

Internal and External Factors in Tenth-Grade EFL Speaking Anxiety

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Submission: 2026-07-01 Revised: 2026-07-11 Accepted: 2026-07-20 Published: 2026-07-1	Speaking anxiety remains a barrier to oral participation in EFL classrooms because students must speak publicly while managing ideas, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and peer evaluation. This qualitative study investigated internal and external factors contributing to speaking anxiety among 15 tenth-grade students at a private senior high school in Jakarta. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis used a framework covering internal factors, namely lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and motivation, and external factors, namely limited vocabulary, peer responses, lack of preparation, and grammatical errors. The findings show that speaking anxiety was produced by interacting psychological, linguistic, and social conditions. Internally, students lacked confidence, feared errors, felt embarrassed when observed, and had unstable motivation. Externally, anxiety was intensified by vocabulary gaps, peer laughter or comparison, spontaneous tasks, limited preparation time, and grammar uncertainty. These factors formed an avoidance cycle that reduced practice and confidence. The study implies that teachers should design scaffolded, low-pressure speaking activities, normalize mistakes, provide preparation time, strengthen vocabulary use, and build a respectful peer culture.
Keywords: Speaking anxiety; EFL classroom; Tenth-grade students; Internal factors; External factors; Qualitative study.	
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1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most visible indicators of communicative competence in English language learning. In EFL classrooms, students are usually judged not only by their ability to understand texts or complete written exercises but also by their willingness and ability to express ideas orally. Speaking allows learners to exchange information, respond to

questions, negotiate meaning, and participate in social and academic interaction. For senior high school students, oral communication is especially important because classroom learning increasingly requires discussion, presentation, questioning, and spontaneous response. Speaking is therefore not a secondary classroom skill; it is a central channel through which learners demonstrate

both linguistic knowledge and social confidence (Ilham et al., 2020; Mishra, 2017).

Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most anxiety-provoking skills for EFL learners. Many students who can understand written English still hesitate when asked to speak because oral communication exposes their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and confidence to immediate social evaluation. Unlike writing, speaking gives little time for revision. Students must formulate ideas, choose words, organize grammar, pronounce utterances, and respond to the interlocutor almost simultaneously. This condition makes speaking difficult for learners who are still building linguistic control and self-confidence. Prior studies have shown that students often feel nervous, embarrassed, or afraid of making mistakes when they are asked to speak English in class (Maba, 2023; Wardatun, 2020).

Speaking anxiety is not simply ordinary nervousness. In language learning, it may become a psychological barrier that prevents students from participating even when they possess sufficient knowledge. Students with speaking anxiety may avoid answering the teacher, speak in a low voice, depend on notes, ask friends instead of asking the teacher, or remain silent although they understand the question. This avoidance weakens speaking development because students lose opportunities to practice. The more students avoid speaking, the less confident they become; the less confident they become, the more anxiety they experience in later speaking tasks. Speaking anxiety therefore operates as a cycle, not merely as a temporary classroom

feeling (Webster, 2019; Zainurrahman & Sangaji, 2019).

The issue is serious in Indonesian EFL classrooms because English is not used as a dominant daily language. Learners often have limited natural exposure to spoken English outside the classroom. As a result, the classroom becomes the main space for oral practice. However, the same classroom can also become a source of pressure when students worry about teacher correction, peer laughter, pronunciation mistakes, or spontaneous questioning. A student may understand English passively but still feel unable to produce it in front of classmates. This gap between knowledge and performance is one reason why speaking anxiety deserves focused investigation at the senior high school level (Samad et al., 2021; Abdullah et al., 2022).

