STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN ENGLISH SPEAKING AMONG GRADE XI STUDENTS AT SMAN 3 PEMATANGSIANTAR

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Abstract

Speaking anxiety is one of the major affective barriers that hinder students' oral performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. This study aims to investigate the levels, forms, and contributing factors of speaking anxiety among Grade XI students at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The findings reveal that students experience a high level of speaking anxiety influenced by five interrelated factors: psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, sociocultural, and environmental. Psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and fear of negative evaluation emerged as the most dominant contributors. Linguistic limitations, particularly vocabulary shortages, pronunciation difficulties, and grammatical concerns, also increased students' hesitation to speak. Pedagogical aspects, including teacher correction styles, unclear task instructions, and difficult speaking tasks, further intensified anxiety. Sociocultural influences, such as peer judgment and cultural norms of silence, shaped students' reluctance to speak, while environmental conditions like large class sizes and limited speaking opportunities outside the classroom exacerbated the problem. The study concludes that speaking anxiety is a complex and multidimensional issue requiring comprehensive support from teachers and institutions. Creating a more supportive, communicative, and low-anxiety classroom environment is essential for improving students' speaking confidence and fluency.

Keywords: speaking anxiety, EFL learners, psychological factors, linguistic factors, classroom environment, SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar

INTRODUCTION

English language learning has been a mandatory component in the national education curriculum in Indonesia for several decades. This policy emerged as a response to the increasingly urgent global need for mastery of international languages. According to Crystal (2003:87), English has developed into a global lingua franca used in various sectors such as business, education, technology, and diplomacy. English is a tool for people from other countries to communicate about various aspects of human life such as education, science, business, technology, culture, and also other aspects used in Indonesia. In Indonesia, English is very important in education. It can be seen from schools in Indonesia that use English as a subject starting from elementary school to high school Simanjutak et al. (2023:100). In the era of industrial revolution 4.0, mastery of English is no longer merely a competitive advantage but has become a basic prerequisite for competing in the global job market. This further emphasizes the importance of effective English language learning in educational institutions.

Nevertheless, empirical reality shows that English language learning in Indonesia still faces significant challenges. According to the EF (Education First) English Proficiency Index report (2023:45), Indonesia still falls into the "low proficiency" category, ranking 80th out of 111 surveyed countries. EF represents Education First, an international education company that annually publishes global English proficiency rankings based on standardized test results from millions of English learners worldwide. This phenomenon indicates a gap between curricular objectives and actual learning outcomes. Lauder (2008:87) identifies several factors contributing to the low mastery of English in Indonesia, including uneven teaching quality, limited resources, low learning motivation, and environmental factors that do not support the active use of English. Among the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), speaking skills often become the most challenging aspect for English learners in

Indonesia. This difficulty stems from several factors: first, speaking requires real-time language production with minimal preparation time; second, it involves multiple linguistic elements simultaneously (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency); third, it demands immediate response to interlocutors; and fourth, it exposes learners to potential public evaluation and correction. Shumin (2002:204) emphasizes that speaking is a complex skill because it simultaneously involves various elements, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and sociocultural understanding. Moreover, unlike receptive skills (listening and reading), speaking demands active and real-time language production, with little time to reflect on or revise the responses given. Speaking ability is one of the essential skills in English language learning, as it becomes the main indicator of successful oral communication. This is because speaking serves as the primary means of expressing ideas, negotiating meaning, maintaining social relationships, and demonstrating language competence in real-world contexts. Furthermore, speaking ability reflects learners' capacity to integrate all language components (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) in meaningful communication. Silalahi (2018:993) states that developing communicative competence in learning speaking is faster and better if they are exposed to maximum natural communication.

Based on the statement and supporting theory, it can be concluded that speaking ability plays a crucial role in English language learning because it reflects a learner's overall communicative competence and ability to use language effectively in real-life situations. Successful speaking requires the integration of various linguistic elements and is essential for expressing ideas and building interpersonal relationships. According to Silalahi (2018:993), this ability develops more efficiently when learners are frequently exposed to natural and meaningful communication. Therefore, providing authentic speaking opportunities is key to enhancing students' speaking proficiency. Brown (2001:267) states that speaking is a productive skill that involves the ability to convey information verbally in meaningful and contextual situations. In the context of foreign language learning in Indonesia, this skill presents a particular challenge for students, especially due to the lack of exposure to and use of English in daily life (Dardjowidjojo, 2000:23).

The complexity of speaking skills is further complicated by Indonesia's unique social-educational context. Marcellino (2008:112) explains that the pedagogical tradition in Indonesia is still dominated by a teacher-centered approach with emphasis on mastering grammatical and lexical aspects rather than communicative competence. Additionally, large class sizes, limited learning time, and lack of authentic practice opportunities further complicate the development of effective speaking skills. Exley (2005:78) adds that aspects of Eastern culture that tend to respect hierarchy and avoid conflict also shape learning dynamics that do not encourage active student participation in speaking activities. Students' difficulties in speaking English are not only related to linguistic factors such as vocabulary mastery or grammatical structure but are also influenced by psychological factors, one of which is speaking anxiety. Tran et al., (2013:565) suggest that Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a situation-specific form of anxiety that can affect individuals even if they are not generally anxious in other contexts. It consists of three main components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These three aspects cause students to feel nervous, afraid of making mistakes, and tend to avoid speaking situations.

Communication apprehension refers to the fear or anxiety experienced by individuals when they have to communicate with others. McCroskey (2001:40) defines communication apprehension as the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons. In the context of foreign language learning, this anxiety can emerge when students are asked to speak in front of the class, participate in group discussions, or even when asked to answer simple questions from the teacher. Test anxiety relates to the fear of failure in evaluative situations. Zeidner and Matthews (2005:137) explain that test anxiety is a subjective experience involving intense biological, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms in evaluative situations perceived as ego-threatening. In language learning, almost every speaking activity can be considered a test situation because students' performance is continuously observed and evaluated by teachers and classmates.

