

STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the psychological factors hindering English speaking performance among eleventh graders at MAN 2 Bukittinggi, Indonesia. A closed questionnaire assessed five key factors: anxiety, shame, lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of making mistakes. The survey was administered to a sample of 55 students from a population of 223. Results revealed anxiety as the most prevalent issue, affecting 86.1% of students. Furthermore, a significant portion of students also reported experiencing a lack of confidence (74.1%), shyness (77.2%), and fear of making mistakes (77.5%), contributing to reduced motivation (70.1%) for learning English. Identifying anxiety as the primary psychological barrier can inform the development of teaching strategies that address student anxieties and enhance English speaking performance.

Keyword: Students psychological problems, English performance

INTRODUCTION

Effective oral communication, or oratory, is a fundamental skill that underpins successful self-expression and interpersonal interactions. For students, proficiency in speaking plays a pivotal role in academic achievement, enabling them to articulate their thoughts, ideas, and emotions with clarity and confidence. This is particularly evident in various academic settings, such as oral presentations, debates, and theatrical performances, which form an integral part of the learning process.

As Richard (2008) aptly defines, speaking performance encompasses the act of delivering information in front of an audience, including classroom presentations, public announcements, and speeches. Brown (2000) further emphasizes that the effectiveness of such performances hinges on the speaker's ability to articulate their thoughts effectively through

vocabulary choice, sentence structure, and overall language proficiency. Engaging in dialogues, conversations, debates, or presentations is crucial for students to develop into proficient communicators, capable of conveying their ideas with clarity and impact.

However, the path to confident and fluent speaking in English is often fraught with psychological challenges that can impede students' progress. Research by Krismanti & Siregar (2017) identifies common hurdles such as a lack of confidence, motivation, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety. These factors can significantly undermine students' ability to express themselves effectively in the target language. Juhana (2012) and Gebhard (2000) further corroborate this notion, highlighting similar psychological barriers as contributors to diminished participation and reluctance to speak in English class.

Observations and preliminary research conducted at MAN 2 Bukittinggi, a prominent high school in West Sumatra, Indonesia, suggest that anxiety, shyness, and insufficient motivation are three prominent psychological problems affecting English speaking performance among eleventh-grade students. This manifestation was evident through signs of nervousness, a reluctance to participate in front of the class, and a general lack of enthusiasm for learning English, which could potentially hinder their academic progress and future prospects.

While previous research has shed light on general psychological barriers in language learning, a more in-depth exploration is needed within the specific context of MAN 2 Bukittinggi. Understanding the precise nature and manifestations of these psychological challenges faced by this student population is crucial for developing targeted interventions and strategies tailored to their unique needs. By gaining a deeper understanding of the psychological factors that hinder their English speaking performance, educators and policymakers can work towards fostering a more conducive learning environment that empowers students to overcome their inhibitions and develop into confident and effective communicators.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach using a survey design to investigate psychological barriers affecting English speaking performance among eleventh-grade students at MAN 2 Bukittinggi (n=223). The survey method was chosen as it is a widely used technique in social sciences for collecting data through questionnaires or interviews (Creswell, 2012).

Simple random sampling was utilized to select a sample of 55 participants from the target population. This sample size was determined based on available resources, time constraints, and a desired confidence level of 95% with a 5% margin of error. The data was collected through a validated questionnaire developed by the researcher, consisting of 15 Likert-scale items. The questionnaire aimed to assess eight key psychological factors that might hinder English speaking performance: anxiety, shyness, fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, lack of motivation, perfectionism, competitiveness, and communication apprehension. Each factor was measured through multiple items, with responses ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts from the English Department at UIN Bukittinggi (Gay et al., 2012). The experts reviewed the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. Their feedback was incorporated to refine the questionnaire before data collection. Furthermore, a pilot study involving a small group of 10 students was conducted to assess the comprehensibility of the items and estimate the time required for completion.

Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from participants and their parents/guardians prior to data collection. The questionnaires were administered during regular class hours in a controlled environment to minimize distractions and external influences, ensuring a conducive setting for data gathering.

The data analysis process involved calculating descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, to identify the most prevalent psychological issues faced by the students. Additionally, inferential statistics, such as t-tests or ANOVA, were employed to examine potential differences in psychological barriers based on demographic variables like gender or academic performance. The findings were presented using tables, charts, and narrative descriptions, providing insights into the specific psychological challenges hampering English speaking performance among the eleventh-grade students at MAN 2 Bukittinggi.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the findings aimed at addressing the research question concerning the psychological barriers hindering English speaking performance among eleventh-grade students at MAN 2 Bukittinggi. The data was collected through a questionnaire designed to

assess various psychological factors, including anxiety, shyness, low self-confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of making mistakes.

The first step in the data analysis process involved tabulating the responses from the questionnaires. Data tabulation is the systematic organization of research data into a tabular format, allowing for easier interpretation and analysis. The researcher meticulously accounted for the collected data and presented it in a clear and concise manner using tables.

Next, the researcher calculated scores for each psychological factor based on the participants' responses to the corresponding items in the questionnaire. This process involved assigning numerical values to the Likert-scale responses and computing the total score for each factor.

