

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN OVERCOMING THEIR SPEAKING ANXIETY AT SMP NEGERI 5 KOTAMOBAGU

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Abstract: Speaking anxiety is a prevalent issue among students across different educational levels, and it can hinder their ability to communicate effectively in public. This research aimed to examine the underlying causes of speaking anxiety in students and explore the coping strategies they employ to address it. The study adopted a qualitative approach and involved 8th-grade students at SMP Negeri 5 Kotamobagu. Data collection was conducted through participant observation and in-depth interviews. The study's findings indicated that students' speaking anxiety primarily stems from two sources: firstly, internal factors related to their own self-perception, influenced by various factors like a lack of self-confidence, insufficient preparation and training, the fear of making mistakes, concerns about negative judgments from others, or inherent shyness. Secondly, external factors tied to classroom activities, including the pressure exerted by teachers to speak spontaneously or an unsupportive classroom environment. Students employ a range of strategies to cope with speaking anxiety, including triggering a relaxation response, thorough preparation and practice, adjusting their thought patterns and attitudes, envisioning successful outcomes, and incorporating physical movement. The study's results emphasize the crucial role of positive thinking and the support provided by parents, teachers, and peers in assisting students in overcoming speaking anxiety, thereby enhancing their self-assurance and level of readiness.

Keywords: *Speaking Anxiety, Causes, Students' Strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

Human communication with each other involves the use of language as an important system. Language has enormous significance in life because it plays a role in conveying ideas, thoughts, emotions and information effectively. Liando (2017) stated that "Language is a means to communicate with each other. As a tool of communication, language is an essential part in human life. It is used to share experiences and express feelings and ideas. Without language, people would find problems in sharing information, interacting with others, showing sympathies and

clarifying important cases". According to Hampp (2019) "Language is a tool for expressing yourself, a communication tool, and a means for social control".

Language skills consist of four main aspects. The first is listening ability, where someone is able to understand and capture the information conveyed by the person they are talking to. Second, speaking skills describe the ability to express ideas and opinions orally. Furthermore, reading skills enable a person to understand the contents of written texts, including books, newspapers, articles, and so on. Lastly, writing skills refer to the ability to express ideas and thoughts in writing clearly, regularly, and precisely. These four aspects are important in communication skills and language understanding.

Speaking is one of the most important language skills because it plays a big role in communication. Siagian and Adam (2017) stated that "Speaking is a way of using language as a medium for communication with other people. Speaking is a common activity that is carried out daily between speakers and listeners, and is a medium for conveying various kinds of information".

When it comes to interacting with others or addressing a public audience, many individuals commonly encounter sensations of uneasiness, apprehension, and sometimes even distress. Speaking anxiety is a prevailing condition frequently observed among students at different educational stages, spanning from elementary school to university. According to Ansari (2015), anxiety is an emotional state triggered by diverse factors like heightened fear, stress, nervousness, and concerns associated with the stimulation of the nervous system. This circumstance has the potential to influence the capacity of students to engage in public speaking scenarios, encompassing presentations, group discussions, or other activities that demand proficient speaking abilities.

Speaking anxiety is a common thing experienced by many students at various levels of education. Many students experience feelings of anxiety or nervousness when faced with public speaking situations, such as when giving presentations in class, participating in group discussions, or speaking in front of teachers and classmates. Speaking anxiety can have significant impacts, including lowering self-confidence levels, affecting academic performance, potentially affecting future careers, and a student's general well-being. Although the problem of speaking anxiety may not be significant for most students at SMP Negeri 5 Kotamobagu,

especially for those who already have experience speaking in public, it is important to remember that almost all students have experienced a stage where they feel nervous and anxious when they have to speak. Therefore, this research was conducted with the title "Analysis of Student Strategies in Overcoming Speaking Anxiety at SMP Negeri 5 Kotamobagu".

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a descriptive-qualitative approach. According to Queiros et al. (2017), qualitative research is a research method that aims to deeply understand the issue being investigated and then analyze it. This research used a qualitative descriptive method, which focuses on collecting data in the form of words and images rather than numbers, with the intention of providing a comprehensive and accurate picture of the conditions being studied, especially in relation to the strategies students use to overcome their speaking anxiety.

Data was obtained through an interview and observation process. Cowie (2009) stated that observation is a deliberate action to carefully observe and evaluate participant behavior in a natural context. Meanwhile, Griffiee (2005) indicated that interviews are the data collection method most commonly used in research, especially qualitative ones.