Fear of negative evaluation refers to excessive worry about how one is evaluated by othersLeary and Kowalski (2001:90) define fear of negative evaluation as a distress and apprehension about others' evaluations, a desire to avoid evaluative situations, and the expectation that others will judge oneself negatively. In the context of language learning, students with high levels of fear of negative evaluation are very sensitive to corrective feedback and tend to interpret teacher corrections or classmates' laughter as indications of their inability. General phenomenon of Speaking anxiety is a widespread psychological barrier encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners across various educational contexts. Unlike receptive skills such as listening and reading, speaking requires learners to produce language spontaneously in real time, often in front of others. This makes

speaking the most anxiety-provoking of the four language skills (Shumin, 2002:204). Many learners experience fear of making mistakes, being negatively evaluated, or failing to communicate successfully, which often results in avoidance of speaking opportunities Leary & Kowalski, (2001:92). According to Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014:175), anxiety negatively affects multiple stages of language learning, including comprehension, production, and overall communicative competence, thus impeding language acquisition. These symptoms are especially common in teacher-centered classrooms or cultures that emphasize correctness over communication and discourage students from speaking freely Marcellino (2008:112). As a result, speaking anxiety remains one of the key obstacles to achieving communicative competence among EFL learners globally.

Possible solutions to speaking anxiety among EFL learners, educators must implement both psychological and pedagogical strategies. One effective approach is the use of a supportive and low-anxiety classroom environment that encourages risk-taking without fear of judgment. Dörnyei (2005:60) highlights that reducing affective factors like anxiety is crucial in creating a conducive environment for effective language learning and acquisition. Activities such as group work, role-plays, and pair discussions have been found to reduce language anxiety by shifting learners' attention from individual performance to collaborative engagement Oxford (2011:213). Additionally, incorporating communicative teaching methods that prioritize fluency over accuracy can reduce learners' fear of making mistakes (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:85). Teachers also play a crucial role in reducing anxiety through positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, and showing empathy toward students' struggles (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002:562). Finally, training students in self-regulation strategies such as positive self-talk, breathing techniques, and gradual exposure to public speaking has proven effective in reducing anxiety levels (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004:263). Collectively, these strategies can foster a more confident and motivated classroom atmosphere conducive to oral language development.

Based on preliminary observations at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar, speaking anxiety manifests clearly among Grade XI students. Initial interviews with three English teachers revealed that approximately 70% of students show reluctance to participate in speaking activities. Classroom observations in five different classes showed consistent patterns: when teachers asked for volunteers to speak, only 2-3 students consistently participated; when teachers randomly selected students, common reactions included surprised expressions, requests to be "skipped," and visible signs of nervousness such as trembling voices and long pauses. These preliminary findings indicate the need for comprehensive research to understand the depth and complexity of speaking anxiety in this specific educational context. One of the most prominent phenomena in English language learning among Indonesian high school students particularly at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar is the high level of speaking anxiety, despite institutional emphasis on developing communicative competence. This anxiety is manifested through students' reluctance to engage in speaking activities, fear of making mistakes, and observable nervousness when required to speak in front of peers or teachers. Although the curriculum promotes mastery of all four language skills, speaking is often considered the most emotionally and cognitively demanding. It requires spontaneous language production, mastery of multiple linguistic components, and real-time interaction factors that can be overwhelming, especially in environments with limited exposure to English outside the classroom (Shumin, 2002:204).

Based on the problems identified both at the national level and specifically at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar, it becomes clear that speaking anxiety is a crucial barrier in English language learning. Despite the inclusion of speaking activities in the curriculum and institutional support, many students still struggle to express themselves confidently in English. The persistence of anxiety-related behaviors such as fear of making mistakes, avoidance of speaking tasks, and physical signs of nervousness indicates that the issue lies not merely in instructional methods but also in internal psychological factors.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Speaking

Speaking in this research refers to the productive skill of verbal communication in English that involves the ability to articulate thoughts, opinions, and information clearly and effectively in spoken form. It encompasses a variety of classroom activities where students are required to use English orally, such as giving presentations, participating in group discussions, answering questions, role-playing, and engaging in spontaneous conversations with teachers or classmates. Speaking in this context also includes the components of pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, and the ability to respond appropriately in different communicative situations. It is seen not only as a linguistic skill but also as a social and cognitive activity that reflects students' competence in using English in real-time classroom interactions.

Students'Anxiety

Students' anxiety in this study refers to the emotional, psychological, and physiological responses experienced by Grade XI students at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar when they are required to speak English in classroom settings. This anxiety can manifest in various ways, including cognitive symptoms such as self-doubt, fear of making mistakes, or worry about negative evaluation; affective symptoms such as embarrassment, nervousness, and fear; and physical symptoms like sweating, shaking, or a racing heartbeat. Students' anxiety often results in hesitation, avoidance of speaking opportunities, or reduced confidence during speaking tasks. In the context of English language learning, this form of anxiety is considered a significant barrier to the development of speaking competence and fluency, as it negatively affects students' participation and performance in oral communication activi

METHOD
Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach to deeply investigate the complex phenomenon of speaking anxiety among Grade XI students at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate when the goal is to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018: 45). Speaking anxiety is not merely a measurable behavior but a subjective experience influenced by psychological, social, and contextual factors that require rich, descriptive data to be fully understood. Dörnyei (2007: 141) further supports the use of qualitative methods in language learning research, emphasizing that such approaches are essential for investigating complex, contextualized phenomena like language anxiety. Unlike quantitative approaches, qualitative research allows for flexibility and responsiveness, enabling the researcher to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of students' experiences in the language classroom.