Previous studies have examined speaking anxiety across different educational levels. Research on junior high school learners has identified causes such as fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, vocabulary limitation, and teacher-related pressure (Abdullah et al., 2022; Sinaga et al., 2020). Other studies have measured anxiety levels quantitatively and grouped learners into low, moderate, and high anxiety categories (Erdiana et al., 2020). These studies are useful, but they also show a gap. Many studies focus on anxiety level or general causes, while fewer studies provide a close qualitative account of how internal and external factors interact in tenth-grade senior high school students' classroom experiences. Tenth grade is a transitional stage. Students enter senior high school with new academic demands, new peer groups, and higher

expectations for oral participation. Their speaking anxiety needs to be understood from their own accounts rather than only from numerical scores.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing interview data from tenth-grade students at a private senior high school in Jakarta. The analysis uses a framework that divides speaking anxiety factors into internal and external factors (Putra, 2018). Internal factors include lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and motivation. External factors include limited vocabulary, peer responses, lack of preparation, and grammatical errors. This distinction is useful because speaking anxiety does not arise only from students' inner psychology or only from classroom conditions. It emerges from the interaction between both. A student may feel shy because

classmates laugh, lose confidence because vocabulary is limited, or avoid speaking because spontaneous tasks do not allow preparation time.

The research question guiding this study is: What internal and external factors contribute to tenth-grade students' speaking anxiety in an EFL classroom? By answering this question, the study contributes to a more practical understanding of speaking anxiety. It helps teachers see that anxiety is not a sign of laziness or lack of ability. It is often a combined result of linguistic insecurity, social-evaluative pressure, and limited classroom support. The findings can inform teaching practices that make speaking activities more supportive, gradual, and communicative without ignoring accuracy.

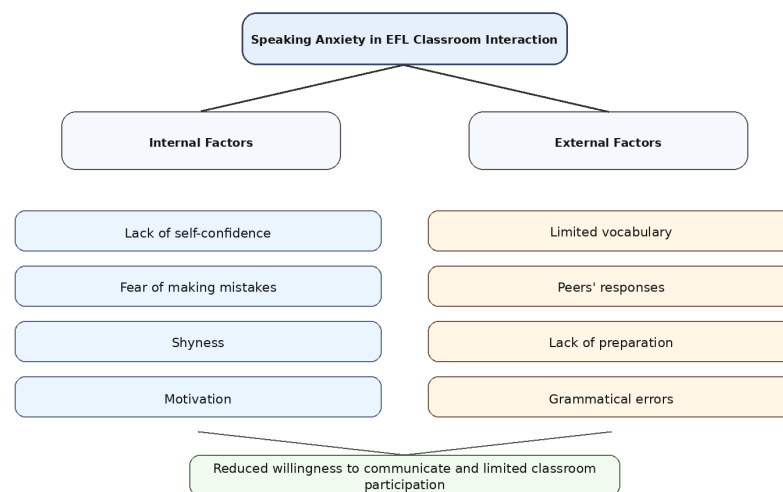


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of internal and external factors contributing to speaking anxiety in responsive EFL classroom interaction.

2. METHOD

2.1. Study Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. A qualitative

approach was appropriate because the purpose of the study was not to measure anxiety statistically but to understand the factors that students perceived as contributing to their speaking anxiety.

Descriptive qualitative research allows researchers to present participants' experiences in a direct and organized way while still interpreting the meanings behind recurring patterns (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). In this study, students' accounts were treated as the primary data for identifying internal and external factors that shaped their anxiety in speaking English.

The design was also suitable because speaking anxiety is a complex classroom phenomenon. It involves emotional responses, self-perception, social pressure, classroom interaction, and linguistic limitations. These dimensions cannot be captured adequately through a single score. Interviews allowed students to explain why they felt nervous, when they avoided speaking, how they reacted to classmates, and what kinds of classroom situations increased or reduced anxiety. The study therefore emphasized depth of explanation rather than breadth of statistical generalization.

2.2. Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at a private senior high school located on Petamburan Street, Jakarta. The site was selected because it provided an EFL classroom context in which English was taught as an additional language and students were required to participate in speaking activities. The research process was conducted between May and August 2025, while the interview session was held on November 6, 2025 in the final stage of data collection.

The participants were 15 tenth-grade students. They consisted of nine male students and six female students. Twelve participants were 15 years old, while three participants were 16 years old. The participants were selected purposively because they had experienced speaking anxiety in English class and were willing to share their experiences. This purposive selection was consistent with qualitative research principles, in which participants are chosen because they can provide rich information about the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2007). All participants were anonymized using participant codes P1 to P15.

