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The Analysis of Students' Psychological Problems and Its Solutions in Speaking English at One of the Junior High Schools in Aru Islands

Imelda Tahalele¹,
Pattimura University

Felicia M. Lekatompessy^{2*}
Pattimura University
*e-mail: felicialeka@yahoo.com

Wensy S. Nussy³
Pattimura University

Abstract

The purposes of this study were to discover what are the students' psychological problems and their solutions in speaking English. The research design of this study was a mixed method with an explanatory sequential design approach. The population of this study was second-grade students, and its sample was two classes consisting of 60 students and 3 English teachers who taught them. The instruments used in this study were questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed using the formula from Sugiyono (2005) $f/n \times 100\%$, while the qualitative data was analyzed using the technique by Miles and Huberman (1992:16) data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verifying.

The results of this study indicate that students still have problems speaking English, especially psychological problems such as fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation, and anxiety. Therefore, based on the problems above, there are several solutions provided by teachers and students to overcome these problems.

Keywords: *Speaking, Psychological problems, Solution*

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INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential aspect of communication that facilitates interactions across countries and cultures. It serves as a means for individuals to express their feelings, convey ideas, share opinions, and communicate desires. According to Brown (2000:5), language is a system of arbitrary conventionalized, vocal, written, or gestural symbols that enable members of a given community to communicate intelligibly with one another. In other words, language fosters communication within a community, making it a

fundamental part of human life. Language is not just a tool for connecting with others; it plays a vital role in various aspects of our lives.

As stated by Isriani Hardini (2017:183) in her book "Integrated Learning Strategies," language holds great significance in human life as a communication tool for everyday interactions. Through language, individuals can effectively convey ideas, thoughts, feelings, and information both verbally and in writing. This aligns with experts' views that language functions as a medium of communication between members of a society through sound symbols produced by human speech tools. Language permeates most human activities, as it enables us to express emotions, convey desires, provide suggestions and opinions, and even articulate our thoughts about language itself. Hence, the better one's mastery of a language, the more effectively it can be used for communication.

English, being an international language spoken worldwide, holds particular importance. It is taught in Indonesian schools from kindergarten through university. English serves as the primary foreign language for the transfer and reception of knowledge, science, technology, art, and culture. Susanto (2007:3) emphasizes the growing popularity of English, stating that it has become one of the most significant languages in all aspects of life, including literature comprehension. Students are encouraged to understand how to utilize the English language effectively, which requires regular practice in daily communication. Therefore, continuous English language practice is crucial for English learners.

In the process of learning English, four key skills are emphasized: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Each skill is important, but speaking is often considered the most crucial to master, as it is often used as a measure of overall language proficiency. Speaking allows individuals to effectively communicate their ideas, feelings, thoughts, and opinions. This view aligns with Ur's perspective (1999:120), who believes that speaking holds the utmost significance among the four skills, and foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to converse.

Considering the era of globalization, where English has established itself as one of the international languages, the ability to speak English has become increasingly necessary. Consequently, many students are required to learn English as a subject in school. Nunan (2000:39) asserts that speaking plays a vital role in daily life, as it serves as a means of interaction with others. Thus, it can be deduced that the mastery of English speaking skills is essential for students who are determined to improve their language abilities.

Based on the aforementioned background, the researcher was inspired to conduct this study. During their participation in KKN/PLP at SMP Negeri 1 Pulau-Pulau Aru for

approximately one month, the researcher observed that the students at the school encountered psychological problems. When asked by their teachers to introduce themselves in English in front of the class, they felt embarrassed and afraid of being laughed at by their peers. Witnessing this, the teacher assisted them by guiding them through the English introduction until they completed it. From these observations, it can be concluded that students face psychological challenges related to speaking English. Consequently, the aim of this study is to identify and understand the psychological problems experienced by students and explore potential solutions according to both teachers and students.

Among the speaking problems encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, linguistic and psychological issues are prominent. Linguistic problems encompass various factors that hinder students' speaking abilities, such as poor grammar, limited vocabulary, and difficulties with pronunciation, as highlighted by Richard (2008). Language-related problems arise when individuals lack the necessary vocabulary to effectively communicate or struggle to construct coherent phrases. Khan (2005) notes that many students learning English as a foreign language find it challenging to use appropriate words and expressions during conversations. Additionally, Doris and Jessica (2007) argue that perfect grammar expressions are not the primary concern in communication; instead, the focus is on the topic and how individuals respond. While students may know what they want to convey in their native language, they often struggle to transfer their thoughts into the target language, such as English, due to difficulties in combining and applying the necessary vocabulary. Grammar is also a hurdle for students, particularly in spoken English, where grammar mistakes are prevalent. Murcia (2001) suggests that EFL learners find grammar challenging when they do not study language structures systematically.