Specifically, this study adopts a phenomenological approach, which aims to describe the common meaning of lived experiences shared by individuals facing a particular phenomenon L.Finlay (2009:10), Van Manen (2016: 32) defines phenomenological research as a method focused on describing and interpreting the meanings of experiences as they occur in everyday life. This approach is well suited for understanding how students experience speaking anxiety in English classes. Moreover, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986: 128) highlight that foreign language anxiety involves unique psychological dimensions related to communicating in a non-native language, which necessitates specialized qualitative inquiry to capture these subtleties. By adopting qualitative methods grounded in these theoretical perspectives, this research can provide a nuanced, in-depth understanding of the personal and contextual factors contributing to speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL learners.

Thus, employing a qualitative research approach is essential for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex and subjective nature of speaking anxiety among Grade XI students. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on measurement and statistical analysis, qualitative research provides the flexibility and depth needed to understand the personal meanings and contextual factors that shape students' experiences. By using a phenomenological approach, this study captures the lived realities of students, offering rich insights into how they perceive and cope with anxiety in English speaking classes. This approach aligns well with the specialized nature of foreign language anxiety and supports the goal of producing findings that are both meaningful and relevant to the educational context at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar.

Research Subjects

The subjects of this research are Grade XI students of SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar in the 2024/2025 academic year. The research use purposive sampling in this research to collecting data. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher selects units to be sampled based on their knowledge and professional judgment. Lavrakas, (2008:645). The use of purposive sampling in this study is to slect samples that are most suitable and relevant to the research objectives. So the research can produce relevant result. The research will select the sample by using purposive sampling focusing on class XI at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar 2024/2025 meets certain criteria. Grade students XI Students are selected for several researchers, The class has already practiced conversation in class. They still have one more year of English instruction ahead of them, making the findings potentially beneficial for their continued language learning. Norton and Toohey (2011:441-443) emphasize the value of research that has practical implications for ongoing learning processes. Patton (2015:169-170) advocates for purposive sampling in qualitative research as it allows researchers to select information-rich cases for in-depth study. This sampling approach allows for a comprehensive examination of speaking anxiety

across different student profiles and learning contexts within SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar. As noted by Dörnyei (2007:37), qualitative research in language learning contexts benefits from diverse participant profiles to capture the breadth of experiences.

Research Setting

This research will conduct at SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar, which is located in Pematangsiantar City, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. SMAN 3 Pematangsiantar is one of the leading public high schools in the city, known for its emphasis on academic excellence and commitment to developing students' English proficiency Academic year 2024/2025. Data collection will take place during the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, spanning a period of one until two days. This timeframe allows for multiple observations of speaking activities across different units of instruction and provides opportunities for follow-up interviews based on observed behaviors. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:15) recommend extended engagement in the field to capture variations in phenomena that may occur over time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of research on students' anxiety in English speaking among grade XI students at SMA Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of statements relating to five major factors of anxiety, namely Psychological Factors, Linguistic Factors, Pedagogical Factors, Sociocultural Factors, and Environmental Factors. The responses were analyzed to determine the extent to which each factor influences students' speaking anxiety in English.
The following are the findings based on each factor:

1. I feel nervous when asked to speak English spontaneously.
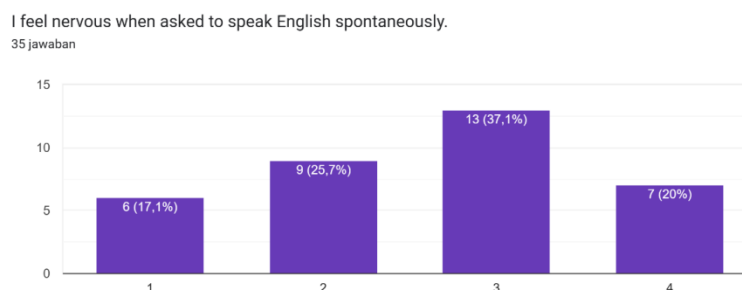

Figure 4.1 Psychological Factors results

Overall, these findings highlight that fear of making mistakes is a prominent factor contributing to students' silence in class, with nearly nine out of ten students reporting some degree of anxiety. This suggests that psychological barriers strongly influence their confidence in speaking English.

2. I am afraid of making mistakes, so I often remain silent in class
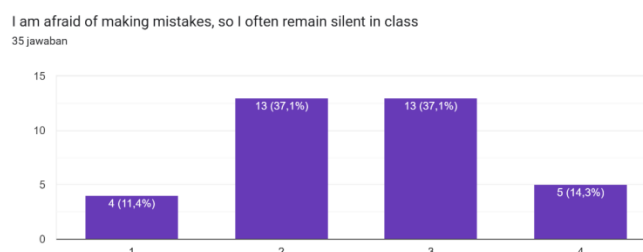

Figure 4.2 Psychological Factors results

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the fear of making mistakes significantly influences students' silence in class, with nearly 90% of them acknowledging at least some level of anxiety. This highlights the psychological barrier that hinders students' ability to practice and improve their English speaking skills.

3. I feel pressured to speak perfectly in English.

I feel pressured to speak perfectly in English.
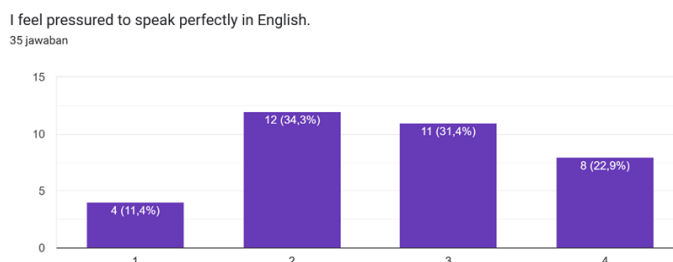35 jawaban

Figure 4.3 Psychological Factors results

Overall, the data reveal that the majority of students (nearly 90%) feel at least some degree of pressure to speak perfectly in English. This suggests that high expectations, either self-imposed or perceived from others, contribute to their speaking anxiety, making them less confident and more cautious when using English in class.

