

Psychological Factors on Students' Speaking Skill Problems at Junior High School

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Highlights

Psychological Factors
Impact Speaking Skills:
Various psychological
factors influence
students' English-
speaking skills
development, including
anxiety, lack of
confidence, motivation,
and fear of making
mistakes.

ABSTRACT: Several psychological factors can affect the development of students' speaking skills in English. This study was to find what psychological factors affect the development of students' speaking skills in English when learning speaking in class. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, where data collection was carried out through observation and interviews with some private junior high school students in grade 7 of the ICO (International Class Orientation) class program. The results of this study showed that four factors can hinder students from developing and also mastering speaking skills, namely anxiety or shyness, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of making mistakes. These four psychological factors have a negative impact on students during the speaking learning process. Therefore, this study imply that parents and teachers should help students understand that making mistakes is a necessary part of learning and that they can take advantage of these opportunities to grow as communicators. In order to give students the chance to practice speaking English without worrying about making mistakes, the teacher must also foster a supportive environment in the classroom.

Keywords: English learning, Speaking skill, Psychological factors, Junior High School students

Introduction

This world consists of various countries that certainly have different languages, so this will make it difficult for each country to stay connected with each other. Seeing that, then comes English which is an international language that can connect one country with another (Rao, 2021). The term related to English that is often found is 'English as an International Language' which is a term to mark that English is the second major language in the world and is often used for communication, international business, travel, and so on. According Zuparova et al, English is the language most often used when people from different countries come together and also English plays another important role in our lives (Zuparova et al., 2020). Therefore, it is very important to know and learn English in our lives. One of the goals of learning English

is so that future generations can follow the knowledge of various countries in the world (Akhter et al., 2020).

In English language learning, there are four skills that must be mastered by language learners. According to Ur, the four skills are reading, writing, listening and speaking (Penny, 1991). Of the four skills, the most important skill and also the main goal of students in learning English is speaking skill. The mastery of speaking skills in English is a top priority in learning a language and of course students will periodically improve their speaking skills as a form of their learning effectiveness (Rao, 2019). In addition, a person's ability to learn a foreign language will be seen from how his ability to speak, whether he can speak using the language he learns or not (Bailey, 2014). The success of speaking ability can be seen from how a person can convey something that is easily understood by the person being spoken to. The most important part of successfully mastering speaking skills is that we can easily interact with people from all over the world, easily receive new knowledge, and be able to keep up with technological developments in the future (Astutik, 2017; Ilyosovna, 2020).

However, speaking is a skill that is quite difficult for students to master (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). Many students complain about their speaking ability, even though they have studied English for many years but still have difficulty in speaking (Bueno et al., 2005). In addition, many language learners say that they find speaking skills in a new language more difficult than reading, writing or listening. This is because speaking is a skill that happens in real time and the person we are speaking to will be waiting for what we are going to say. In addition, according Nunan, when speaking of course we cannot change or correct what we want to say, just like when we write we can correct it first (Bailey, 2014). As we know that English in Indonesia is a foreign language, so the use of English is very limited. In daily life, the language used to communicate is Bahasa Indonesia which is the first language. Learning and mastering speaking skills in a foreign language is a challenge for students because they have few opportunities to speak. In addition, obstacles or barriers in achieving success in speaking skills are not only from the students themselves, but these obstacles can also come from the teacher (Huwari, 2019).

It can be seen that currently the main problem faced by students related to speaking skills is not only due to a lack of vocabulary or grammar in the sentences they say. the problems faced by students in speaking skills that need attention are related to problems caused by psychological factors (Tridinanti, 2018). Psychological factors are factors which are caused by how a person thinks and behaves which will affect the person's self-decision (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). These psychological factors can interfere with students to achieve success in mastering speaking skills. The obstacles caused by these psychological factors are what cause the students' learning outcomes to be less than optimal. According Thao & Duong (2020), problems with speaking skills are generally caused by psychological factors, which include anxiety about receiving criticism or negative feedback from others when speaking, feeling laughed at when accidentally making mistakes, or being embarrassed to speak in class. In addition, Thornbury (2005) stated that the psychological factors that interfere with students in mastering speaking skills are anxiety or shyness, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of making mistakes.

