



PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS ON STUDENT SPEAKING ENGLISH PROBLEMS AT SMAN 6 TAMBUN SELATAN

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Article Submission:
21 July 2025

Article Revised:
22 July 2025

Article Accepted:
23 July 2025

Article Published:
23 July 2025

ABSTRACT

The research was conducted to thoroughly explore the barriers that hinder students' ability to learn effectively, both from psychological and academic perspectives. Previous studies on English learning difficulties have primarily focused on linguistic and academic factors, such as grammar mastery, vocabulary development, and reading or writing skills. However, limited attention has been given to the psychological barriers that significantly influence students' ability to learn and perform in English, particularly in the context of Indonesian high school students. While some research has mentioned issues like anxiety or fear of making mistakes, these studies often lack a detailed exploration of how psychological factors interact with academic challenges to affect students' confidence and participation in class. This study aims to address this gap by thoroughly investigating both psychological and academic barriers that hinder students' English learning process. By using a questionnaire distributed to students at SMAN 6 Tambun Selatan, the research highlights the dominant role of fear and anxiety as emotional obstacles that reduce students' self-confidence and willingness to engage in learning activities. The findings emphasize the importance of creating supportive and anxiety-reducing classroom environments, which have not been adequately discussed in prior research.

Keywords: English Learning Difficulties, Psychological Barriers, Student's Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

English has become a universal means of communication in the era of globalization, where people from all over the world use it to connect and exchange ideas, regardless of their native language (Suwartono & Stapa, 2022). It plays a crucial role in bridging communication gaps among individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. According to (Quenta, 2024) English is the most commonly used language by non-native speakers when they interact with people who speak different first languages. This widespread use highlights its global importance. Similarly, in the field of education, many countries prioritize English learning because it is widely perceived as essential for academic success and future career opportunities (Gibson &

Esra, 2020). In Indonesia, English is recognized as a significant foreign language and is increasingly integrated into both formal education and everyday life (Ariyanti, 2016a). Indonesian students, in particular, view English proficiency as a valuable skill, and many take pride in their ability to speak the language fluently. As a result, English is not only a subject in school but also a tool for self-expression, access to global knowledge, and personal development.

One of the essential skills that students must develop as foreign language learners is the ability to speak English. According to (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017) Speaking refers to the ability to express oneself in a particular situation, describe actions or events using appropriate words, and communicate a sequence of ideas fluently. It is not merely about producing words, but about conveying meaning effectively. In line with this, (Scrivener, n.d.) Describes communication as a highly complex skill. He emphasizes that effective communication requires more than just speaking—it demands a deep understanding of the ideas being expressed and a strong command of vocabulary. Without these, a speaker may struggle to convey their thoughts clearly and meaningfully. Therefore, mastering speaking skills involves both linguistic knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge in real-life interactions.

English is considered a global language that is widely used for communication across cultures and nations. Among the four language skills, speaking plays a particularly vital role in verbal interaction, as it allows individuals to express ideas, emotions, and intentions in real-time. Compared to writing, speaking requires greater spontaneity and confidence, which makes it more challenging for many learners. Unfortunately, many students experience heightened levels of anxiety when speaking English, especially in formal or academic settings. According to (Tridinanti, 2018), one of the major challenges students face in developing their speaking skills is the presence of psychological barriers. These psychological factors—such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and pressure to perform—can significantly hinder students' ability to communicate effectively. (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017) Explain that psychological factors are rooted in how individuals think and behave, influencing their confidence and decision-making. Similarly, (Thornbury, 2005) emphasizes that anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and low motivation are among the key psychological elements that negatively impact learners' speaking performance. Therefore, addressing these psychological obstacles is essential to help students improve their speaking skills and build their confidence in using English in real-life situations.