The data collected was analyzed using the theoretical framework of Miles and Huberman (as cited in Punch, 2009, pp. 174-175). The analysis process consists of three main stages:

1. **Data Reduction:** This stage is an integral part of the analysis process, and the process continues continuously throughout the analysis.
2. **Data Display:** The purpose of repeated data presentation is to provide an in-depth understanding of the current state of research, as well as provide a basis for further research.
3. **Conclusion Drawing or Verification:** This step logically follows the previous two stages; however, it is possible that conclusions may be drawn in a less definite form in the early stages of the analysis and then become clearer during the overall analysis stage. After all the data has been analyzed, conclusions can be formulated in the form of statements that require further verification

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. *The Result of Observation*

Table 4.1. The Results of Several Aspects Assessed

Observed Aspects	Results
Signs of Anxiety	Some of the symptoms that appear in students are nervousness, long silence, blanks, mispronunciation, and looking confused.
Physical Responses/Body Language	Various physical responses and body language were shown by students: cold sweat, unfocused eyes (to the right, left, up, or down) or avoiding eye contact with other people, crossing arms, restlessness, or uncomfortable body position.
Speaking Ability	The results showed that most of them had good speaking skills and some had unstable speaking skills, such as speaking too fast so that they sounded unclear, stammering, and having difficulty conveying their ideas.
Efforts Made	Efforts and strategies made by students: do breathing techniques, prepare themselves well, do positive visualization, ask permission from the teacher and ask for a moment to think about the words to be said, or ask permission from the teacher to switch positions with a friend to appear first.
Social Interaction	There were some students who seemed uncomfortable with the existing environment; students tended to avoid interactions with their classmates; and there were also those who were just silent throughout the activity, looking like they weren't enthusiastic.

Class Situation	The class situation sounded noisy when a student made a mistake in pronunciation.
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2. The Result of Interview

Table 4.2. Causes of Students Feeling Anxious in Speaking

Interviewee	The Interviewee's Answers Related to the Cause of Their Speaking Anxiety
1 st Interviewee	Fear of being wrong and lack of preparation.
2 nd Interviewee	Fear of being wrong.
3 rd Interviewee	Fear of being laughed at by friends.
4 th Interviewee	It's hard to think of words.
5 th Interviewee	Afraid to say the wrong thing to be laughed at by friends.
6 th Interviewee	Rarely practice and lack of self-confidence.
7 th Interviewee	Depends on the situation. Usually nervous when suddenly, but if there is a chance to prepare, it's less nervous.
8 th Interviewee	Lack of self-confidence.
9 th Interviewee	I can't adjust myself in public.
10 th Interviewee	Afraid of saying the wrong thing, and people will judge after the performance.
11 th Interviewee	Fear of being wrong and lack of self-confidence.
12 th Interviewee	Fear of being empty and ending up saying the wrong thing.
13 th Interviewee	Fear of being laughed at by the audience.
14 th Interviewee	Often stressed to speak spontaneously.
15 th Interviewee	Fear of being laughed at by other people if the wrong word.
16 th Interviewee	Because introverts.
17 th Interviewee	Fear of being wrong and afraid of being laughed.
18 th Interviewee	Afraid of people laughing and having bad opinions.
19 th Interviewee	Fear of judgment from others.
20 th Interviewee	Fear of not being able to show the best.
21 st Interviewee	Fear of other people's judgment.

Causes of Students Feeling Anxious When Speaking in Public:

- Personal-self

Lack of self-confidence or feeling inferior is a natural thing when experience weakness or failure when speaking in front of many people. Rather, it is a valuable opportunity to learn and grow. However, it cannot be denied that there are still many students who feel less confident when speaking in front of an audience. This lack of self-confidence can stem from doubts about their abilities and appearance, problems with effective communication, lack of confidence in their grammatical abilities, lack of appropriate use of body language, or even embarrassment when others witness their weaknesses or failures.

Lack of preparation and lack of independent practice: Another factor that influences students' speaking abilities is lack of sufficient preparation and lack of independent practice in public speaking. These two elements are very important for developing readiness and confidence in speaking in front of large groups of people. Unpreparedness and infrequent practice can reduce the quality and effectiveness of speaking performances, which then causes many students to experience anxiety when speaking in public.