4. My fear of failure is stronger than my desire to try speaking English

My fear of failure is stronger than my desire to try speaking English
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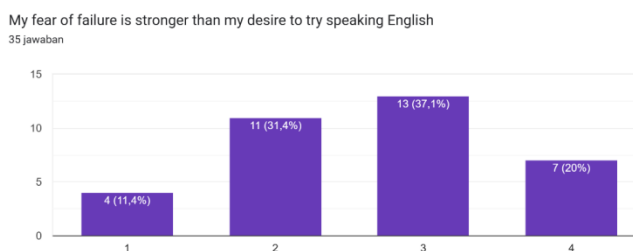
Figure 4.4 Psychological Factors results

Overall, the results demonstrate that a considerable majority of students (nearly 90%) acknowledge that fear of failure plays a role in shaping their speaking behavior. This indicates that anxiety caused by the possibility of making mistakes or being judged negatively often outweighs their motivation to actively practice English speaking.

5. Just imagining speaking in front of the class already makes me anxious

Just imagining speaking in front of the class already makes me anxious
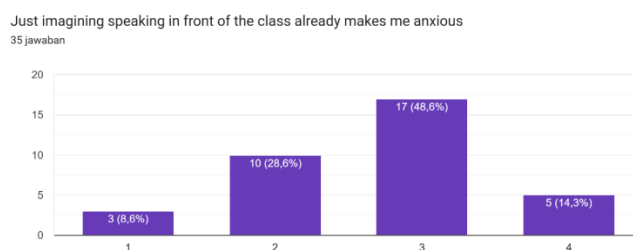35 jawaban

Figure 4.5 Psychological Factors results

Overall, these results highlight that anticipatory anxiety is a common experience among students, with nearly 90% admitting to feeling some level of nervousness before speaking in front of the class. This suggests that fear and worry arise not only during performance but also beforehand, potentially affecting their confidence and readiness to engage in English speaking activities.

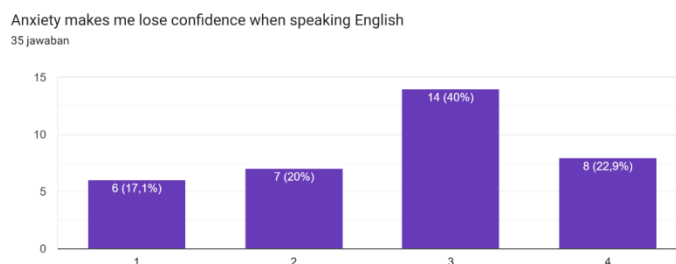## 6. Anxiety makes me lose confidence when speaking English

Figure 4.6 Psychological Factors results

Overall, these findings suggest that anxiety is a major barrier to self-confidence in English speaking for the majority of students. With more than 60% acknowledging that their confidence is negatively affected, it is clear that reducing anxiety levels could play a crucial role in helping students become more comfortable and effective in using English orally.

7. I often run out of vocabulary while speaking English
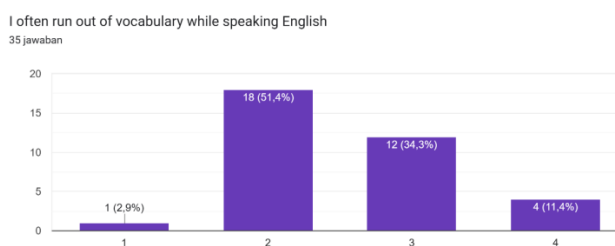
Figure 4.7 Linguistics Factors

Overall, these results demonstrate that vocabulary limitation is one of the most common challenges students face when speaking English. More than 85% of respondents acknowledged experiencing this issue to varying degrees, which highlights the need for strategies such as vocabulary enrichment, practice in spontaneous speaking, and exposure to authentic English use to help learners overcome this barrier.

8. I worry that my pronunciation is incorrect and hard to understand
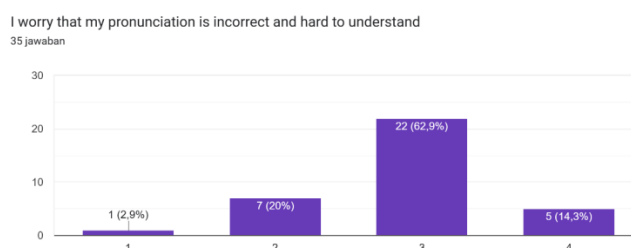

Figure 4.8 Linguistics Factors

These findings indicate that pronunciation is a major source of anxiety among students when speaking English. Most learners express worry that mispronunciations may hinder communication or cause misunderstandings. This suggests the importance of providing more pronunciation practice, corrective feedback, and listening–speaking drills to help students build confidence and reduce fear of being misunderstood.

9. I struggle to form grammatically correct sentences when speaking

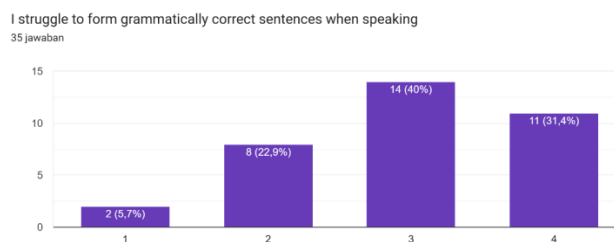I struggle to form grammatically correct sentences when speaking
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Figure 4.9 Linguistics Factors

These findings suggest that grammatical accuracy is a prominent factor contributing to students' speaking anxiety. The fear of making grammatical mistakes prevents many learners from speaking confidently, which may hinder fluency and overall oral communication. This indicates the need for more targeted practice in grammar usage within speaking activities, along with supportive feedback to help students build accuracy without feeling overly pressured.