According to (Dewi et al., 2024) Anxiety is a strong emotional response characterized by excessive worry, often driven by the anticipation of negative outcomes. In the context of learning English, students frequently experience anxiety when they imagine making mistakes or being judged, even though these negative outcomes are often unlikely to occur. This constant worry hinders their ability to speak confidently. Another significant factor is a lack of self-confidence. As stated by (Semuel et al., 2024). Self-confidence is the belief in one's ability to achieve a goal. Students who lack confidence in their English-speaking abilities often feel insecure, which makes them hesitant to participate in speaking activities. Additionally, motivation plays a crucial role in language learning. (Ariyanti, 2016b) defines motivation as an internal source of energy that drives interest and engagement. Without sufficient motivation, students tend to show little enthusiasm for speaking in class, which limits their opportunities to practice and improve (Motevalli et al., 2020). Lastly, fear of making mistakes is a common barrier. This fear causes students to remain silent rather than risk being wrong, ultimately preventing them from developing their speaking skills. Addressing these psychological factors is essential for helping students build confidence and become more effective English speakers.

The researchers in this study aimed to examine the psychological factors that influence students' speaking abilities, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language. Speaking is often considered one of the most challenging skills to master, especially for students who experience emotional and mental barriers that can interfere with their ability to communicate effectively (Cabe & Selatan, 2012). Difficulties in learning English, especially in speaking, can lead to a lack of understanding during classroom instruction, which in turn negatively impacts students' academic performance and overall confidence (Khapsoh, 2020). At SMAN Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan, speaking skills are an integral part of the English assessment system, and students are regularly evaluated based on their oral communication abilities. Please translate to the Indonesian version. Based on my teaching experience at this school, I have observed that many students show visible signs of anxiety when they are unable to respond to questions in English. This anxiety often manifests in the form of nervousness, avoidance behavior, or even complete withdrawal from class activities. In more severe cases, students may refuse to participate in speaking tasks altogether, which hampers both their language development and academic progress. Such psychological obstacles not only prevent students from practicing their speaking skills but also contribute to a cycle of low self-esteem and fear of making mistakes. According to (Dewi et al., 2024), psychological factors such as

anxiety, lack of confidence, fear of negative evaluation, and low motivation are key contributors to students' reluctance to speak in English. They recommend further research to investigate the role of teachers in recognizing and addressing these psychological barriers. Building on this recommendation, the current study seeks to delve deeper into the specific psychological challenges faced by students at SMAN Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan. By identifying and analyzing these factors, the study hopes to provide insights that will support educators in creating more inclusive and supportive learning environments. Therefore, this research is guided by the following research question; what are the psychological factors that influence students' speaking ability at SMAN Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a mixed methods approach, using questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The participants in this study are eleventh-grade students from SMAN 6 Tambun Selatan, a public senior high school located in Bekasi. To ensure a diverse representation of perspectives, the sample will include students from two different academic streams: health sciences and social sciences. These students will be selected through purposive sampling, based on their relevance to the research objectives.

Questionnaires and interviews will be used as instruments to collect data. In the first stage, quantitative data will be collected by evaluating the results of the questionnaire. The questionnaire includes several statements to assess and explore various aspects of the study, including linguistic and psychological difficulties in speaking. All statements will be designed by the researcher to measure how much psychological factors affect students' learning process in learning a foreign language. To clarify unclear or general findings from the questionnaire, the second stage of the interview is conducted with a qualitative data approach on the statements adapted from (Diaab, 2016) This research will be conducted in three classes at the high school SMAN 6 Tambun Selatan, Bekasi district, Indonesia. The total number of respondents is about 100 students. The questionnaire and interview will be translated into Indonesian to help students share the information on the instrument. The survey was collected using Google Forms to facilitate data collection and data tabulation.

The qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis, while the quantitative data were examined descriptively by identifying participants' preferences, as well as their complaints and

challenges, which were gathered through virtual interviews in the form of essay-based questionnaires. Two research instruments were used:

1. A closed-ended questionnaire, which was analysed thematically, and
2. An open-ended questionnaire consisting of semi-structured questions.