Fear of pronunciation errors: Students often have very high standards for themselves and feel forced to speak perfectly, afraid of making any mistakes. This worry often makes students feel stressed when they make small mistakes while speaking. There are various factors that cause this, including a lack of support from the surrounding environment, which can hinder the development of students' confidence in speaking.

High fear of being judged by others: Most students face a variety of recurring fears on a regular basis, whether caused by excessive anxiety or worry about embarrassing mistakes. They often feel that other people or the audience have high expectations, are afraid of not being able to give their best performance, feel afraid of suddenly losing their words, or even feel anxious because of negative experiences in the past such as being laughed at or judged.

Introverted or shy nature: Not all students with introverted or shy nature will experience anxiety when speaking. However, a small number of students who are introverted or shy may feel anxious when speaking in public. This can be caused by a variety of factors, including a lack of interaction with other people in their daily lives.

- *Classroom Environment or Classroom Activity*

Spontaneous speaking pressure: In the context of classroom learning, it is generally expected that students participate actively in developing various aspects of their abilities, including speaking abilities. However, one factor that can become an obstacle or cause students to feel reluctant to participate is the pressure that arises from teachers who require students to speak without prior preparation in front of the whole class, especially if the classroom environment is not supportive and often results in negative reactions. This kind of situation can increase students' anxiety levels because they feel humiliated or embarrassed when they have to speak in front of a large audience.

Students' Strategies in Overcoming Their Speaking Anxiety:

Activating the Relaxation Response is the first strategy commonly used by students to overcome anxiety when speaking in public and it is considered effective. One of the techniques used is regulating breathing (doing internal and external breathing), meditating, and praying. This is considered successful because it can improve concentration, relieve physical tension, reduce stress responses, and build self-confidence, so students feel better prepared to speak in public.

Preparation and Practice is another strategy that many students adopt to overcome anxiety while speaking in public. Good preparation includes steps such as preparing comprehensively, determining speaking goals, planning the content of speaking, practicing speaking many times (either in front of a mirror or with their family), recording the practice and conducting a self-evaluation to identify areas that need improvement. In addition, students can broaden their horizons. These strategies help improve students' speaking skills, help them understand the purpose

of speaking, and make them feel more comfortable speaking in public. Apart from thorough preparation, positive motivational support is also needed to build students' self-confidence, in line with the view of Liando (2012) which states that motivation is very important for students in expanding their understanding of a foreign language.

Modifying Thoughts and Attitudes is the subsequent strategy employed by students. This approach involves transforming negative thought patterns into more positive and constructive ones. Students execute this strategy by shifting their mindset from "I cannot perform well" to "I have prepared adequately, and I can excel." This process aids students in dispelling negative thoughts, boosting their self-confidence, fostering optimism, enhancing their speaking performance, and facilitating improved communication.

The subsequent strategy employed by students is Visualizing Success, which involves mentally picturing themselves achieving success. This technique plays a pivotal role in helping students envision themselves confidently addressing the public and effectively expressing their thoughts. Furthermore, Visualizing Success assists students in vividly imagining the entire speaking process, including body movements, voice modulation, and facial expressions. Utilizing Movement to Minimize Anxiety is another strategy embraced by students to combat speaking anxiety. Movement is perceived as a means to alleviate physical tension, enhance comfort during speech, bolster self-assurance, and divert attention from prevailing anxiety is being felt.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that there are two main factors that identify the main causes why students experience anxiety when speaking. First, causes that are rooted in students, where fear, anxiety, worry and negative thinking arise as a result of various internal factors such as lack of self-confidence, lack of preparation and practice, fear of pronunciation errors, fear of negative judgment from people or shyness. Second, the causes are influenced by situations in class, where students feel anxious because of the pressure they may

experience while in class, such as pressure from the teacher to speak spontaneously without prior preparation. There are various strategies used by students to overcome speaking anxiety, one of the most common strategies is to activate the Relaxation Response, which involves practicing breathing techniques, meditation, and prayer. The second strategy is Preparation and Practice, which involves a series of repeated preparations and practice. The third strategy is Modification of Thoughts and Attitudes, namely changing negative thought patterns into positive ones. The fourth strategy is Visualization of Success, which involves imagining themselves successfully speaking in public. The last strategy is Utilizing Movement to Reduce Anxiety, where students perform simple movements while speaking to relieve the physical tension they are experienced.

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