Anxiety is a strong emotion from feeling of apprehension which predicts something bad will happen (Putri, 2020). Thinking about bad things that are not necessarily going to happen makes English learners feel anxious when speaking. They are anxious about the bad things that will happen when they speak English. The next factor is a lack of confidence. Self-confidence is the belief in oneself that one can successfully accomplish anything (Kansil et al., 2022). Similarly, when students feel less confident when speaking English, it means that they are not sure of their abilities. Furthermore, motivation is a form of energy that comes from within and can help increase self-interest in anything (Juhana, 2012). In learning English, students who lack motivation to speak have no interest or desire to speak. The last factor is the fear of making mistakes. The fear that exists in students will certainly prevent them from developing their speaking skills.

Researchers in this study have conducted a literature review of previous research related to psychological factors in students' English-speaking ability. Juhana (2012) in her research stated that students in Senior High School in Tangerang Banten faced difficulties in learning English, particularly in speaking skills. She identified psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, shyness, and anxiety among students. Souisa (2020) in her research also examined speaking problems and psychological factors encountered by senior high school students in developing their speaking skills. Souisa observed that psychological factors significantly impact students' ability to learn speaking. Students reported issues with low motivation, fear of making mistakes, nervousness and tension, uncertainty in delivering presentations, and confusion in expressing their thoughts.

Based on preliminary observations, the researchers identified similar factors present in one of the private junior high schools in Sidoarjo, particularly within the ICO (International Class Orientation) program. Researchers noted several indications of psychological factors among students while learning to speak in class. These indications included feeling shy when speaking in front of the class, fear of making mistakes, and lacking confidence due to the fear of being ridiculed by peers. As a result, for further investigation, researchers aim to gain a clearer understanding of the psychological factors existing within the class. Therefore, the researchers formulated the research questions as follows:

1. What are the psychological factors that hinder students from learning English, especially speaking skills, at one of the junior high schools in Sidoarjo?
2. What is the impact of psychological factors on student learning in speaking skills?

Method

This research employed descriptive qualitative methods, wherein researchers analyzed, described, and summarized events based on information collected through observations and interviews (Dodgson, 2017).

The study was conducted at a private Junior High School, in Sidoarjo. The researchers focused on seventh-grade students enrolled in the ICO (International Class Orientation) program, conducting observations and interviews during speaking lessons from February to March. The researchers observed all 15 students in the ICO class and conducted additional observations on those showing psychological indicators.

Primary data were obtained through observation activities related to psychological factors in English speaking. Data were also collected through interviews with selected students and insights from the respective teacher. The data collection involved overt observation, where subjects were aware of being observed, utilizing observation sheets as the primary tool. Researchers positioned themselves discreetly in the classroom, using a designated chair. They observed student behavior and learning environments, evaluating psychological factors based on Thornbury's theory. For the second research question, researchers conducted unstructured interviews with selected students identified from observations, aiming to validate observation sheet outcomes.

Then, in analysing the data the researchers transcribed all recorded data, classified it for clarity and research processing, and then reduced and filtered the data appropriately, the last the researchers wrote research report.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

In this section the researchers present the results of the data collected through observation and interviews with research subjects. The findings are presented as follows:

1. Psychological hindrances to students' learning of speaking skills

Tabel 1.

Psychological Factors

Psychological Factors on Speaking Skill	Number of Students	
	Meeting 1	Meeting 2
Anxiety or shyness	1, 4, 9, 12, 13, 14	9, 12, 13, 14
Lack of Confidence	4, 9, 12, 13, 14	12, 13, 14
Lack of Motivation	2, 9, 12, 13, 14	9, 12, 13, 14
Fear of Making Mistake	1, 9, 12, 13, 14	9, 12, 13, 14

The table 1 presents the results of observations conducted by researchers during two learning sessions. It is evident that the first and second observation sessions yielded different outcomes. During the first meeting, six students exhibited signs of anxiety or shyness, lack of confidence was observed in five students, lack of motivation was noted in five students, and fear of making mistakes was identified in five students. Contrasting results were observed in the second meeting. During this session, four students displayed indications of anxiety or shyness, lack of confidence was evident in three students, lack of motivation was observed in four students, and fear of making mistakes was identified in four students.