Table 1. Profile of interview participants

Parameter	Description
Number of participants	15 tenth-grade students
Gender	9 male students and 6 female students
Age	12 students aged 15 years and 3 students aged 16 years
School context	Private senior high school, Petamburan Street, Jakarta
Data collection	Semi-structured individual interviews

2.3. Research Instrument

The main instrument was a semi-structured interview guide. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide direction while allowing flexibility for follow-up

questions (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The interview questions were developed around the internal and external factors of speaking anxiety adapted from Putra's framework (Putra, 2018). Internal indicators included lack of

confidence, shyness, motivation, and fear of making mistakes. External indicators included lack of preparation, limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and peers. The interview guide asked students about their feelings when responding to teachers, speaking without notes, joining spontaneous quizzes, being corrected, lacking vocabulary, making grammar mistakes, and being laughed at by friends.

Open-ended questions were used to avoid restricting students to yes-or-no answers. This enabled participants to explain their experiences in their own words. Individual interviews were used because speaking anxiety may involve embarrassment or personal insecurity. A one-to-one setting gave participants a safer space to describe experiences that they might not reveal in a group situation (Taylor et al., 2015).

Table 2. Interview-based coding framework for speaking anxiety factors

Main factor	Sub-factor	Analytical focus
Internal	Lack of self-confidence	Students' belief in their ability to respond or speak English
Internal	Fear of making mistakes	Fear of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or answer errors
Internal	Shyness	Embarrassment when speaking in front of teachers and peers
Internal	Motivation	Interest, personal relevance, and willingness to participate
External	Limited vocabulary	Difficulty finding English words during speaking
External	Peers	Classmates' laughter, comparison, teasing, or support
External	Lack of preparation	Anxiety when responding spontaneously or without notes
External	Grammatical errors	Uncertainty about sentence structure, tense, and word form

2.4. Data Collection

Data were collected through individual interviews. Before the interview, participants were asked to introduce themselves and provide basic demographic information such as age, gender, and grade. The researcher then asked questions related to students' experiences in English speaking activities. Interviews focused on classroom situations such as teacher questioning, class discussion, speaking without notes, spontaneous quizzes, peer laughter, vocabulary difficulty,

grammar uncertainty, and teacher correction.

The interview responses were transcribed and organized according to participant codes. Since several participants expressed their experiences in Indonesian, relevant excerpts were translated into English for presentation in the article. The translation was done carefully to preserve the meaning of the original responses. For example, students' statements about being afraid of saying the wrong thing, feeling embarrassed

when classmates laughed, or going blank when asked to answer spontaneously were treated as evidence of specific anxiety factors.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected interview segments that were relevant to speaking anxiety and removed unrelated information. The selected segments were then coded according to the framework of internal and external factors. For example, statements about being afraid of wrong pronunciation were coded as fear of making mistakes, while statements about not knowing English words were coded as limited vocabulary.

In the data display stage, the coded data were arranged into thematic categories. This display made it possible to compare patterns across participants and identify how factors overlapped. For instance, limited vocabulary often appeared together with fear of mistakes, and peer laughter often intensified shyness. In the conclusion stage, the researcher interpreted the themes by connecting them with theories of foreign language anxiety, affective filter, self-efficacy, and previous studies (Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1982; Bandura, 1997; Liu & Jackson, 2008). The analysis did not aim to rank factors statistically. Instead, it aimed to explain how each factor contributed to speaking anxiety and how factors interacted in the classroom context.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Participant Profile and Classroom Context

The participants shared a common educational context: all were tenth-grade students learning English in a senior high school classroom. Most were 15 years old, with only three participants aged 16. This relatively similar age range is important because adolescents at this stage are sensitive to peer judgment, public embarrassment, and teacher evaluation. Speaking English in front of classmates therefore becomes not only a language task but also a social performance. The classroom situation can intensify anxiety when students feel that mistakes will be noticed immediately.

