

Exploring Factors of Students' Speaking Anxiety during Dialog Practice At SMPN 3 Masbagik in the Academic Year of 2025-2026

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety during English dialog practice in the eighth grade of SMPN 3 Masbagik in the academic year 2025-2026. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, using observation, interviews, and questionnaires as the main instruments of data collection. The findings revealed that students experienced two types of anxiety: state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety appeared in specific classroom situations, particularly when students were asked to perform dialog practice, with symptoms such as trembling hands, shaky voices, forgetting lines, and excessive sweating. Meanwhile, trait anxiety was more consistent and related to limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracy, and lack of confidence. The main factors that triggered speaking anxiety included limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, pronunciation difficulties, and fear of negative evaluation. To cope with these challenges, students applied several strategies such as repeated practice, relaxation techniques, positive self-talk, preparing vocabulary/grammar, and seeking peer support. The study concludes that students' speaking anxiety is a multidimensional issue influenced by both linguistic and psychological factors, requiring efforts from both teachers and students to foster a more supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Speaking Anxiety; English; Dialog Practice

INTRODUCTION

English is a universal language. It is important to learn in this modern era. English has been the most important language in international communication. Almost people all over the world use English. It is not only used in education, but also in business, tourism, technology, and diplomacy. Therefore, mastering English is crucial for students to compete globally and to access a wider range of information and opportunities in various fields. In learning English, there are four skills have to be mastered by the learners namely, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Each skills has its own challenging. The most difficult one is speaking. Kehing and Yunus (2021) says that "Speaking skills have always been regarded as the most difficult skill out of the four skills that learners should master in language learning". Speaking is considered the most complex skill because it involves not only linguistic knowledge but also psychological and social factors. Many students feel nervous, anxious, or even afraid to speak in English, especially when they are required to perform in front of others or during classroom activities. There are a number of reasons why students find that speaking is difficult: they do not have enough vocabulary, they cannot pronounce the word correctly, they do not understand grammar in arranging the words. Thus they become frustrated to express their idea. The students may also be worried about making mistake in their utterance. They have nothing to say in the particular context in reality and the students may be bored and feel that the topic is unreal. Those reasons obliged the teachers to pay more attention to their students' ability and to find

out an approach, method, strategy or model which can solve the students' problem, in order that the students' speaking skill is getting better.

In junior high school, the students should be brave to express their idea or they can ask something if they do not understand yet with English because to have good speaking English the students must have good grammar and vocabulary, it will be useless because they do not interest to speak by using English. In fact, studies show that junior high school learners often experience speaking challenges due to inhibition, lack of content, and mother tongue interference (Palomargareta & Astutik, 2024).

In Indonesia, there are some problems in speaking skill learning. First, students feel bored in speaking English learning because they have difficulty in remembering words and pronouncing English (Astuti, 2018). Second, students rarely use English to communicate both in the classroom and outside the classroom. This makes them unaccustomed to speak English well. Third, students only remember the words when they have to practice speaking in front of class. They usually speak by imitating the words and phrases in the book. They do not understand the content being spoken and they do not speak spontaneously using their own words. In order to meet the target of learning English, speaking skill has several problems, both internal and external. Internally, speaking skill learning makes them feel anxious. They may be reluctant to use the target language because they may be afraid of making a mistake.

Nervousness is one of the reasons problem of speaking often found in some students who will speak. Apart from that, there is something else that makes they are reluctant to speak in the class, namely anxiety. England et al. (2017) suggests that active learning practices can increase students' anxiety, there is some evidence to suggest that evaluative active learning practices may also decrease students' anxiety.

There are many activities for purposeful speaking practice to develop foreign language speaking skills. Dialogue practice is one of the speaking activities that can significantly contribute to students' learning to create basic interactive skills. Dialogue is a textual depiction of spoken words and dialogue in most creative writings. Additionally, dialogue is a language component crucial to learning a language. The benefit of dialogue is it helps students comprehend proper English grammar. The students can learn new vocabulary, grammar rules, and pronunciations through dialogue that they can then use to communicate their ideas verbally. Additionally, it provides students with tools for discussing vocabulary and grammar.

Dialogue practice is also a method used by the teacher to take students' speaking scores. Dialogue practice is one of the variations of formative in formal form. In formal practice, there are plans and preparations for students and teachers using the criteria assessment for student development. While in informal practice it is not there are special instructions for implementation. Ability assessment talks about students using English can be included in the alternative assessment and used by the teacher as the basis for giving grades formative tests. Moreover, the impacts of speaking anxiety extend beyond the classroom. It can affect students' social interactions, self-esteem, and future career opportunities. Therefore, addressing this issue is not only important for academic success but also for the overall well-being and professional development of the students.