For the anxiety or shyness factor, students displaying these indicators exhibit behaviors such as blushing when speaking in front of friends and teachers, appearing embarrassed when noticed by peers while speaking, avoiding eye contact with friends or teachers, and struggling to articulate their thoughts.

Regarding the lack of confidence factor, students exhibiting this behavior often avoid speaking in front of the class when asked to share opinions, remain passive during class

activities, focus only on their peers speaking, and may resist or reject praise from teachers. They may also refrain from taking risks due to perceived inadequacy in their English skills. In terms of the lack of motivation factor, students showing this trait appear disinterested in participating during speaking lessons, display boredom during class, do not pay attention to teacher explanations, readily express inability or unwillingness to try, and exhibit passive behavior during learning activities.

For the fear of making mistakes factor, students with this concern speak very quietly in front of their peers, often mumbling or speaking unclearly. Similarly, to anxiety and lack of confidence, these students tend to avoid opportunities to speak and, when prompted, may still speak softly or unclearly.

2. The impact of psychological factors on students learning in speaking

In this section, researchers present the results of interviews that have been conducted with some representative students. This interview aims to clarify or recheck the observation data. The following are the results of the interviews:

Anxiety or shyness

The very low opportunities in speaking English and the absence of interactive conversations cause a lack of confidence and acute anxiety when speaking.

"Aku tidak mau bicara ke depan karena takut ditertawakan, soalnya aku tidak bisa berbicara pakai bahasa Inggris" (I don't want to speak in front for fear of being laughed at, because I can't speak English)

"Aku malu bicara di depan karena tidak bisa bahasa Inggris" (I am shy to speak in front of my friends because I can't speak English.)

"Aku malu, takut ditertawakan sama teman-teman" (I am shy, afraid of being laughed at by my friends)

In the examples of transcript excerpts above, the three students indicated experiencing psychological factors when speaking, namely anxiety or shyness. They did not take advantage of the opportunity given by the teacher and even preferred to remain silent for fear of being laughed at by their friends.

The anxiety or embarrassment felt by students when speaking English is caused by very limited opportunities to speak the language and a lack of interactive conversations. This causes an acute lack of confidence and anxiety when speaking. Students tend to avoid speaking in front for fear of being ridiculed by their friends. They choose to remain silent rather than face this possibility.

Lack of confidence

Similar to anxiety or shyness. The impact of other factors also has an impact on the lack of confidence factor. A student who is shy when speaking English will also feel less confidence.

"Saya tidak percaya diri kalau berbicara di depan, karena tidak bisa bahasa Inggris" (I am not confidence when speaking in front of the class because I don't speak English)

"Tidak percaya diri, saya malu ..." (Not confidence, I shy...)

In the examples of transcript excerpts above show that they lack confidence because they feel shy about their English skills.

Lack of confidence in speaking is also influenced by anxiety. A student who feels embarrassed when speaking English tends to have a lack of confidence in speaking in front of the class. They feel insecure because they feel embarrassed about their English skills.

Lack of motivation

The student's lack of motivation in learning English and, specifically, in speaking English can be seen from how she follows the learning. The student felt lazy during the learning process. As the following transcript excerpt shows:

“Aku malas berbicara. Ya ” (I'm too lazy to talk)

In the transcript excerpt above show that the student has no motivation to learn English. Laziness dominates the student. It can be seen that the student has no motivation to learn. Another statement during the interview also proved that indeed the student lacked motivation to speak English: "I like English, but I am lazy to speak".

Students' lack of motivation in learning English, especially in speaking, can be seen from their lazy attitude in participating in the learning process. This lazy attitude dominates students, so they are not motivated to learn. Students who lack motivation also tend to be inactive and lazy to speak English.

Fear of making mistakes

The fear of making mistakes can also affect the learning process of students in the classroom. Students who do not want to speak English because they are afraid of making mistakes. The student was afraid of being wrong in speaking because he or she could not speak English.