The interviews show that students' speaking anxiety appeared most clearly in responsive speaking situations. Students became anxious when teachers asked them to answer questions, when quizzes required spontaneous responses, when they had to speak without notes, or when their classmates watched them. This finding is important because it shows that anxiety did not always emerge in all English learning situations. It was stronger when students had to produce English orally under time pressure and social observation.

The data also show that speaking anxiety was not uniform. Some students were highly anxious and preferred silence, while others were nervous but still willing to try. Several students stated that they were more confident when the topic was familiar or interesting, such as hobbies, music, food, sports, or school activities. This indicates that speaking anxiety is situational. It can increase or decrease depending on preparation, topic

relevance, teacher support, and peer climate.

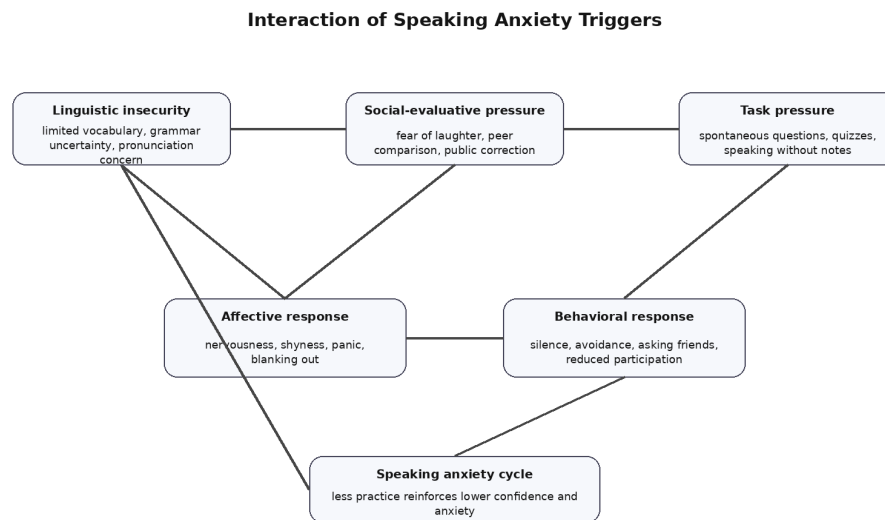


Figure 2. Thematic interaction model showing how linguistic insecurity, social-evaluative pressure, and task pressure intensify speaking anxiety.

3.2. Internal Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety

The internal factors found in the data were lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and motivation. These factors were internal because they were related to students' self-perception, emotional response, and willingness to participate. However, they were not purely personal. They were often shaped by classroom experiences. For example, a student's lack of confidence was reinforced by limited vocabulary, and shyness was intensified when classmates laughed. Internal factors therefore need to be interpreted as psychological responses that develop within a social classroom context.

The first internal factor was lack of self-confidence. Many students reported that they were not confident when speaking English because they were unsure of their vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation. Some

students said they wanted to answer the teacher but chose to remain silent because they were afraid of saying the wrong thing. One participant explained that he felt unconfident because he was afraid his words would be wrong. Another stated that she already had an answer in mind but did not know how to express it in English. These statements show that students' confidence depended on their perceived ability to control language form during speaking.

This finding supports the view that foreign language anxiety is strongly related to communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). In EFL classrooms, students may feel that speaking English publicly exposes their weaknesses. When they do not trust their ability to produce accurate language, they avoid participation. Self-efficacy theory also helps explain this pattern. Students who believe they

cannot perform a speaking task are more likely to experience anxiety and avoid the task (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, lack of confidence is not a minor emotional issue. It directly affects willingness to communicate.

The second internal factor was fear of making mistakes. Students expressed fear of wrong pronunciation, incorrect grammar, wrong word choice, and incorrect answers during discussion or quizzes. For several students, mistakes were not viewed as a natural part of learning. Mistakes were viewed as embarrassing events that could invite laughter, correction, or negative judgment. One participant stated that he was afraid of saying the wrong thing and being laughed at by friends. Another participant reported that she often stopped herself from speaking because she kept thinking, 'do not make a mistake.' This shows that fear of mistakes can interrupt speech before it even begins.