Previous studies have shown that speaking anxiety is one of the most common affective problems among EFL learners, significantly influencing students' oral performance and participation in classroom activities. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) identified three major components of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, all of which affect students' willingness to speak. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) found that high levels of language anxiety correlate with poor speaking performance and lower motivation to communicate in the target language. Furthermore, recent studies conducted in the Indonesian context by Aulia and Rahmawati

(2022) and Sari (2023) also revealed that limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and peer pressure are the dominant causes of students' speaking anxiety during classroom speaking tasks. Another study by Tien and Chen (2021) reported that repetitive practice and relaxation techniques could effectively reduce anxiety and increase students' confidence in speaking English. These findings underline the multidimensional nature of speaking anxiety, combining both linguistic and psychological aspects, and justify the need to investigate how these factors emerge in dialog practice among junior high school students.

This study aims to explore the factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety during dialog practice at *SMPN 3 Masbagik*. By identifying the underlying causes and potential strategies to reduce anxiety, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into effective approaches that can help students manage their fear of speaking, especially in dialog activities. The findings are expected to support teachers in developing methods and classroom environments that foster students' confidence and improve their speaking performance.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method to explore the factors of students' speaking anxiety during dialog practice at *SMPN 3 Masbagik*. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, feelings, and behaviors in their natural classroom environment. As stated by Creswell (2014), qualitative research is appropriate when the researcher seeks to explore participants' perspectives and interpret meanings within their natural context. The data collected are presented in the form of words rather than numbers, focusing on students' perspectives and the real classroom situation. This research was conducted at *SMPN 3 Masbagik* during the academic year 2025–2026, with eighth-grade students as the participants. The study was carried out over one month.

To collect the data, the researcher used three main instruments: observation, questionnaire, and interview. Observation was conducted to identify students' behaviors and reactions during dialog practice, such as trembling hands, lack of eye contact, low voice, frequent pauses, and signs of embarrassment. The questionnaire was distributed to measure the level and causes of students' anxiety, consisting of ten statements related to fear of making mistakes, pronunciation difficulties, lack of vocabulary, negative evaluation, and preparation time, using a five-point Likert scale. Interviews were carried out to gain deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions, focusing on the causes of their anxiety, classroom atmosphere, personal feelings, and strategies they used to overcome their anxiety.

The data analysis involved three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. This procedure followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which explains that data analysis in qualitative research is a continuous process involving condensing, displaying, and drawing meaning from data. Data reduction was done by selecting and focusing on relevant information while eliminating unnecessary data. The reduced data were then organized systematically through narrative descriptions and tables to highlight important patterns and themes. Conclusions were drawn and verified continuously during the research process to ensure their accuracy and consistency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Observation Result

Table 1. The Result of Observation

| No. | Characteristics of Anxiety | Conclusion |
|-----|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. | The Student looks nervous (shaking hands, sweating, restless) before speaking. | Fear of making mistake |
| 2. | The student avoids eye contact during dialog practice. | Fear of negative evaluation |
| 3. | The student forgets or skips words due to nervousness. | Lack of vocabulary |
| 4. | The student's voice becomes very low or unclear when speaking. | Mispronunciation |
| 5. | The student pauses frequently and struggles to continue the dialog. | Lack of Vocabulary |
| 6. | The student shows signs of embarrassment (blushing, covering face, laughing). | Fear of negative evaluation |
| 7. | The student looks more anxious compared to normal classroom activities. | Fear of making mistake |
| 8. | The student avoids participating unless called by the teacher. | Fear of negative evaluation |
| 9. | The student depends heavily on their partner to continue the dialog. | Mispronunciation |
| 10. | The student relaxes and performs better after some time in the activity. | Fear of making mistake |

The researcher concluded that the anxiety experienced by class VIII students of SMPN 3 Masbagik, while speaking English during dialog practice in class was caused by several factors, namely: lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, difficulty in pronunciation, and fear of negative evaluation. The fact of that factor is also supported by a statement based on opinion of Amengual-Pizarro (2018).

