

STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY OF ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) CLASS AT THE ELEVENTH GRADE OF SMA ALFAQIHIL MUQADDAM KUBU RAYA

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Abstract

Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in English language learning as it supports the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. However, many students still experience difficulties in mastering vocabulary, which affects their motivation and interest in learning. This study aims to examine students' interest in learning English vocabulary through Live Worksheets and to identify factors influencing their engagement. The research was conducted at SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam Kubu Raya and involved ninth-grade students. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through observations, interviews, and field notes. The findings show that most students (80%) demonstrated a high level of interest in learning vocabulary using Live Worksheets. Interactive features, ease of access, immediate feedback, and attractive visual design contributed to increased student motivation and participation. Interview results further indicate that students perceived Live Worksheets as enjoyable, easy to use, and effective in supporting vocabulary mastery. Students' interest was influenced by internal factors such as health, cognitive ability, attention, talent, and learning readiness, as well as external factors including family support and the school environment. Overall, Live Worksheets are an effective digital learning medium that enhances student engagement and supports interactive vocabulary instruction.

Keywords: Students' Interest, English Vocabulary, *Live Worksheets*, Descriptive Qualitative Research

Abstrak

Kosakata memiliki peran fundamental dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris karena mendukung pengembangan keterampilan menyimak, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis. Namun, banyak siswa masih mengalami kesulitan dalam penguasaan kosakata, yang berdampak pada rendahnya motivasi dan minat belajar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji minat siswa dalam mempelajari kosakata bahasa Inggris melalui penggunaan Live Worksheets serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi keterlibatan mereka. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam Kubu Raya dengan melibatkan siswa kelas IX dan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan catatan lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa (80%) memiliki minat belajar yang tinggi terhadap pembelajaran kosakata menggunakan Live Worksheets. Fitur interaktif, kemudahan akses, umpan balik langsung, dan tampilan visual yang menarik berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan motivasi dan partisipasi siswa. Hasil wawancara juga menunjukkan bahwa Live Worksheets dipandang sebagai media pembelajaran yang menyenangkan, mudah digunakan, dan efektif dalam mendukung penguasaan kosakata. Minat belajar siswa dipengaruhi oleh faktor internal, seperti kesehatan, kemampuan kognitif, perhatian, bakat, dan kesiapan belajar, serta faktor eksternal berupa dukungan keluarga dan lingkungan sekolah. Secara keseluruhan, Live Worksheets merupakan media pembelajaran digital yang efektif dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan belajar dan mendukung pembelajaran kosakata yang lebih interaktif dan efisien.

Kata Kunci: Minat Siswa, Kosakata Bahasa Inggris, Lembar Kerja Interaktif, Deskriptif Penelitian Kualitatif

1. BACKGROUND

Linguistics is a scientific discipline concerned with the systematic study of human language and is generally classified into macro-linguistics and micro-linguistics. Macro-linguistics examines language from a wider perspective by relating it to other fields such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience. Within this framework, several subfields have developed, including psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and neurolinguistics. Psycholinguistics specifically explores the connection between language and the human mind by investigating the psychological and neurological

processes underlying language acquisition, comprehension, production, and use. Language and linguistics share a reciprocal relationship, as linguistic research depends on language data, while language development is enriched by linguistic analysis. Among the thousands of languages spoken globally, English has emerged as the dominant international language. Consequently, English is taught as a foreign language in many countries, including Indonesia. The Indonesian government has integrated English into the national education curriculum from the early levels to equip students with the ability to communicate internationally and to keep up with advancements in science and technology.