Fear of making mistakes is consistent with the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). When learners feel anxious, afraid, or embarrassed, their affective filter rises and language production becomes more difficult. The interview data show that some students went blank when they were asked to answer spontaneously. This blankness was not simply a lack of knowledge; it was an anxiety response. Students over-monitored their language because they wanted to avoid mistakes. Excessive monitoring slowed their speech, increased hesitation, and reduced fluency. As a result, the fear of mistakes became more damaging than the mistakes themselves.

The third internal factor was shyness. Shyness appeared when students felt uncomfortable becoming

the center of attention. Several participants described physical and emotional reactions such as cold hands, fast heartbeat, silence, and the desire to stop speaking. A student explained that she felt embarrassed when everyone watched her. Another said that when friends laughed, she wanted to stop speaking immediately. These responses show that speaking English in class is not only cognitive but also affective and social. Students may know what they want to say, yet still feel unable to speak because of embarrassment.

Shyness is closely related to communication apprehension (Horwitz et al., 1986). It reduces students' readiness to speak, especially when the speaking task is public. This finding is also consistent with studies showing that shy learners often participate less in oral activities because they fear exposure and negative attention (Young, 1991). In the present study, shyness sometimes made students ask friends instead of teachers. This avoidance strategy protected students from public embarrassment, but it also reduced direct interaction with the teacher and limited opportunities for practice.

The fourth internal factor was motivation. Motivation functioned differently from the other internal factors. Low motivation increased anxiety because students were less willing to struggle through difficult speaking tasks. Some participants said English made them dizzy, that they preferred other subjects, or that they became less interested when the topic was boring. However, motivation also reduced anxiety when students found the topic relevant or received encouragement from the teacher. Students became more willing to speak when the topic involved hobbies, food,

music, dance, sports, or personal experience.

This finding supports motivation theories in second language learning, which emphasize that motivation influences learners' willingness to invest effort in communication (Gardner, 1985; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Motivation in this study was not fixed. It changed according to topic, teacher support, prior success, and classroom atmosphere. A student who

was usually anxious could become more confident when speaking about a familiar hobby. Another student became more motivated after receiving positive feedback on pronunciation. Therefore, motivation can be used pedagogically. Teachers can reduce anxiety by connecting speaking tasks with students' interests and by giving encouragement that strengthens students' sense of progress.

Table 3. Internal factors and interview-based evidence

Internal factor	Representative evidence from participants	Interpretation
Lack of self-confidence	Students reported wanting to answer but remaining silent because they feared saying the wrong thing.	Low perceived ability reduced willingness to communicate.
Fear of making mistakes	Students feared incorrect pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, especially when friends were watching.	Mistakes were perceived as embarrassing rather than as part of learning.
Shyness	Students felt embarrassed when everyone watched them and some experienced cold hands or fast heartbeat.	Public attention increased emotional pressure.
Motivation	Students were more willing to speak when topics involved hobbies, food, music, sports, or teacher encouragement.	Interest and support reduced anxiety and increased participation.

3.3. External Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety

External factors refer to classroom and linguistic conditions that intensified students' anxiety. In this study, the main external factors were limited vocabulary, peer responses, lack of preparation, and grammatical errors. These factors were external because they were connected to the learning environment, language demands, or social conditions surrounding speaking activities. However, they became psychologically powerful because

students internalized them as fear, shame, or low confidence.

The first external factor was limited vocabulary. This factor appeared repeatedly in students' accounts. Many students said they already knew what they wanted to say in Indonesian but did not know the English words. Some reported mixing Indonesian and English because the needed vocabulary did not come to mind. Others said they became nervous when they could not choose the right word. Limited vocabulary therefore created a gap between thought and

expression. Students had ideas, but they could not transform those ideas into English quickly enough during oral interaction.

Vocabulary limitation is a major barrier to speaking because oral communication requires rapid lexical retrieval (Nation, 2001). When students lack vocabulary, they hesitate, pause, and fear that their message will be unclear. In the data, vocabulary limitation was also connected to fear of mistakes. Students were afraid that the word they selected might have the wrong meaning. This fear made them speak more slowly or remain silent. The finding confirms that vocabulary learning should not be treated only as memorization. Students need repeated opportunities to use vocabulary in meaningful spoken contexts so that words become available during real-time communication.