Data analysis was conducted using Jamovi software, along with the calculation of average responses from the essay-based interviews. The primary aim of this study was to investigate the influence of psychological factors on students' English learning in school. Psychological factors refer to internal aspects influenced by a person's mindset and behaviour, which in turn affect their decision-making and actions. For instance, anxiety is one such factor that commonly arises when students speak English. This anxiety often stems from a fear of making mistakes, particularly in pronunciation. Even when students pronounce words correctly, the fear of being wrong can cause hesitation, which ironically increases the likelihood of errors

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Close-ended questions

Table 1. Regression model analysis

| Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | |
|--|-------|--------|----------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|
| <i>F=61.98, p<.001; R²=0.0659</i> | | | <i>F=2.21, p 0.049; R²=0.123</i> | | | |
| The difference between Model 1 and 2 = <i>F=1.24, p=0.297;ΔR²=0.0578</i> | | | | | | |
| Predictor | β | SE | t | β | SE | t |
| Intercept | | 1.1352 | 10.56 | | 1.7541 | 7.423 |
| Y | 0.257 | 0.0700 | 2.64* | 0.2695 | 0.0708 | 2.744 |
| Gender: | | | | | | |
| Male – Female | | | | -0.5665 | 0.8601 | -2.177 |
| Age: | | | | | | |
| 16 – 17 - <15 | | | | -0.2844 | 1.3112 | -0.717 |
| >17 - <15 | | | | -0.1919 | 1.3222 | -0.480 |
| Major | | | | | | |
| IPS - Kesehatan | | | | -0.196 | 1.4324 | -0.387 |
| Bahasa - Kesehatan | | | | 0.306 | 2.6740 | 0.323 |
| Note: β=standardised estimate, SE=standard error, Confidence interval=95%. | | | | | | |

* $p < 0.01$

The regression analysis was conducted using two models to investigate the factors that predict the dependent variable, presumably related to students' performance or interest in English. **Model 1**, which included only a single predictor variable (**Y**), was found to be statistically significant ($F = 61.98$, $p < .001$), and explained **6.59%** of the variance in the outcome variable ($R^2 = 0.0659$). The standardized coefficient for **Y** in Model 1 was $\beta = 0.257$, with a **t-value of 2.64** ($p < .01$), indicating that this predictor had a significant positive influence on the dependent variable. This suggests that the variable **Y**—which could represent a motivational or behavioral factor—plays a meaningful role in shaping students' engagement or performance.

In **Model 2**, several demographic variables were added, including **gender**, **age**, and **major**. The overall model was statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($F = 2.21$, $p = 0.049$), with an $R^2 = 0.123$, indicating that the expanded model explained approximately **12.3%** of the variance. However, the improvement in predictive power was relatively modest, with a $\Delta R^2 = 0.0578$, and the **difference between Model 1 and Model 2 was not statistically significant** ($F = 1.24$, $p = 0.297$). This suggests that while Model 2 accounts for more variance, the additional predictors do not substantially enhance the model's explanatory power.

Despite the added variables, **Y** remained a significant predictor in Model 2, with a slightly increased standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.2695$, $t = 2.744$), reinforcing its importance. In contrast, the demographic variables did not show significant effects. **Gender (Male vs. Female)** had a negative association ($\beta = -0.5665$, $t = -2.177$), suggesting that male students might perform slightly worse or show less interest than females, although the effect approaches but does not meet conventional significance thresholds. **Age groups** showed very weak and statistically insignificant associations; for example, students aged **16–17 compared to under 15** had $\beta = -0.2844$, and students **over 17 compared to under 15** had $\beta = -0.1919$, both with low t-values and high standard errors, indicating little practical effect. Similarly, the academic **major** variables did not contribute significantly: students majoring in **IPS compared to Health** showed $\beta = -0.196$, while **Bahasa majors compared to Health** showed a small positive effect ($\beta = 0.306$), but neither reached statistical significance.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that predictor **Y** remains the most robust and consistent factor influencing the dependent variable, while demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and academic major, do not significantly impact the outcomes. These findings

suggest that internal or psychological factors captured by **Y**—possibly motivation, confidence, or learning strategy—should be prioritized in efforts to support students’ development in English learning, rather than relying solely on demographic categories.