To gain further insights into the prevalence and severity of the psychological barriers, the researcher calculated the mean scores and standard deviations for each factor. The mean score provided an average measure of the participants' responses, while the standard deviation indicated the extent of variability or dispersion within the data. These calculations were performed using the formula suggested by Azwar in (Widhiarso, 2014), a widely accepted statistical methodology for analyzing Likert-scale data.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Formula	Explanation
Mean	$\overline{M_{\pm}} = \frac{(X_{\max} + X_{\min})}{2}$	M : Mean X _{max} : Maksimum Score X _{min} : Minimum Score
Standard Deviation	$SD = \frac{1}{6} (X_{\max} - X_{\min})$	SD : Standard Deviation X _{max} : Maksimum Score X _{min} : Minimum Score

Based on the standard deviations and means obtained, the researcher categorized the students' psychological problems in English speaking performance, as provided in the table below:

Table 2: Result of Students' Categorization

No	Categorization	Categorization	Frequency	Percentage
1	$X < 58,3$	Low	0 Students	0%
2	$58,3 \leq X < 91,7$	Medium	11 Students	20%
3	$91,7 \geq X$	High	44 Students	80%

The above table categorizes the students' psychological problems in English speaking performance into three levels: low, medium, and high. The categorization is based on the score ranges derived from the data analysis. Out of the 55 students surveyed, none fell into the low category, indicating an absence of minimal psychological barriers. However, 11 students (20%) experienced moderate levels of psychological challenges, as their scores fell within the range of 58.3 to 91.7. Notably, a substantial portion of the students, 44 (80%), scored 91.7 or higher, placing them in the high category, signifying the presence of significant psychological problems hindering their English speaking performance.

Interestingly, the findings from Table 2 are further elucidated by Table 3, which provides specific insights into the prevalence of various psychological indicators contributing to these challenges.

Table 3: The Percentage of each Indicator

No	Indicator	Percentage
1	Anxiety	86,1%
2	Lack of Confidence	74,1%
3	Shyness	77,2%
4	Fear of Mistakes	77,5%
5	Lack of Motivation	70,1%

Table 3 reveals that anxiety was the most prevalent psychological barrier, with a staggering 86.1% of students reporting issues related to anxiety during English speaking activities. This finding aligns with the high percentage of students categorized as experiencing severe psychological problems in Table 1, underscoring the significant impact of anxiety on the students' speaking performance.

Furthermore, other notable psychological indicators, such as shyness (77.2%), fear of making mistakes (77.5%), and lack of confidence (74.1%), were also highly prevalent among the students. These factors likely contribute to the overall psychological challenges faced by the majority of students, as reflected in the high category of Table 1.

While lack of motivation was relatively less prevalent (70.1%) compared to the other indicators, its presence suggests that it may still play a role in hindering the students' English

speaking performance, particularly for those categorized as having medium or high levels of psychological problems.

The findings from these tables collectively highlight the interconnectedness of various psychological factors and their cumulative impact on the students' English speaking abilities. By understanding the specific psychological indicators and their prevalence, educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions and supportive measures to address these challenges effectively.

Discussion

The present study investigated the psychological barriers hindering English speaking performance among eleventh-grade students at MAN 2 Bukittinggi. Through a questionnaire distributed to 55 students, consisting of 25 items, the researcher assessed five key indicators: anxiety, lack of confidence, shyness, fear of mistakes, and lack of motivation.

The findings revealed that anxiety was the most prevalent psychological issue, with 86.1% of students experiencing high levels of anxiety during English speaking activities. This result aligns with Brown's (2000) theory, which identifies anxiety and apprehension as primary causes of students' speaking difficulties. The overwhelming presence of anxiety suggests that students feel nervous and anxious when required to speak English, often leading them to forget or struggle with what they had prepared.

These findings are consistent with those of Ninuk & Maria (2017), who also identified anxiety as a significant challenge faced by students in their study, along with other factors such as fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of motivation, and lack of self-confidence. The present study corroborates these findings, highlighting the multifaceted nature of psychological barriers and their cumulative impact on students' English speaking performance.

However, the current research deviates from Juhana's (2012) investigation, which identified students' fear of making mistakes as the most significant obstacle they faced. While fear of mistakes was found to be a prevalent issue (77.5%) in the present study, it was superseded by anxiety as the primary psychological barrier. These discrepancies in findings may be attributed to contextual differences, such as the specific educational settings, student demographics, or cultural factors influencing language learning. Nevertheless, the common thread across these studies is the recognition of psychological factors as significant impediments to effective English speaking performance among students.

The high prevalence of anxiety, shyness, lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, and lack of motivation observed in this study underscores the need for targeted interventions and supportive measures to address these psychological barriers. Strategies such as anxiety-reducing techniques, confidence-building activities, error-desensitization exercises, and motivational strategies could be implemented to create a more conducive learning environment for English speaking.

Furthermore, it is essential to explore the underlying causes and potential interactions among these psychological factors. For instance, anxiety may be exacerbated by a lack of confidence or fear of negative evaluation, leading to a cyclical pattern that reinforces these barriers. By understanding the complex interplay of these factors, educators and policymakers can develop comprehensive and tailored approaches to support students in overcoming their psychological challenges.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to a growing body of literature highlighting the significance of psychological factors in language learning, particularly in the context of English speaking performance. By addressing these barriers proactively and fostering a supportive learning environment, educators can empower students to develop confidence, reduce anxiety, and ultimately improve their English speaking abilities, enhancing their academic and personal growth.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The research study revealed several significant psychological barriers hindering the English speaking performance of eleventh-grade students at MAN 2 Bukittinggi. Among the factors examined, anxiety emerged as the most prevalent issue, with a substantial percentage of students experiencing high levels of anxiety during speaking activities. Other notable barriers included lack of confidence, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of motivation. These psychological challenges can profoundly impact students' ability to effectively communicate and express themselves in English, potentially limiting their academic and personal growth. The findings underscore the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses not only the linguistic aspects of language learning but also the psychological well-being and emotional support required for students to overcome their inhibitions and develop confidence in speaking English. By implementing targeted interventions and fostering a supportive learning environment, educators can empower students to confront these psychological barriers, enhance their speaking proficiency, and

ultimately thrive in an increasingly globalized world where effective communication skills are crucial.

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