10. I feel confused when choosing the right words while speaking English

I feel confused when choosing the right words while speaking English
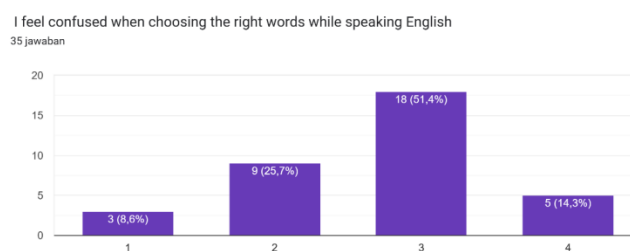35 jawaban

Figure 4.10 Linguistics Factors

These findings suggest that lexical limitations are a major linguistic factor affecting students' speaking ability. The confusion in choosing the right words may not only reduce fluency but also increase hesitation, making learners less confident when communicating in English. This indicates that vocabulary-building activities, such as lexical chunks and speaking practice in authentic contexts, could be beneficial in addressing this challenge.

11. I focus too much on grammar structure, and it makes me lose track of my ideas

I focus too much on grammar structure, and it makes me lose track of my ideas
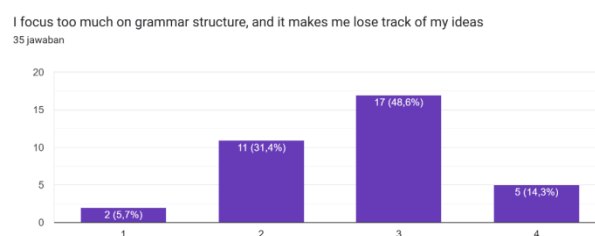35 jawaban

Figure 4.11 Linguistics Factors

Overall, the data demonstrate that most students (94.3%) admitted that concentrating too much on grammar has at least some negative impact on their ability to express ideas effectively. This finding highlights the common dilemma faced by students between maintaining grammatical accuracy and developing content in writing. In other words, excessive concern with grammatical correctness may reduce fluency, creativity, and the clarity of the ideas they want to express.

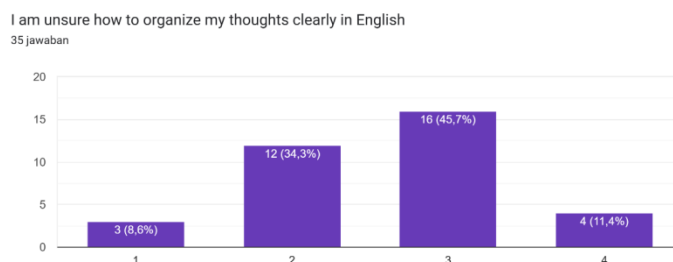## 12. I am unsure how to organize my thoughts clearly in English

Figure 4.11 Linguistics Factors

Overall, the data reveal that most students (91.4%) experienced at least some level of difficulty in organizing their ideas clearly in English. This finding suggests that problems in structuring and arranging ideas are common among students and become one of the main barriers in their writing process. It also indicates the importance of providing guidance in writing strategies, such as outlining or drafting, to help students express their ideas in a clearer and more organized way.

13. I feel stressd when the teacher corrects my mistakes in front of the class

Figure 4.13 Pedagogicl Factors

In general, the findings reveal that most students (88.6%) experienced at least some level of stress when teachers corrected their mistakes in front of the class. This indicates that public correction can be a source of anxiety and discomfort for many learners. Such situations may affect their confidence and willingness to participate actively in class activities. Therefore, it suggests that teachers may need to apply more supportive or private correction strategies to reduce students' stress and encourage a more positive learning environment.

14. I feel uncomfortable with teaching methods that focus too much on grammar accuracy
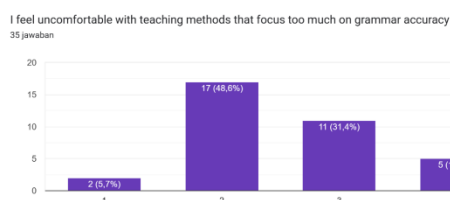

Figure 4.14 Pedagogical Factors

Overall, the data show that the majority of students (94.3%) reported some level of discomfort with teaching methods that pay too much attention to grammar. This suggests that while grammar is an important component of language learning, excessive focus on it may create pressure and reduce students' comfort in the classroom. These findings highlight the need for a more balanced approach that combines grammar instruction with opportunities for idea development, creativity, and communicative practice.

15. Speaking tasks given in class are too difficult, which makes me anxious.

Speaking tasks given in class are too difficult, which makes me anxious.
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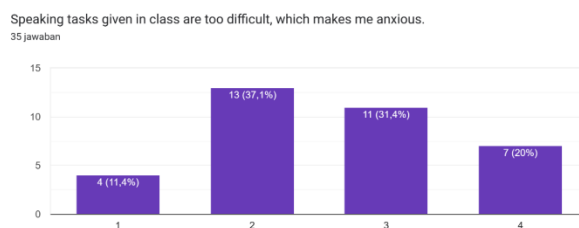4 (11,4%)   13 (37,1%)   11 (31,4%)   7 (20%)

Figure 4.15 Pedagogical Factors

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the majority of students (88.6%) experienced at least some degree of anxiety when faced with speaking tasks that they considered too difficult. This indicates that speaking performance in front of others is a major source of language anxiety among students. The results also suggest that task difficulty plays an important role in shaping students' confidence, and that teachers may need to adjust speaking activities to match learners' proficiency levels, while gradually increasing the level of challenge to build both skills and self-confidence.