The second external factor was peer response. Peers played a powerful role in shaping students' speaking anxiety. Several participants stated that they were afraid classmates would laugh at them if they spoke incorrectly. Some students felt embarrassed when friends teased them, even when the teasing was framed as joking. Others compared themselves with classmates who spoke English more fluently and felt inferior. These accounts show that peer behavior can either create a supportive learning climate or intensify anxiety.

The role of peers is closely connected to fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). In classroom speaking, students do not speak only to the teacher. They speak in front of a peer audience. If the peer audience is perceived as judgmental, students become more cautious and less willing to try. This finding is

consistent with previous studies showing that peer judgment and classroom laughter can reduce participation in EFL speaking activities (Suparlan, 2021; Maisarah, 2019). Peer pressure also creates social comparison. Students may believe that classmates who speak better make their own weakness more visible. This comparison can lower confidence and increase avoidance.

The third external factor was lack of preparation. Students became especially anxious when they had to answer spontaneous questions, join sudden quizzes, or speak without notes. Some participants said they went blank when they had no time to prepare. Others explained that notes made them feel safer. Lack of preparation increased anxiety because students had to manage content, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation at the same time. Preparedness gave students a sense of control, while spontaneity made them feel exposed.

This finding does not mean that spontaneous speaking should be removed from language classes. Real communication often requires spontaneous response. However, spontaneous speaking should be developed gradually. Students who are already anxious may need scaffolding before they can perform spontaneous oral tasks. Preparation can take the form of vocabulary preview, pair rehearsal, sentence starters, short planning time, or topic familiarization. These supports do not eliminate challenge; they make challenge manageable. Without preparation, speaking tasks can become tests of survival rather than opportunities for learning.

The fourth external factor was grammatical errors. Students often

connected speaking anxiety with uncertainty about tenses, sentence structure, and word forms. Some students stated that they understood grammar only a little, while others said they forgot the difference between past and present tense when nervous. Grammar uncertainty made students focus on accuracy rather than meaning. When students concentrated too heavily on avoiding grammar errors, their speech became slower and more hesitant.

The role of grammar in speaking anxiety needs careful interpretation. Grammar knowledge is important, but

an excessive classroom emphasis on correctness can raise anxiety and reduce fluency. Previous research has warned that immediate correction, especially in public, can increase learners' anxiety (Young, 1991). In the present study, students did not reject correction entirely. Several students said they were willing to be corrected when the teacher's tone was gentle or when correction was not humiliating. This suggests that the problem is not correction itself but how correction is delivered. Supportive correction helps learning; public correction that feels embarrassing can strengthen anxiety.

Table 4. External factors and interview-based evidence

External factor	Representative evidence from participants	Interpretation
Limited vocabulary	Students knew the answer in Indonesian but did not know the English words to use.	Lexical gaps caused hesitation, panic, and silence.
Peers	Students felt embarrassed when classmates laughed or teased them after mistakes.	Peer reaction created social-evaluative pressure.
Lack of preparation	Students felt safer with notes and went blank when asked sudden questions.	Preparation increased perceived control.
Grammatical errors	Students were unsure about tense and sentence structure during speaking.	Overemphasis on accuracy increased anxiety and reduced fluency.

3.4. Interaction Between Internal and External Factors

The most important finding of this study is that speaking anxiety resulted from interaction among factors. Internal and external factors did not work separately. Low confidence was intensified by limited vocabulary. Fear of mistakes was intensified by grammar uncertainty. Shyness was intensified by peer laughter. Low motivation was intensified by boring topics or fatigue. Lack of preparation intensified all other factors because students had less time to control

vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and content. Therefore, speaking anxiety should be understood as a layered phenomenon.

This interaction explains why some students remained silent even when they had something to say. A student may begin with limited vocabulary. Because vocabulary is limited, the student fears choosing the wrong word. Because the student fears mistakes, the student becomes shy when peers are watching. Because the student becomes shy, the student avoids speaking. Because the student

avoids speaking, the student gains less practice and becomes less confident in the next speaking task. This cycle shows that anxiety is reproduced through repeated classroom experiences.