2. Questionnaire Result

Table 2. The Result of Questionnaire

| No. | Statement | General Tendency |
|-----|--|--|
| 1. | I feel nervous when I have to speak English in front of my classmates. | Most students agreed, showing that nervousness is the most common anxiety. |
| 2. | I am afraid of making mistakes during dialog practice. | Many students agreed, indicating that fear of mistakes is a major factor. |

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 3. | I feel anxious when my teacher asks me to perform a dialog. | The majority felt anxious, highlighting performance pressure as a cause. |
| 4. | I worry about being laughed at by my friends when speaking English. | Some students agreed, suggesting peer pressure influences anxiety. |
| 5. | My heart beats fast when I have to do dialog practice in English. | Several students reported this, showing physical symptoms of anxiety. |
| 6. | I feel uncomfortable if I forget vocabulary during dialog practice. | Many students agreed, proving vocabulary limitation is a strong cause. |
| 7. | I feel more anxious in dialog practice than in other English activities. | Some agreed, meaning dialog practice makes students more anxious. |
| 8. | I lose confidence when my friends speak English better than me. | Several students admitted this, showing comparison increases anxiety. |
| 9. | I feel stressed when I cannot pronounce English words correctly. | Many agreed, indicating pronunciation difficulty as another factor. |
| 10. | I feel nervous when I do not have enough preparation time. | Most students strongly agreed, emphasizing preparation as essential. |

The questionnaire results showed that students experienced various types of speaking anxiety during dialog practice. The most dominant factors were nervousness when speaking in front of the class, fear of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and insufficient preparation. Peer pressure and comparison with classmates also contributed to students' lack of confidence. These findings indicate that speaking anxiety is influenced by both linguistic limitations and psychological aspects.

3. Interview Result

In the interview sessions, the researcher asked several questions to the eighth grade students of SMPN 3 Masbagik to obtain more detailed information regarding their experiences and feeling during dialog practice in English Class. The interviews aimed to identify the types of anxiety, the factors contributing to their anxiety, and the strategies they used to overcome it. The responses provide deeper insight that complemented the data collected through observation and questionnaires.

The interview results revealed that the majority of students experienced state anxiety, which appeared temporarily during dialog practice in front of the class. Several students reported feeling panic and nervous when they were asked to perform. One student explained, *“I usually feel very nervous when I have to speak English in front of the class, especially during dialog practice. I worry that my classmates or teacher will notice my mistakes, and this makes me lose focus.”* Another student added, *“When I do dialog practice, I feel nervous because everyone is watching me. I’m afraid that my friends will laugh if I make a mistake. Sometimes I can practice well before, but when I stand in front of the class, I suddenly forget the dialog.”* These statements indicate that fear of making mistakes, peer judgment, and classroom atmosphere significantly increase students' state anxiety. Some students also described physical symptoms such as trembling hands, shaking voices, and mental blocks, which align with the signs observed during classroom activities. Additionally, several students mentioned that a serious and silent classroom atmosphere often made them feel more pressured, causing their anxiety levels to rise before and during their performance.

Besides state anxiety, the interviews also uncovered trait anxiety, which is more stable and internalized. Some students admitted that they often felt anxious not only during dialog practice but also in other English activities due to their limited vocabulary and grammar mastery. One student stated, “ *My biggest problem in speaking English is my lack of vocabulary and grammar. I often cannot find the right words, and I am not sure if my sentences are correct. This makes me feel less confident even before I start speaking.*” Another student mentioned, “ *I always feel less confident in speaking English because my vocabulary is very limited. Even when I practice at home, I cannot remember many words. This makes me afraid to speak, and I usually keep silent because I don’t know what to say.*” These consistent worries show that some students carry their anxiety into multiple learning situations, not just during dialog practice. This trait anxiety is closely related to their language competence, especially in vocabulary and grammar, which affects their confidence levels over time.

The Interviews also revealed various coping strategies that students use to reduce their anxiety. Many students mentioned that repeated practice was the most effective way to feel more prepared. One student explained, “ *To reduce my anxiety, I usually practice the dialog many times before the performance. I do it alone at home and also with my partner. By practicing more, I feel more confident and I don’t forget the sentences easily.*” Others described using deep breathing to calm themselves before speaking, applying positive self-talk to reduce fear of mistakes, preparing vocabulary and grammar in advance, and seeking encouragement from peers.

Overall, the interview results provide a rich picture of students’ experiences. The data show that students’ speaking anxiety is influenced by both situational factors, such as classroom atmosphere and peer evaluation, and personal factors, such as language ability and self confidence. While state anxiety often arises in response to classroom conditions, trait anxiety is tied to students’ long-term linguistic limitations. At the same time, students show awareness of various personal strategies to manage their anxiety, indicating their willingness to improve their speaking performance.

Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the research results. This research focused on the types of anxiety, the factors that contribute to students’ speaking anxiety, and the strategies used by students to cope with their anxiety during dialog practice in grade 8 at SMPN 3 Masbagik. From the findings of the study, it was revealed that the students felt anxious in speaking English during dialog practice with several influencing factors, namely lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, pronunciation difficulties, and fear of negative evaluation. In addition, the results also showed that students experienced two types of anxiety, state anxiety and trait anxiety, which affected their performance in the classroom. The findings of this study indicate that the students experienced two types of anxiety, namely state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety appeared in specific classroom situations, particularly when students were asked to perform dialog practice in front of the class. The symptoms included trembling hands, sweating, forgetting their lines, and shaky voices. This result is in line with Spielberg (2014), who stated that state anxiety is a temporary emotional condition triggered by external factors such as task pressure or social situations. On the other hand, trait anxiety was observed in students who consistently lacked confidence due to limited vocabulary and grammar mastery. These students already felt anxious even before they started speaking. This finding is consistent with Ormrod (2011), who described trait anxiety as a personality tendency to react anxiously even in situations that are not necessarily threatening. Therefore, the findings show that students’

speaking anxiety is not only situational but also deeply rooted and persistent, influencing their overall English learning experience.

The results from observations, interviews, and questionnaires revealed that the most dominant factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety were lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, pronunciation difficulties, and fear of negative evaluation. Many students reported difficulties in finding the right words during dialog practice, which often led to pauses, repetitions, or silence. This finding supports Astuti (2018), who stated that limited vocabulary is one of the main causes of speaking anxiety among EFL learners in Indonesia. Students also expressed fear of making mistakes, particularly grammatical errors, which made them nervous and prevented them from conveying their ideas fluently. This is consistent with Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986), who emphasized that fear of mistakes is a common form of communication apprehension in foreign language learning. Furthermore, pronunciation problems also contributed to anxiety, as students felt embarrassed when they mispronounced words, sometimes resulting in ridicule from peers. This finding agrees with Szyszka (2017), who found that pronunciation difficulties are strongly linked to increased speaking anxiety. Finally, fear of negative evaluation emerged as a significant factor, with students expressing worry about being laughed at or criticized by classmates and teachers. This aligns with Horwitz et al. (1986) and Amengual-Pizarro (2018), who identified fear of negative evaluation as one of the core components of foreign language anxiety. Overall, these findings demonstrate that students' speaking anxiety is influenced not only by linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation but also by psychological factors such as fear, lack of confidence, and peer judgment.

In addition to identifying the factors of anxiety, this study also revealed several strategies that students used to cope with their speaking anxiety. One of the most common strategies was repeated practice or rehearsal, where students practiced their dialog at home either individually or with a partner. This strategy supports Kondo (1994), who argued that rehearsal increases preparedness and reduces nervousness. Another strategy was relaxation and self-control, as some students reported using deep breathing techniques to calm themselves before performing. This finding corresponds to Liu (2018), who suggested that relaxation techniques effectively reduce physical symptoms of anxiety. Students also applied positive self-talk by reminding themselves that mistakes are a natural part of learning, which helped them build confidence and stay motivated. Furthermore, some students prepared vocabulary and grammar in advance, which helped them feel more confident and reduced their state anxiety. Peer support also played a significant role, as encouragement from classmates or partners made students feel braver and less nervous. This confirms Young's (1991) framework, which highlights the importance of social support in lowering language learning anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to explore the factors of students' speaking anxiety during dialog practice at the eighth grade of *SMPN 3 Masbagik* in the academic year 2025-2026. The findings revealed that the students experienced two types of anxiety, namely state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety appeared temporarily during dialog practice in the classroom, while trait anxiety was more consistent and strongly related to students' lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and insufficient grammar mastery. The study also identified four major factors that contributed to students' speaking anxiety: lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, pronunciation difficulties, and fear of negative evaluation. These factors proved that speaking anxiety is not only influenced by linguistic limitations but also by psychological aspects such as fear, nervousness, and low self-confidence. Moreover, the research also found that students used several strategies to cope with their speaking anxiety, including repeated practice,

relaxation techniques, positive self-talk, preparation of vocabulary and grammar, and seeking peer support. In conclusion, speaking anxiety among students is a multidimensional problem that requires attention from both teachers and students to create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

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