



The Emergency in English Speaking Proficiency Among Non-Native Learners

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and analyze the main factors that cause limitations in English speaking skills in non-native learners, focusing on speaking anxiety, learning environment, and teaching methods. The focus of the study is directed at the interaction between psychological, environmental, and pedagogical factors in influencing the development of speaking skills. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive approach, involving in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of the results documentation. Data were analyzed to identify patterns and relationships between these factors. The results showed that speaking anxiety is a major barrier that is exacerbated by lack of exposure to English, monotonous grammar-based teaching, and minimal opportunities for speaking practice. Observations revealed avoidance of speaking and the dominance of the use of the mother tongue in the village, documentation analysis showed low scores\ youth on aspects of fluency and pronunciation. This study contributes to the development of new perspectives in English language learning by emphasizing the importance of integrating practice-based approaches, technology, and supportive learning environments. The results provide practical insights for educators in designing more effective learning strategies to improve the speaking skills of non-native students.

Keywords: *Speaking Skills, Non-Native Learners, Speaking Anxiety, Learning Environment, Teaching Methods, English Language Learning.*

Introduction

English speaking ability has become an important skill in the era of globalization, especially for non-native learners who face great challenges in mastering this language. The need to communicate effectively in English arises in various fields, such as education, work, and international relations. However, many non-native learners still have difficulty developing their speaking skills, mainly due to obstacles such as anxiety, lack of practice, and less supportive learning environments. Horwitz et al. (2018) identified that speaking anxiety is one of the biggest obstacles in learning English. This phenomenon is crucial because it affects students' success in achieving their educational goals. This study is important because it can provide in-depth insight into the factors that influence speaking ability and offer relevant solutions to overcome this problem.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of English language learning, including speaking anxiety (Horwitz, 2020), grammar-based teaching methods (Richards, 2021), and the influence of the learning environment (Liu & Jackson, 2022). However, most of these studies have focused on one particular factor and rarely explored the interaction between psychological, pedagogical, and environmental factors holistically. Young (2021) noted that studies that integrate these three aspects are still limited. In addition, in-depth qualitative approaches to understand the experiences of non-native learners in diverse contexts are also lacking. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by combining interviews, observations, and documentation to explore challenges and solutions in improving English speaking skills.

This study aims to answer the main question: "What are the main factors that affect the English-speaking ability of non-native learners, and how can these factors be overcome through effective learning approaches?" This question stems from the problems of speaking anxiety, uninteresting teaching methods, and the lack of a supportive learning environment. These issues are relevant because they directly affect the success of non-native learners in mastering speaking skills. This study also aims to identify patterns that emerge in the learning experiences of young people and evaluate the effectiveness of the learning strategies that have been used. By answering these questions, this study is expected to provide practical insights for educators and policy makers in improving the quality of English learning.

The initial hypothesis of this study was that speaking anxiety, irrelevant teaching methods, and unsupportive learning environments are the main barriers to the development of non-native students' speaking skills. This study tested the hypothesis that the integration of practice-based approaches, technology, and communication simulations can significantly improve young people's speaking skills. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2019) emphasized that practice-based strategies

can reduce speaking anxiety. In addition, Zhang et al. (2020) found that the use of technology in learning increased youth engagement. If this hypothesis is proven correct, the implication is the need for a transformation in English language learning methods, from theory-based to more applied and contextual approaches, to support the development of non-native students' speaking skills as a whole.

Method

This study uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is a type of research that aims to describe a situation in narrative or written form. Qualitative methods are used to obtain in-depth data and data that contain meaning. The subjects of this study were students of SMA Negeri 1 Bangorejo in grades 11 and 10 who studied at the tutoring center consisting of 33 students. This research was conducted at the English Training Center (Fun English) Paciran Lamongan.