Compared to first language acquisition, learning a foreign language presents greater challenges, particularly in developing productive skills such as speaking. Speaking requires not only adequate linguistic knowledge but also self-confidence and willingness to communicate. Ur highlights that speaking is often considered the most essential skill because learners generally aim to use the language for real communication. In the context of globalization, proficiency in speaking a foreign language has become increasingly important for academic, professional, and social interactions. Nevertheless, speaking English in classroom settings remains a difficult task for many EFL learners. Speaking a foreign language involves risk-taking, especially for students with limited proficiency. Preliminary observations at SMA Alfaqih Kubu Raya revealed that many students experienced fear and hesitation when asked to speak English. They tended to avoid answering questions, asking for clarification, or delivering presentations in English, indicating the presence of speaking anxiety.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope describe anxiety as a subjective feeling of tension, nervousness, and apprehension associated with physiological arousal. Horwitz further explains that speaking activities in the classroom are among the most anxiety-provoking aspects of foreign language learning. In addition, learning a foreign language extends beyond the memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules; it also involves emotional and psychological factors, including learners' personalities, emotions, and prior experiences. These aspects play a crucial role in shaping learners' attitudes toward the target language and the learning process. In light of these conditions, it is important to examine students' speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms. Identifying the factors that contribute to speaking anxiety can provide valuable insights for teachers in developing instructional strategies that foster a supportive learning environment and encourage students to speak English with greater confidence.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine students' speaking anxiety in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Qualitative research seeks to understand social phenomena in natural settings by interpreting participants' meanings, experiences, and perceptions. In line with Denzin and Lincoln, this approach is characterized as multimethod and interpretive, enabling an in-depth exploration of complex educational phenomena through naturalistic inquiry. Accordingly, a qualitative design was deemed appropriate for investigating students' speaking anxiety. The research was conducted at SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam, an Islamic senior high school located in Desa Durian, Kubu Raya Regency. The research site was selected based on preliminary observations indicating the presence of speaking anxiety among students during English classroom activities. The participants consisted of one eleventh-grade class, namely class XI A.

Data were collected using multiple techniques to ensure data credibility and depth, including classroom observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted to examine students' speaking performance and to identify behavioral indicators of anxiety, such as hesitation, nervousness, and reluctance to participate in speaking activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out through face-to-face interactions with selected students using ten open-ended questions to explore their perceptions and experiences related to speaking English. To measure students' anxiety levels, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al., consisting of 33 items, was administered. In addition, relevant documents, including permission letters, student attendance lists, and other institutional records from SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam, were collected to support the research data and provide contextual information regarding the research setting and participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings on the level of students' speaking anxiety at SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam Kubu Raya. The findings are based on quantitative data obtained from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire and qualitative data derived from interviews. A critical discussion is provided by linking the findings to relevant theoretical frameworks.

Results of Speaking Anxiety Measurement (FLCAS)

This study involved 15 students of SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam Kubu Raya. To measure students' speaking anxiety levels, the researcher employed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz. The questionnaire was used to classify students' levels of speaking anxiety. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of students' speaking anxiety scores and categories.

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Speaking Anxiety Scores and Categories (FLCAS)

No	Speaking Anxiety Score	Anxiety Category	Number of Students	Percentage
1	83–89	Moderately Low Anxiety	2	13%
2	90–98	Moderate Anxiety	3	20%
3	99–108	Moderate Anxiety	3	20%
4	109–165	High Anxiety	7	47%
		Total	15	100%

The analysis indicates that the majority of students, namely 7 respondents (47%), were classified in the High Anxiety category. Meanwhile, the Moderate Anxiety and Moderately High Anxiety categories each consisted of 3 students (20%). Only 2 students (13%) were categorized as having Moderately Low Anxiety. Overall, these findings confirm that speaking anxiety represents a significant challenge, with nearly half of the participants experiencing high levels of anxiety when speaking English.

Interview Findings on the Manifestation of Anxiety

To gain a deeper understanding of students' speaking anxiety, interviews were conducted with 7 students from the High Anxiety group and 3 students from the Moderate Anxiety group. The interview findings were organized into three main aspects: symptoms of anxiety, causes of anxiety, and coping strategies.