16. I often feel confused by unclear intructuions for speaking tasks

I often feel confused by unclear intructuions for speaking tasks
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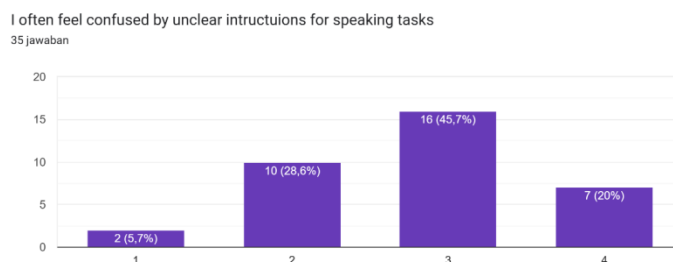2 (5,7%)   10 (28,6%)   16 (45,7%)   7 (20%)

Figure 4.16 Pedagogical Factors

Overall, the data reveal that most students (94.3%) experienced at least some confusion due to unclear instructions for speaking tasks. This finding suggests that unclear guidance is a significant factor influencing students' anxiety and performance in speaking activities. It also highlights the importance of teachers providing clear, structured, and step-by-step instructions so that students can better understand the tasks, reduce confusion, and focus on practicing their speaking skills effectively.

17. I feel more confident speaking in small group discussions than in front of the whole class

I feel more confident speaking in small group discussions than in front of the whole class
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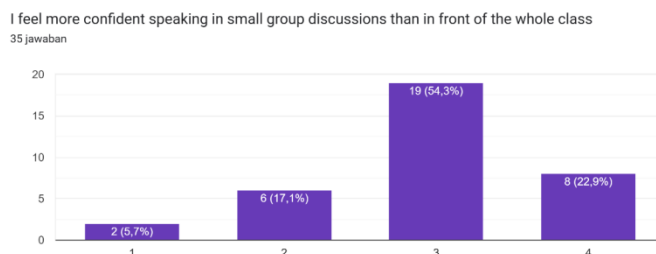2 (5,7%)   6 (17,1%)   19 (54,3%)   8 (22,9%)

Figure 4.17 Pedagogical Factors

Overall, the findings reveal that almost all students (94.3%) expressed a higher level of confidence in small group discussions compared to whole-class speaking activities. This suggests that classroom setting and audience size strongly influence students' confidence levels. Speaking in smaller groups may reduce anxiety, encourage participation, and create a safer environment for practicing English. These results emphasize the importance of incorporating more group-based speaking activities in teaching strategies to help students build their confidence gradually before performing in front of the entire class.

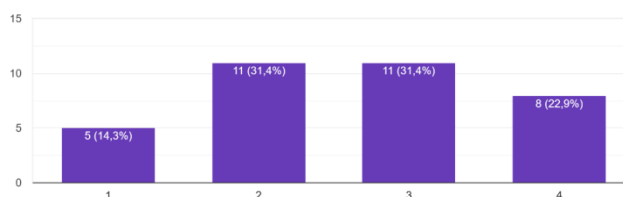**18. Lack of speaking practice in class makes me feel unprepared to speak**
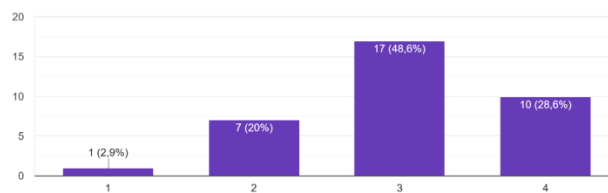
Figure 4.18 Pedagogical Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that a majority of students (77.2%) admitted to feeling unprepared to speak due to insufficient speaking practice in class. This highlights the importance of providing more frequent and consistent opportunities for students to practice speaking English. Without adequate practice, students may struggle with fluency, confidence, and readiness when engaging in oral communication tasks.

**19. I worry that my classmates will laugh at my speaking mistakes**

Figure 4.19 Socialcultural Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that a majority of students (65.7%) admitted to feeling unprepared to speak due to insufficient speaking practice in class. This highlights the importance of providing more frequent and consistent opportunities for students to practice speaking English. Without adequate practice, students may struggle with fluency, confidence, and readiness when engaging in oral communication tasks.

20. I feel embrrassed about my accent when speaking English
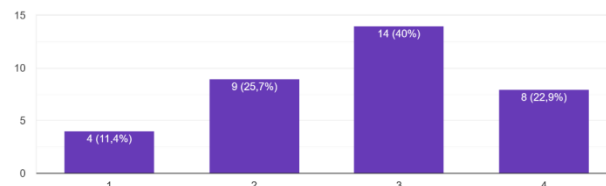
Figure 4.20 Socialcultural Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that a majority of students (62.9%) feel some level of embarrassment about their accent when speaking English. This highlights the importance of fostering a more supportive and non-judgmental environment for students to improve their speaking confidence without fear of negative reactions to their accents.

21. I feel inferior because my speaking ability is lower than that of my classmates

I feel inferior because my speaking ability is lower than that of my classmates
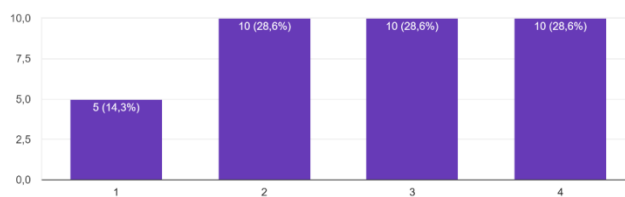35 jawaban

Figure 4.21 Socialcultural Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that 57.2% of students feel some level of inferiority due to their speaking ability being perceived as lower than their classmates. This highlights the need for creating a supportive environment where all students feel confident in their abilities, regardless of skill differences.

22. I hesitate to speak because I'm afraid others will think I'm showing off

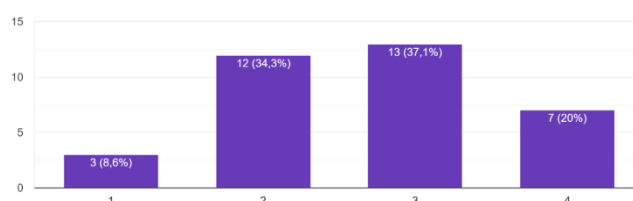I hesitate to speak because I'm afraid others will think I'm showing off
35 jawaban

Figure 4.22 Socialcultural Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that a majority of students (57.1%) hesitate to speak because they are concerned about being perceived as showing off. This highlights the need for creating an environment where students feel more comfortable expressing themselves without fear of judgment from their peers.