Furthermore, according to Hinkel (2005), pronunciation is a crucial aspect that students must grasp to communicate naturally with native English speakers. Achieving intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability in pronunciation is essential, as outlined by Burns (2003). Intelligibility refers to the ability to produce recognizable English sound patterns, while comprehensibility implies that listeners can understand the speaker's message. Interpretability means that listeners can grasp the speaker's intended meaning. In addition to linguistic problems, students also face psychological issues stemming from a lack of confidence, nervousness, and fear of making mistakes. Brown (2001) attributes the lack of self-confidence to various factors, including anxiety, shyness, unrealistic expectations of perfection, a false sense of shame, fear of making mistakes, and sadness. Anxiety, as Rochelle (2011) explains, encompasses feelings of nervousness, shyness, and worry, which can hinder individuals' efforts to improve their communication skills. Therefore, it is crucial for students to understand and address their psychological problems, including managing anxiety, in order to speak English more fluently in the future.

In conclusion, this research seeks to explore the psychological problems faced by students at SMP Negeri 1 Pulau-Pulau Aru when speaking English and propose solutions to overcome these challenges. Language is an indispensable tool for communication, and English holds significant importance as an international language. The mastery of English speaking skills is essential for effective communication in various contexts. However, students often encounter linguistic and psychological obstacles. Linguistic problems arise from issues such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, while psychological challenges stem from a lack of confidence, nervousness, and fear of making mistakes. This study aims to shed light on students' psychological problems and provide insights for teachers and students to address and overcome these obstacles. The findings of this research can contribute to the existing knowledge and assist future researchers in understanding students' psychological problems in speaking English, ultimately enhancing English language learning strategies.

METHOD

The method used in this research was the mixed method. According to Sugiyono (2014, p. 475), mixed methods is a research approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies to collect more comprehensive, valid, reliable, and objective data in research activities. In this research, a sequential explanatory design was employed. Sugiyono (2014, p. 486) defines sequential explanatory designs as a research approach that sequentially combines quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, with the first step being conducted using quantitative methods and the second step using qualitative methods.

The explanatory sequential design begins with quantitative data collection and then continues with qualitative data collection to help explain and decipher the results obtained from the quantitative data (Sugiyono, 2014). The underlying basis of this research model is that the quantitative data obtained in the first stage can provide an overview or generalization of the research problem. For further analysis, qualitative data is necessary to explain the general picture (Creswell, 2011). The study will be conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Pulau-Pulau Aru, as the researcher's experiences during KKN/PLP revealed that the students at that school still have problems in speaking English, particularly psychological problems.

The population for this study consists of eighth-grade students, with a total of 312 students. Probability sampling and non-probability sampling techniques were used to determine the sample size (Sugiyono, 2018, p. 130). The researcher used simple random sampling as the probability sampling technique to select 60 students and an English teacher who taught English in the second grade as participants for the questionnaire. For the interview, a purposive sampling technique was used as a non-probability sampling technique to select ten students (five who took English courses and five who did not) and English teachers who taught English in the second grade (Sugiyono, 2018, p. 131).

The instruments used in this research are a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire consists of 19 questions, adapted from previous research, and is designed in a Likert scale format (Sugiyono, 2011). The questionnaire will be distributed directly to the 60 second-grade students and teachers who teach English in the second grade. To validate the questionnaire, one expert lecturer will validate the instrument for teachers, while the

questionnaire for students will be validated using SPSS. The validity test will compare the calculated R value with the R table and check for significance (Sugiyono, 2011). The reliability test will be conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha formula, and a value greater than 0.60 indicates reliability (Sugiyono, 2017).

The interview will be conducted with selected participants who have already answered the questionnaire. The interview will consist of 12 questions and will be recorded using a voice recorder. The researcher will translate the interview responses from Bahasa Indonesia to English. Data analysis techniques will include analyzing the questionnaire results using a formula provided by Sugiyono (2005) to determine the frequency of responses. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

FINDINGS

Close-Ended Items Questionnaire Findings

Based on the collected data from students and teachers, several key findings emerge regarding students' psychological problems in speaking English. These findings are summarized below, along with the corresponding data:

1. Fear of Making Mistakes:

- Table 1 shows that 40% of students agree that they are afraid of making mistakes in speaking English because they fear getting corrections from their teacher.