The interaction model also explains why supportive conditions can reduce anxiety. When the topic is familiar, students have more ideas. When they have preparation time, they can organize words. When peers respond respectfully, they feel safer. When teachers correct gently, mistakes become learning opportunities. When students experience small success, confidence improves. This means that speaking anxiety is not fixed. It can be reduced through classroom design that addresses both linguistic and psychological barriers.

3.5. Pedagogical Implications

The findings have several implications for EFL teachers. First, teachers should not interpret silence as lack of interest only. Silence may indicate anxiety, fear of mistakes, vocabulary limitation, or embarrassment. Students may want to speak but feel unsafe or unprepared. Teachers need to observe the emotional conditions behind student silence and provide gradual speaking opportunities.

Second, speaking practice should be scaffolded. Students can begin with pair work or small-group discussion before speaking in front of the whole class. This reduces public pressure and allows rehearsal. Short speaking turns, sentence frames, vocabulary lists, and topic previews can help students participate without feeling overwhelmed. Over time, teachers can increase the level of spontaneity and audience size.

Third, teachers should normalize mistakes. If students believe mistakes are shameful, they will avoid speaking. Teachers can explicitly explain that mistakes are evidence of learning. Correction should be delivered strategically. Delayed correction, recasts, private feedback, or class-level feedback without naming individuals can reduce embarrassment. When correction is necessary, tone matters. The data show that students accepted correction when it felt supportive rather than humiliating.

Fourth, teachers need to build a respectful peer culture. Classmates should understand that laughing at pronunciation or grammar errors can damage participation. Classroom rules should protect students from ridicule. Teachers can model supportive responses and encourage peer feedback that focuses on content and improvement rather than mockery. A low-anxiety speaking classroom is not built by teacher support alone; it also requires peer support.

Fifth, vocabulary and grammar should be taught as tools for communication, not as isolated accuracy targets. Vocabulary should be recycled through meaningful topics and speaking tasks. Grammar should be connected to communicative functions. For example, students can practice past tense through telling experiences, future forms through planning, or modals through giving suggestions. When grammar is used for communication, students may become less afraid of form and more focused on meaning.

Finally, motivation should be treated as a design issue. Students spoke more willingly when topics were personally meaningful. Teachers can include topics related to hobbies,

school life, music, food, sports, digital media, or future goals. Authentic and relevant speaking tasks can make students feel that English is usable, not merely examinable. Motivation will

not remove anxiety automatically, but it can give students a reason to persist despite anxiety.

Pedagogical Response Pathway for Low-Anxiety Speaking Practice

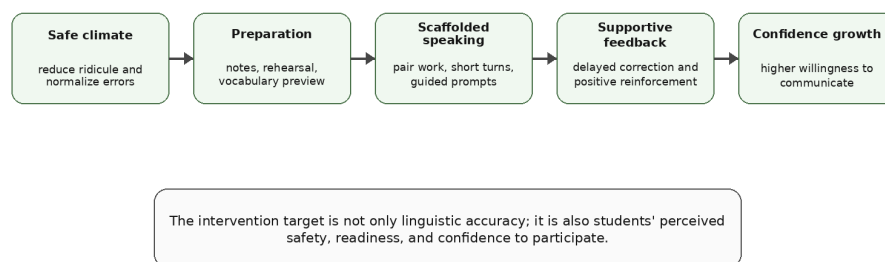


Figure 3. Pedagogical response pathway for reducing speaking anxiety through safety, preparation, scaffolding, feedback, and confidence development.

3.6. Theoretical Contribution and Study Limitations

Theoretically, this study strengthens the argument that speaking anxiety should be examined through an integrated lens rather than through a single-factor explanation. The findings support the foreign language classroom anxiety perspective because students' anxiety was repeatedly connected to communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). However, the data also show that these dimensions become more concrete when they are connected to classroom realities. Fear of negative evaluation was not an abstract psychological construct; it appeared through classmates' laughter, public teacher correction, and comparison with more fluent peers. Communication apprehension was not merely nervousness; it appeared when

students had to answer without notes, speak spontaneously, or produce English while worrying about vocabulary and grammar. This confirms that theoretical categories need to be interpreted through students' lived classroom experiences.