23. I was raised in a culture where staying quiet is preferred if unsure, not speaking out

I was raised in a culture where staying quiet is preferred if unsure, not speaking out
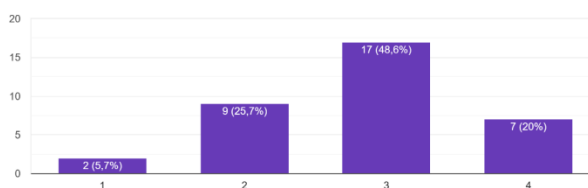35 jawaban

Figure 4.23 Socialcultural Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that a majority of students (68.6%) were raised in a culture where staying quiet when unsure is the preferred behavior. This highlights the potential influence of cultural factors on students' willingness to engage in speaking activities, especially in situations where they may not feel fully confident.

24. I feel that people expect me to speak perfectly, and this adds pressure

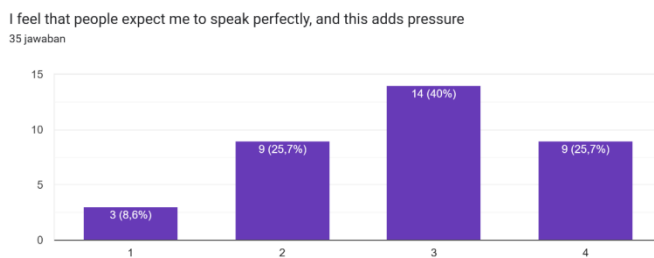I feel that people expect me to speak perfectly, and this adds pressure
35 jawaban

Figure 4.24 Socialcultural Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that 65.7% of students feel some level of pressure due to the expectation to speak perfectly. This highlights the need for fostering an environment where students feel more comfortable speaking without the fear of being judged for making mistakes.

25. The classroom is too formal, making it hard to speak comfortably.

The classroom is too formal, making it hard to speak comfortably.
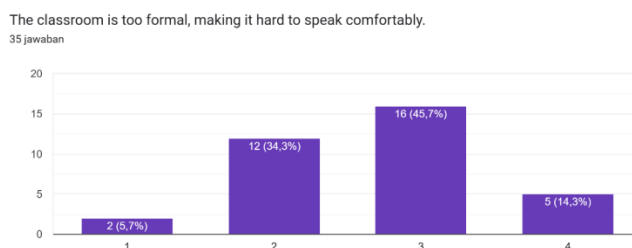35 jawaban

Figure 4.25 Environmental Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that 68.5% of students find speaking tasks in class too difficult, which results in anxiety. This highlights the need for teachers to provide speaking tasks that are appropriately challenging but not overwhelming, ensuring students feel confident and supported in their learning.

26. I feel uncomfortable speaking in large classes with many students.

I feel uncomfortable speaking in large classes with many students.
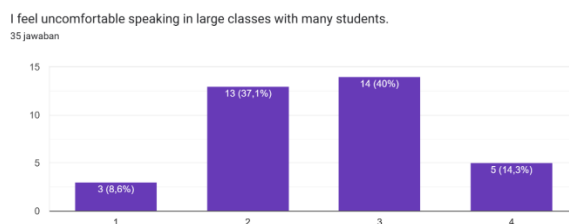35 jawaban

Figure 4.26 Environmental Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that 51.4% of students feel uncomfortable speaking in large classes with many students. This highlights the potential impact of class size on students' confidence and comfort levels in speaking activities, suggesting the need for smaller group settings or strategies to ease discomfort in larger classes.

27. When I sit in class (far from or close to the teacher) affects my willingnes to speak

When I sit in class (far from or close to the teacher) affects my willingnes to speak
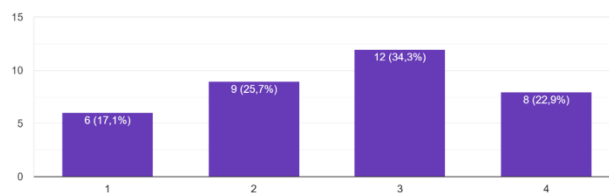35 jawaban

Figure 4.27 Environmental Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that 57.1% of students feel that their seating position in class influences their willingness to speak. This highlights the importance of creating a classroom environment where all students feel equally comfortable participating, regardless of their proximity to the teacher.

28. I have very few opportunities to practice speaking English outside the classroom

I have very few opportunities to practice speaking English outside the classroom
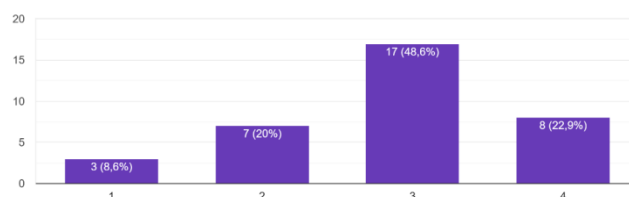35 jawaban

Figure 4. 28 Environmental Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that 71.4% of students feel they have few opportunities to practice speaking English outside the classroom. This highlights the need for more avenues or activities for students to engage in English conversation outside of class, which could help improve their speaking skills and overall fluency.

29. Noise or distractions in the class in the class make it hard for me to focus when speaking

Noise or distractions in the class in the class make it hard for me to focus when speaking
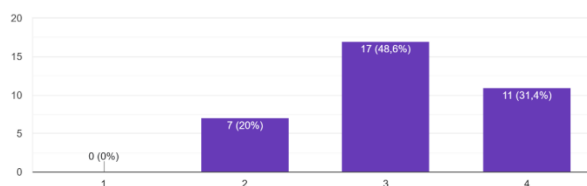35 jawaban

Figure 4.29 Environmental Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that 80% of students feel that noise or distractions in the classroom make it difficult to focus while speaking. This highlights the importance of minimizing disruptions during speaking activities to help students concentrate and perform better.

