and anxious when their speaking performance was assessed. These conditions reduced students' willingness to participate in speaking activities.

In addition, the findings also revealed that linguistic difficulties such as limited vocabulary, grammar problems, and pronunciation difficulties influenced students' confidence in speaking English. These findings support the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Stephen Krashen, which explains that anxiety, low self-confidence, and low motivation can increase the affective filter and negatively affect language acquisition and speaking performance.

The interaction between psychological and linguistic factors caused students to avoid speaking activities and prefer to remain silent in the classroom. Therefore, improving students' speaking confidence requires not only improving their language ability, but also creating a supportive and low-anxiety learning environment.

Based on the findings, teachers are suggested to create more interactive and supportive speaking activities that can reduce students' anxiety and fear of making mistakes. Teachers are also encouraged to provide positive feedback and create a classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas. Students are expected to practice speaking English more actively and develop confidence gradually through regular practice. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct further studies with a larger number of participants or different research methods to obtain deeper understanding about students' speaking confidence in English learning.

REFERENCES

- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125–132.
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.