Open-ended questions

Table 2. Test of Hypotheses

| |
|---|
| H1: Apa yang menyebabkan kamu merasa cemas ketika berbicara bahasa Inggris, coba jelaskan |
| H2: Apakah kesulitan yang kamu hadapi dalam mempelajari tata bahasa, coba jelaskan. |
| H3: Bagaimana cara kamu berlatih berbicara Bahasa Inggris, coba jelaskan. |
| H4: Relationship lending helps to minimize credit risk |

The data obtained from the study revealed several interesting findings regarding the challenges students face when speaking English. One of the main difficulties reported by the students is their limited vocabulary, which often leads to hesitation and a lack of fluency. In addition, many students experience anxiety when asked to speak in front of others. They worry about making mistakes, especially in pronunciation. For example, one student admitted, *“I am afraid of being wrong in pronunciation, which should not be like that.”* Another expressed, *“I’m afraid of being judged by those who understand English better, or of using the wrong vocabulary and pronunciation.”*

A lack of confidence also emerged as a significant barrier. Some students fear being teased or laughed at if they make errors while speaking. As one student explained, *“I don’t feel confident because I rarely speak English, and I’m afraid of being teased if I make mistakes.”* Almost all students who participated in the English-speaking class acknowledged that they tend to feel anxious when performing in front of their teacher and classmates. This anxiety becomes the dominant factor that creates pressure whenever they are required to speak English.

Another common challenge identified by the students is Grammar. They expressed a fear of being judged if they use incorrect grammar. One student stated, *“I’m afraid of speaking English in front of many people, especially because I might make grammatical errors or choose the wrong vocabulary.”* This fear of judgment often prevents students from expressing themselves freely, even when they have ideas they want to share.

Despite these anxieties and difficulties, the students have also developed various strategies to overcome their challenges. Some students reported practicing speaking in front of a mirror. One student described this technique: *"I stand in front of the mirror, look at the notes of the English vocabulary I want to say, and then start speaking."* Others try to build confidence by expanding their social network and connecting with people who are passionate about English, including online friendships. For example, a student shared, *"I play games and practice live with my friend who lives in the UK."*

Furthermore, students often engage with English through media such as music, movies, and podcasts to improve their vocabulary and pronunciation. As one student mentioned, *"I listen to English podcasts and music, watch Western movies, and learn vocabulary from that."* These proactive efforts reflect students' awareness of their weaknesses and their willingness to find solutions. By consistently practicing and immersing themselves in English, they hope to overcome their fears and become more confident speakers in the future.

Although this study provides valuable insights into students' psychological barriers and coping strategies when learning English, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the data was collected from a relatively small sample of students from a single school, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The participants' responses may not represent the experiences of students in other regions, schools, or cultural contexts. Second, the study relies heavily on self-reported data from interviews and questionnaires, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or students' reluctance to share their true feelings. Additionally, this study focuses primarily on psychological and personal challenges without examining other potential factors such as teaching methods, classroom environment, or socio-economic background, which might also affect students' speaking abilities. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted with caution and that further research with larger, more diverse samples is necessary.

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This study addresses a gap in the existing literature on English-speaking challenges among high school students, particularly in the context of Indonesian learners. While previous studies have often focused on linguistic competence, grammar, or vocabulary acquisition, fewer studies have explored the interplay between psychological barriers—such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of judgment—and the strategies students use to overcome them. Moreover, there is a lack of research that combines both qualitative insights (e.g., students' personal experiences) and practical solutions that learners themselves have developed, such as using media or peer interaction. By highlighting both the barriers and the proactive strategies employed by students, this study fills a critical gap and provides a foundation for designing interventions that not only improve language skills but also build students' confidence and reduce speaking anxiety.

CONCLUSIONS

According to researchers, psychological factors can hinder students from developing their English-speaking skills. These elements also affect students' overall learning process. The findings indicate four main psychological factors: lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety or shyness. These factors significantly impact students as they try to improve their speaking abilities. They often feel pressure when learning English, which makes communication challenging and prevents them from making progress. For example, students often feel nervous whenever they are asked to speak in English. However, despite these fears, they have their strategies for practicing, such as speaking in front of a mirror, finding friends who are fluent in English, and watching English-language movies. Researchers suggest that parents and teachers should remind students that making mistakes is a natural part of learning to speak. Teachers can also create a more enjoyable and supportive learning environment to motivate students, especially in developing their speaking skills.

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