The findings also extend the affective filter explanation by showing how external classroom triggers raise students' internal emotional barriers (Krashen, 1982). When students lacked vocabulary, received sudden questions, or anticipated peer ridicule, their anxiety increased and their ability to speak decreased. In this sense, the affective filter was not only an individual emotional condition. It was shaped by the organization of classroom tasks and by the social climate in the classroom. A student who feels safe and prepared may have a lower affective filter, while the same

student may experience a high affective filter when the task becomes sudden, public, and socially risky. This interpretation is important because it shifts the pedagogical solution from simply telling students to be confident toward redesigning the conditions under which confidence can grow.

The study also contributes to self-efficacy theory in EFL speaking. Students' confidence was strongly connected to their belief that they could complete a speaking task successfully (Bandura, 1997). This belief was not stable. It increased when students had notes, familiar topics, teacher encouragement, successful prior experiences, or friends who helped rather than mocked them. It decreased when students felt linguistically unprepared or socially exposed. Therefore, speaking self-efficacy should be treated as something that can be built through repeated manageable success. Teachers cannot expect students to become confident merely by being asked to speak more often. If repeated speaking experiences are humiliating or too difficult, they may reduce rather than increase self-efficacy.

Practically, this study demonstrates that speaking anxiety can be reduced through an ecology of support. This ecology includes task support, linguistic support, emotional support, and social support. Task support means giving students clear instructions, adequate preparation time, and gradual progression from controlled to freer speaking. Linguistic support means equipping students with vocabulary, sentence frames, and useful expressions before asking them to perform. Emotional support means treating mistakes as normal and avoiding correction that makes students

feel publicly exposed. Social support means building peer norms that discourage ridicule and encourage mutual help. These supports need to work together because anxiety itself is produced by overlapping factors.

Nevertheless, the study has limitations. First, the participants came from one private senior high school, so the findings cannot be generalized to all tenth-grade students in Indonesia. The data are valuable for understanding the selected classroom context, but other schools may have different teacher practices, peer cultures, curriculum demands, or student proficiency levels. Second, the study relied on interviews as the main source of data. Interviews are useful for capturing students' perceptions, but they depend on what students remember and are willing to report. Classroom observation would provide additional evidence about how anxiety appears during actual speaking activities. Third, the study did not measure anxiety levels quantitatively. As a result, it cannot determine which factor has the highest statistical effect. The strength of the study lies in explanation, not measurement.

Future research should address these limitations by involving several schools, combining interviews with classroom observation, and using mixed-methods designs. Longitudinal studies would also be useful because speaking anxiety may change over time. Students who are anxious at the beginning of grade ten may become more confident if they receive supportive teaching, while students who experience repeated embarrassment may become more avoidant. Future studies may also test specific interventions, such as peer-support protocols, delayed correction strategies, vocabulary-based speaking

preparation, reflective journals, or small-group rehearsal before public speaking. These directions would move the field from describing speaking anxiety toward designing evidence-based responses to it.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the internal and external factors that contribute to tenth-grade students' speaking anxiety in an EFL classroom. The findings show that speaking anxiety is multidimensional. Internally, students experienced anxiety because of low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and unstable motivation. Externally, anxiety was intensified by limited vocabulary, peer responses, lack of preparation, and grammatical errors. These factors interacted and formed an anxiety cycle: students felt linguistically insecure, feared social evaluation, avoided speaking, lost practice opportunities, and became less confident in later tasks. The study confirms that speaking anxiety cannot

be solved only by asking students to speak more. Students need structured opportunities, preparation time, supportive correction, vocabulary reinforcement, meaningful topics, and a classroom climate that protects them from ridicule. The pedagogical priority is therefore to make speaking practice challenging but psychologically safe. Future studies may involve more participants from different schools, combine interviews with classroom observation, and examine how specific teaching strategies reduce anxiety over time.

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