- 35% of students disagree with this statement, indicating that they believe receiving corrections directly from the teacher helps them learn from their mistakes.

Table 1. Fear of Making Mistakes

No	Statement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Hesitant		Agree		Strongly agree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	I fear my teacher's corrections, so I avoid English mistakes in speaking.	4	6,6%	21	35%	5	8,3%	24	40%	6	10%
2	I fear my English grammar and vocabulary may be incorrect.	8	13,3%	12	20%	14	23,3%	18	30%	8	13,3%
3	I am afraid that people will laugh at me if I make mistakes when speaking English	7	11,6%	13	21,6%	11	18,3%	13	21,6%	16	26,6%
4	I am afraid of being criticized	10	16,6%	10	16,6%	8	13,3%	24	40%	8	13,3%

	when speaking in English										
5	I started to panic when I have to speak English without any preparation.	6	10%	10	16,6%	10	16,6%	15	25%	19	31,6%

2. Lack of Confidence:

- Table 2 reveals that 30% of students agree they feel less confident when speaking English because their friends are more fluent than them.

- 30% of students disagree with this statement, suggesting that they are confident even if their friends are more fluent.

Table 2. Lack of Confidence

No	Statement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Hesitant		Agree		Strongly agree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
6	I feel less confident when speaking English because my friends are more fluent than me.	7	11,6%	18	30%	11	18,3%	16	26,6%	8	13,3%
7	I feel less confident speaking English because I do not understand the topic to be discussed.	3	5%	13	21,6%	17	28,3%	18	30%	9	15%
8	I lose my confidence, when I make a mistake and someone corrects my mistake	6	10%	18	30%	10	16,6%	18	30%	8	13,3%
9	I always shy away when I have to speak English in front of the class	10	16,6%	11	18,3%	12	20%	24	40%	3	5%
10	I'm embarrassed to speak English because my pronunciation is not good	6	10%	12	20%	11	18,3%	18	30%	13	21,6%
11	I never feel confident about myself when I speak in English	4	6,6%	16	26,6%	14	23%	16	26,6%	10	16,6%

3. Lack of Motivation:

- Table 3 demonstrates that 40% of students agree they are not interested in speaking English because they perceive it as difficult to learn.

- However, 35% of students disagree, indicating that they still find interest in speaking English despite the perceived difficulty.

Table 3. Lack of Motivation

No	Statement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Hesitant		Agree		Strongly agree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
12	I am not interested in speaking English because English is difficult to learn	3	5%	13	21,6%	10	16,6%	24	40%	10	16,6%
13	My teacher never gives motivation about the importance of learning English	21	35%	24	40%	3	5%	6	10%	6	10%
14	I am not motivated to speak English because I feel pressured	7	11,6%	9	15%	11	18,3%	30	50%	3	5%
15	I am not motivated to speak English because my teacher never speaks English in class	17	28,3%	27	45%	3	5%	8	13,3%	5	8,3%

4. Anxiety:

- Table 4 highlights that 33.3% of students agree they feel anxious when speaking English and end up unable to say anything.

- Moreover, 46.6% of students agree they feel worried about speaking English because their friends might mock them using harsh words.

Table 4. Anxiety

No	Statement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Hesitant		Agree		Strongly agree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
12	I am not interested in speaking English because English is difficult to learn	3	5%	13	21,6%	10	16,6%	24	40%	10	16,6%
13	My teacher never gives motivation about the importance of learning English	21	35%	24	40%	3	5%	6	10%	6	10%
14	I am not motivated to speak English	7	11,6%	9	15%	11	18,3%	30	50%	3	5%

	because I feel pressured										
15	I am not motivated to speak English because my teacher never speaks English in class	17	28,3%	27	45%	3	5%	8	13,3%	5	8,3%

These findings are further supported by the teachers' perspective, as reflected in their responses to the 19 statement items related to students' psychological problems:

1. Fear of Making Mistakes:

- All teachers agree that students fear making mistakes, being corrected by the teacher, and facing criticism when speaking English.

2. Lack of Confidence:

- Teachers observe that students' confidence is influenced by the fluency level of their peers and their understanding of the topic to be discussed.

3. Lack of Motivation:

- Teachers agree that some students lack motivation to speak English due to perceiving it as difficult to learn, feeling pressure, or having teachers who do not use English in class.

4. Anxiety:

- Teachers note that students experience anxiety while waiting for their turn to speak in English and express worry about being mocked or not understood by others.

These findings highlight the various psychological challenges students face when speaking English, including fear of mistakes, lack of confidence, motivation, and anxiety. Understanding these problems can help educators develop targeted strategies to support students in overcoming these psychological barriers and improving their English-speaking skills.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings presented above, the discussion focuses on students' psychological problems in speaking English and proposes solutions based on the perspectives of both students and teachers.