30. Lack of speaking media or facilities (like audio tools) makes me less motivated to speak.

Lack of speaking media or facilities (like audio tools) makes me less motivated to speak.
35 jawaban
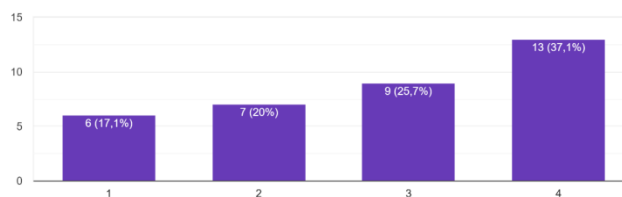
Figure 4.30 Environmental Factors

Overall, the findings suggest that 62.8% of students are affected by the lack of speaking media or facilities, which decreases their motivation to speak. This highlights the importance of providing sufficient resources like audio tools to enhance student engagement and speaking practice.

DISCUSSION

The researcher found that students' anxiety in speaking English did not arise from a single cause, but rather from a combination of several interrelated factors. Throughout the process of analyzing the questionnaire results, the researcher realized that speaking English for many students was not only a matter of mastering the language but also of dealing with psychological pressure, classroom dynamics, cultural expectations, and environmental conditions. The psychological aspect appeared to be the strongest influence. The researcher noticed that even before speaking, many students already felt anxious simply by imagining themselves standing in front of the class. This anticipation made them lose confidence, and it became clear to the researcher that fear of being judged or making mistakes shaped much of their hesitation. The researcher felt that this fear often created a barrier even before students opened their mouths to speak, showing that the anxiety was deeply connected to self-perception and emotional readiness.

The researcher also observed that linguistic limitations played a significant role. Many students admitted to running out of vocabulary, worrying about pronunciation, and struggling to form grammatically correct sentences. From the researcher's point of view, these difficulties often made students pause, hesitate, or remain silent during speaking activities. It became evident that even when students had ideas in mind, they could not always express them smoothly in English. The researcher reflected that this lack of fluency was not because students had nothing to say, but because they lacked confidence in choosing the right words and feared that their sentences would sound incorrect. Pedagogical factors also contributed to the problem. The researcher noticed that classroom practices, especially the way mistakes were corrected, had a strong impact on students' confidence. Several students felt embarrassed when their errors were corrected directly in front of their peers. The researcher realized that while correction is necessary for learning, the manner of correction can either motivate or discourage students. In addition, unclear instructions and tasks that felt too difficult increased students' stress. The researcher saw that students seemed more relaxed and willing to speak when working in small groups compared to speaking in front of the whole class, which suggested that a supportive classroom atmosphere plays an important role in reducing anxiety.

Sociocultural influences were also visible in the findings. The researcher found that some students were worried about their accent or about being laughed at by others. This concern made them more hesitant to speak. The researcher reflected that in some cases, cultural background shaped this anxiety. Growing up in an environment where making mistakes is often avoided or criticized, students tended to remain silent rather than take risks. Some students even feared being perceived as showing off if they spoke English fluently. To the researcher, this showed that speaking anxiety was not only an individual challenge, but also a product of social expectations. Environmental conditions added another layer of difficulty. The researcher noticed that students in large classes felt more pressure and had fewer opportunities to practice speaking. Others expressed frustration about the lack of exposure to English outside the classroom. The researcher realized that without continuous practice and supportive facilities, students would continue to feel unprepared and anxious. A classroom that provides more practice opportunities and a safe environment for trial and error would likely help students feel more confident. From the researcher's perspective, the findings highlighted that speaking anxiety is a complex issue shaped by the interaction of psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, sociocultural, and environmental factors. The researcher came to understand that solving this problem requires a holistic approach. It is not enough to only teach grammar or

vocabulary; what students also need is encouragement, a safe and supportive learning environment, and consistent opportunities to practice without fear of failure. Through this study, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the reality faced by students when speaking English. The findings led the researcher to believe that teachers should focus not only on language accuracy but also on building students' confidence. Creating an environment where mistakes are accepted as part of learning is essential. In the researcher's view, this is the key to reducing students' anxiety and helping them develop greater fluency and self-assurance in speaking English.

CONCLUSION

Based on the overall findings of this research, the researcher concludes that students of Grade XI at SMA Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar experience a high level of anxiety in English speaking. The phenomenon is not caused by a single aspect but results from a combination of psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, sociocultural, and environmental factors. Psychological factors are revealed as the most dominant contributors, since many students feel nervous, lack confidence, and are afraid of making mistakes whenever they are required to speak English in class. This fear of failure and negative evaluation often prevents them from participating actively in speaking activities. In addition, linguistic difficulties such as limited vocabulary, grammar problems, and pronunciation errors also play a significant role in shaping students' speaking anxiety. The inability to find appropriate words or to construct grammatically correct sentences increases their hesitation to speak. Pedagogical factors, particularly teaching methods that emphasize accuracy over fluency and public correction of mistakes, further intensify their anxiety. Moreover, sociocultural influences such as peer comparison, cultural norms of silence, and the fear of being judged by classmates contribute to the students' reluctance to speak. Environmental conditions, including large class sizes, a formal classroom atmosphere, and the lack of opportunities to practice English outside of school, also reinforce the students' anxiety. From these findings, the researcher concludes that speaking anxiety is a complex and multidimensional issue. It is not only rooted in individual psychological conditions but is also shaped by social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Therefore, overcoming this issue requires collaborative efforts among students, teachers, and schools to build a learning environment that is supportive, communicative, and motivating for students to practice English confidently.

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