Symptoms of Anxiety

Students in the High Anxiety group consistently reported intense physical and psychological symptoms when speaking in front of the class. Physical symptoms included rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, trembling body, and very low voice volume. The main psychological symptoms were sudden mental blocks, forgetfulness despite prior preparation, and a strong desire to end the presentation as quickly as possible (Students 1, 3, and 7). In contrast, students in the Moderate Anxiety group also experienced nervousness; however, their symptoms were less severe and tended to diminish after a few minutes of speaking (Moderate Students 1 and 2).

Major Causes of Anxiety

When asked about the main causes of their anxiety, students in the High Anxiety group identified several dominant factors. The first was fear of negative evaluation, as students were afraid of being judged or laughed at by classmates or teachers due to grammatical or pronunciation errors (Students 1, 3, and 6). The second factor was low self-confidence, reflected in students' doubts about their own abilities despite adequate preparation and their tendency to compare themselves with more fluent peers (Student 4). Another contributing factor was limited linguistic competence, particularly insufficient vocabulary, which caused fear of being unable to continue speaking during presentations (Student 6). In contrast, students in the Moderate Anxiety group tended to worry more about inadequate preparation or unexpected questions that made them feel uncomfortable (Moderate Student 2).

Coping Strategies

To cope with anxiety, students in the High Anxiety group reported using strategies such as repeated practice in front of a mirror or friends, writing key points on small notes as a backup, and applying deep-breathing techniques and positive self-talk (Students 1, 4, and 6). Meanwhile, students in the Moderate Anxiety group relied more on thorough preparation, focused breathing techniques, and seeking visual support from smiling classmates during presentations (Moderate Students 1 and 3).

Discussion of Findings and Theoretical Connections

The quantitative finding that 47% of students experienced High Anxiety, supported by qualitative evidence, highlights speaking anxiety as a major barrier to students' oral performance. This condition strongly aligns with the Foreign Language Anxiety framework proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which identifies fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension as core components of language anxiety. Students' perceptions that "everyone is watching and waiting for mistakes" directly reflect this fear of negative evaluation.

Furthermore, low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) played a crucial role in intensifying anxiety. Several students reported forgetting well-prepared material, indicating that their anxiety stemmed not from a lack of knowledge but from psychological self-doubt that disrupted cognitive processing during oral performance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Although linguistic limitations, such as restricted vocabulary, also contributed to anxiety consistent with Woodrow's (2006) findings, the data suggest that even well-prepared students experienced high anxiety. This indicates that the primary source of anxiety was psychological rather than purely linguistic. In terms of coping strategies, the findings reflect the concept of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2000). Students in the High Anxiety group tended to use reactive strategies, such as breathing techniques and self-talk, to manage their emotions. In contrast, students in the Moderate Anxiety group employed more proactive strategies, particularly thorough preparation, which resulted in better emotional regulation and faster recovery from nervousness.

4. CONCLUSION

This research indicates that anxiety related to speaking English represents a major affective obstacle for seventh-grade students at SMA Alfaqih Muqaddam Kubu Raya. Almost half of the participants (47%) were identified as experiencing high levels of speaking anxiety. This condition was not only reflected through physical responses such as shaking and sweating, but also significantly interfered with students' cognitive functioning, often causing them to lose focus or experience mental blocks during oral performance in the classroom.

The results suggest that students' speaking anxiety mainly originates from psychological factors. Feelings of fear toward negative judgment from teachers and peers, along with low self-confidence, were found to be the dominant contributors to anxiety. Linguistic challenges, including limited vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties, tended to act as secondary factors that intensified anxiety rather than being the primary cause. Students who experienced moderate anxiety showed better emotional control by applying proactive strategies, especially adequate preparation, whereas those with high anxiety relied more on reactive responses and continued to struggle in managing their nervousness.

Based on these findings, teachers need to move beyond an exclusive emphasis on language accuracy and pay closer attention to students' emotional conditions. Establishing a supportive and non-threatening learning environment, along with teaching practical strategies to manage anxiety, can help reduce students' fear of making mistakes and enhance their confidence in speaking English. Future studies are encouraged to employ action research approaches to design and evaluate specific intervention programs, such as self-awareness activities and relaxation techniques, particularly for learners with high levels of speaking anxiety.

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