Fear of Making Mistakes:

According to Aftat (2017), fear is associated with the fear of correction and negative evaluation, leading students to be afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at or criticized. Teachers agree that students fear making mistakes due to potential ridicule. To address this, teachers can create a comfortable and supportive environment that allows students to speak English without feeling pressured. The emphasis should be on making students feel at ease and motivating them to understand the importance of learning from

their mistakes (Aftat, 2017; Brown, 2001). Students who take English courses suggest that practicing extensively can improve their English skills (Brown & Yuke, 1983).

Lack of Confidence:

Many students feel lacking in confidence when speaking English, which aligns with their teachers' observations. Elliot (1998) identifies various factors contributing to the lack of self-confidence, such as guilt, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and unrealistic expectations of perfection. To address this issue, teachers can provide continuous motivation and encouragement to students, emphasizing that speaking English is more important than perfect grammar and vocabulary. Maximizing exposure to English, including regular opportunities for pronunciation practice and free conversation, can help build students' confidence (Elliot, 1998; Ye Htwe, 2007).

Lack of Motivation:

The majority of students agree that learning to speak English is challenging, which affects their motivation. However, teachers should find ways to make English learning interesting and engaging. Using games as a tool to train students in speaking English can increase motivation and make the learning process enjoyable (Nunan, 1999; Zua, 2008). Sharing personal experiences and providing positive affirmations can also motivate students to stay motivated in learning English (Hidayati, 2016).

Anxiety:

Many students express anxiety about speaking English, fearing harsh judgment from their peers. Teachers acknowledge this fear of being mocked. To address anxiety, teachers should create a comfortable and supportive classroom environment, assuring students that making mistakes is acceptable and will be corrected constructively. Techniques that reduce pressure and encourage student participation, along with positive reinforcement, can help alleviate anxiety and increase students' confidence and willingness to communicate (Koichi Sato, 2003; Chan cited in Noon-ura, 2008).

Additional solutions provided by students:

Some students suggest that increasing English vocabulary through extensive learning can enhance confidence and comprehension (Hastuti, 1992). Students who do not take English courses emphasize the importance of self-confidence and remaining positive (Golmen Rahayu, 2013). Learning English for future opportunities, such as studying abroad, is also seen as a motivating factor (Tarigan, 1990). Calming down and thinking positively are mentioned as personal strategies to overcome fear and anxiety (Cuello & Oros, 2014). Seeking solace through prayer is another coping mechanism mentioned by some students (Keene, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that students face several psychological problems when speaking English, including the fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and anxiety. These problems hinder their ability to improve their English speaking skills in the classroom.

To address the fear of making mistakes, teachers suggested normalizing mistakes, providing motivation, and creating a comfortable environment where students feel at ease.

Additionally, students who took English courses emphasized the importance of practicing extensively, while those who did not take English courses mentioned the significance of building confidence. To tackle the issue of lack of confidence, teachers recommended providing continuous motivation, encouraging students to be brave and confident in their English speaking abilities. Students who took English courses emphasized the need to increase their English vocabulary, while those who did not take English courses highlighted the importance of continuous learning. In terms of lack of motivation, teachers suggested using interactive games to engage students, finding interesting ways to spark their interest in learning English, and sharing personal experiences to motivate and provide self-affirmation. Students who took English courses mentioned the effectiveness of learning while playing, while those who did not take English courses emphasized the motivation to pursue education in universities abroad. Regarding anxiety, teachers emphasized the importance of creating a comfortable classroom environment, reassuring students that making mistakes is acceptable, and encouraging consistent practice. Students who took English courses suggested calming down as a strategy to overcome anxiety, while those who did not take English courses mentioned prayer as a means to find inner peace and alleviate worries.

Based on the research findings, several suggestions can be made. English teachers should consistently guide students' speaking activities, providing motivation and creating opportunities for students to practice speaking English regularly. Students should recognize the importance of speaking English, change their mindset, and actively engage in practicing the language, not solely relying on teachers for improvement. For future researchers, it is recommended to prepare thoroughly and conduct comprehensive studies analyzing students' difficulties in other language skills at SMP Negeri 1 Pulau-Pulau Aru. This will enable a better understanding of the challenges students face and help develop effective strategies to enhance English language learning. By implementing these suggestions, teachers can create a supportive learning environment that encourages students' English speaking skills, students can overcome their psychological barriers, and future research can contribute to the continuous improvement of English language education.

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