“Saya takut salah karena tidak bisa bahasa Inggris” (I'm afraid of making a mistake because I don't speak English)

The findings of this research present the results of interviews with several research subjects with the aim of clarifying or re-examining the results of observations.

Fear of making mistakes also affects students' learning process in class. Students who are afraid to speak English for fear of making mistakes tend to avoid speaking altogether. They are afraid of making mistakes because they feel unable to speak English.

In a nutshell, the findings show that some students experience anxiety or lack of confidence when speaking English. They feel afraid of being laughed at by their friends if they speak in front of the class because of their lack of self-confidence and sharp anxiety. This is due to the lack of opportunities to speak English and the lack of interactive conversations. Then, lack of self-confidence is also a factor that impacts the inability to speak English. This lack of self-confidence is generally related to shame about low English skills. Students who are embarrassed when speaking English also feel less confident. Research findings also show that some students have a lack of motivation in learning English, especially in speaking. The students also stated that they afraid of making mistakes, this of course also affects students'

learning process in class. They are afraid of making mistakes in speaking because of their lack of English skills. Overall, the findings of this interview data highlight several psychological and motivational factors that influence students' ability to speak English, including anxiety, lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of making mistakes.

Discussion

One of the skills that can be said to be difficult to master by students in Indonesia is related to speaking skills. There are many things that can affect their delay and cause difficulties in mastering their speaking skills. Such is the case at SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Krian, which is one of the private junior high schools in Sidoarjo district. More precisely, it can be seen at the 7th grade level with the ICO (International Class Orientation) program, where in the class program students are more emphasized and focused on their English language skills. Actually, if you look closely, the ICO class subjects and other regular classes are almost the same, the difference is in English subjects. The amount of learning time in the ICO class is more, and they have a separate schedule for each ability in English, such as speaking classes, reading classes, listening classes, and also writing classes.

Seeing that they have more opportunities to learn each skill than other regular classes, it cannot make them easily master English as well and quickly as other regular classes. As happened to the ICO class students, they showed that some of the ICO class students experienced obstacles in speaking class because of psychological factors. Some psychological factors were found to be present in some of these students. During the learning process, they showed indications of these psychological factors, such as anxiety or shyness, a lack of confidence, a lack of motivation, and a fear of making mistakes when speaking. These four factors become their obstacles during the speaking learning process in class.

Anxiety is the first factor in learning to speak. Students who experience anxiety during the learning process look like they are afraid when they are given the opportunity to speak or are appointed by the teacher to simply express their opinions. This is the same as the opinion of the American Psychological Association cited in Januariza and Hendriani, which says that anxiety an emotion is marked by a feeling of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes (Januariza & Hendriani, 2016). When speaking in front of the class, they look shy and also uncomfortable when delivering something. According to Tobias, cited in Ansari, anxiety is a complex concept that depends not only on one's confidence, but also on the opportunities and risks associated with a particular situation (Ansari, 2015). The feeling of anxiety is a feeling that cannot be explained in words. This is because the feeling is only in the mind. The perception of each individual who thinks about something that is not necessarily happening can also be said to be anxiety. Some of the things they fear include being laughed at by their friends when they speak in front of the class. This is the cause of their inhibitions in developing their speaking skills. Based on the results of interviews, researchers found that students often feel anxious or embarrassed when appearing to speak in front of the class because they cannot speak English. Because they cannot speak English and are afraid of being laughed at by their friends, this kind of thinking is the cause of anxiety and embarrassment.

The second psychological factor shown by students is their lack of self-confidence. This lack of confidence is still influenced by the anxiety they experience. According Nunan cited in

Ahsan, M., Asgher, T., & Hussain, Z, students who feel lack confidence in speaking English will experience communication anxiety (Ahsan et al., 2020). Students who feel less confident will look more passive. This is based on observations that show that students who lack confidence are more passive during the learning process and only look down. They seemed not to want to be involved in the learning process. They feel less confidence because they feel intimidated by the gaze of their friends, so students who lack confidence will always look down or look at the floor of the class when speaking in front of the class. In addition, students feel less confidence because their English skills are not good enough, so when speaking English, they lack confidence and are less confidence in their abilities. The same results are also shown by previous research conducted by Juhana, which shows that students who lack confidence in speaking due to limited knowledge of English also do not have the ability to speak English (Juhana, 2012).

The third factor is lack of motivation. Motivation relates to students' interest or desire to learn something new. Motivation is one of the most important factors in successful foreign language learning (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). For example, learning and mastering English speaking skills. Students who lack motivation towards English speaking will show unpleasant behavior during the teaching and learning process in speaking class. They don't seem to care about the teacher or the speaking lesson. Even when the teacher is explaining the material, they don't seem to care. Students who lack motivation in learning speaking skills tend to be inactive during the lesson. They are not interested in what the teacher is explaining and prefer to be silent but not pay attention to the lesson.

The last factor is the fear of making mistakes. The mistake referred to here is that they are afraid that when speaking English they will make mistakes, whether it is mistakes in pronunciation of words, sentence structure, grammar, and so on. As stated by Middleton cited in Nakhalah , some students are afraid of making mistakes when speaking English, they don't want to look stupid in front of their friends, and also they worry about how to say vocabulary in English, whether it sounds good or bad (Nakhalah, 2016). Actually, mistakes that happen to us when we learn something or when we learn English are normal, and there is no need to be afraid when we make mistakes. Mistakes are something we don't want to make, because they are unintentional.

Based on the four psychological factors found in students' speaking ability, of course these factors have an impact on the mastery and development of students' speaking ability in English. The impact of these factors can hinder students in mastering their speaking skills in English. Students who experience these psychological factors cannot speak well. Their speaking ability tends to be lacking. In the speaking learning process, students tend to be more silent and do not participate during learning. Students who experience these factors choose to be silent because they are not confident in their English language skills. Based on the results of interviews, students admitted that they were not confident in their English skills and they said they could not speak English. In addition, they feel worried if when speaking in front of their friends, they will be laughed at because of their poor speaking skills. This makes it difficult for students to develop and learn English speaking skills. The same result was shown by research conducted by N. Nijat, H. Atifnigar, K. Chandran et al. The results of the study show that

psychological factors have an impact on students' speaking skill, or in other words that psychological factors can prevent students from speaking English (Nijat et al., 2019)

In addition, students are also unable to speak in English well because they are more focused on the opinions of their friends which are not necessarily the case. Students tend to lack concentration when speaking in English. The students immediately seemed to lose ideas or words that they would say, and it happened because they were in a position where they immediately felt anxious, embarrassed, and afraid at the same time. Students feel afraid and anxious if when speaking they make mistakes, for example, wrong pronunciation of words, grammar, or the form of sentences they say. The existence of psychological factors like this is what makes students unable to speak English well, students have difficulty mastering speaking skills well. The same results were also found by Bakhtiar and Suwandi, who in their research showed several impacts of psychological factors on speaking, and one of them was that students who experienced anxiety had difficulty memorizing information or speaking in English (Rifqi Bakhtiar & Suwandi, 2022).

Therefore, the psychological factors that students experience in their English speaking skills have a negative impact. Something that should be easy for them to master speaking skills is currently a difficult thing for students. The adverse impact caused by these psychological factors greatly disrupts the process of developing and mastering students' English speaking skills.

Conclusion

Based on research conducted by researchers, it is known that there are psychological factors in speaking that hinder students in learning English speaking skills. These factors in fact also have an impact on student learning. The results show that there are four psychological factors that influence ICO class students in learning English speaking skills. These four factors are anxiety or shame, lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of making mistakes. Naturally, these factors significantly influence students during the process of developing their speaking skills. The unfortunate outcome of these psychological factors is that students may struggle to speak English proficiently, leading to challenges in their learning and advancement in speaking abilities. Seeing the impact of these factors, the researchers advised parents and teachers to provide students with an understanding that when developing speaking skills they do not need to be afraid of making mistakes. Apart from that, teachers can also create a learning environment, especially speaking skills, to make it more enjoyable, thereby motivating students to be more confident in speaking English. Therefore, the researchers suggest that future researchers who wish to study the same topic further examine the role of teachers in overcoming psychological factors in developing students' English speaking skills.

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