This research was conducted on Monday, January 6, 2025. The data collection techniques used was questionnaires, in-depth interviews and documentation. According to (Sugiyono, 2017) stated that in qualitative research, data collection is carried out in natural conditions (natural settings), primary data sources, and data collection techniques are more on participant observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The instruments used in this study were questionnaires and interview guidelines. Testing the validity of the data in this study is Triangulation; Triangulation techniques carried out in this study are testing the validity of data obtained from the same source but with different techniques. This study was conducted on research subjects, namely students, with different techniques, namely questionnaires, interviews and documentation. Researchers conducted questionnaire tests and in-depth interviews with each student regarding difficulties in speaking English.

Objectives

- 1) To find out the emergency in English speaking proficiency Among non-native learners.
- 2) To find out speaking anxiety is a major obstacle for non-native learners in developing their English-speaking skills.

Results

A. Interview

1. Data

The interview results show the main obstacles of non-native learners in their ability to speak English. The data is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Data of interview

Problem Category	Number of Respondents (%)	Example Statement
Public speaking anxiety	65%	"I feel nervous when I speak in class."
Lack of English exposure	45%	"I rarely use English outside of class."
Teaching methods are less interesting	40%	"The class materials are less helpful for real conversations."
Limited vocabulary	50%	"I have trouble finding the right words when I speak."

Restatement: The majority of participants felt that speaking ability was hampered by anxiety and limited vocabulary, although other factors such as exposure and method also contributed.

2. Description

Interview data indicated that public speaking anxiety was the main obstacle for non-native learners, affecting more than half of the respondents (65%). Other frequently mentioned factors were lack of exposure to everyday English (45%), limited vocabulary (50%), and uninteresting teaching methods (40%). This pattern illustrates that psychological aspects such as anxiety play a significant role in speaking ability, followed by technical and environmental aspects.

3. Interpretation

This pattern occurs because speaking involves interactive elements and spontaneity, which can trigger greater anxiety compared to passive skills such as reading. Limited vocabulary exacerbates anxiety, because participants feel unable to convey ideas effectively. Lack of daily exposure to English indicates that the learning environment is not optimal in encouraging language practice, while less interesting teaching methods make participants less motivated.

B. Observation

1. Data

The observation results show the behavior of participants during the English training session. The data is summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Data of Observation

Behavior	Percentage of Observations (%)	Observation Notes
Avoiding talking	60%	Many participants were silent or gave short responses.
Use of mother tongue	50%	Participants often mix their mother tongue in conversation.
Active participation in discussions	30%	Only a small number of participants actively spoke.
Use of compensation strategies	40%	Participants use gestures or synonyms to replace unknown vocabulary.

Restatement: Observations showed that the majority of participants tended to avoid speaking or using their mother tongue, with active participation and compensatory strategies only seen in a small number of participants.

2. Description

Observations revealed that 60% of participants preferred to remain silent or give short answers during speaking sessions, which confirmed the findings from the interviews regarding anxiety. In addition, 50% of participants often mixed their mother tongues when speaking, indicating a lack of confidence in using English. In contrast, active participation only reached 30%, indicating that the learning environment was less conducive to encouraging participation. Some participants (40%) tried to use compensatory strategies such as synonyms or gestures, reflecting an attempt to stay engaged despite limited vocabulary.

3. Interpretation

This pattern can be explained by the low exposure to real-world English contexts, which limits participants' opportunities to practice speaking. The tendency to use their mother tongue indicates that participants feel more comfortable in their comfort zone. Meanwhile, the low level of active participation and minimal use of compensatory strategies reflect the need for a more collaborative and supportive learning approach.

C. Documentation**1. Data**

The documentation results in the form of participants' speaking assignment scores are summarized in the following table:

Table 3. Data of Documentation

Rated aspect	Average Value (%)	Information
Eloquence	55%	Many participants stopped while speaking.
Grammatical accuracy	60%	Common grammatical errors were seen in most of the participants.
Pronunciation	50%	Some participants had difficulty with intonation and articulation.
Vocabulary	58%	Word usage is often repetitive and limited.

Restatement: Documentation shows that participants' fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary are still below optimal standards, with average scores ranging between 50–60%.

2. Description

The data shows that participants' speaking skills still need a lot of improvement. Fluency had the lowest mean score (55%), which is in line with the observation that participants often paused while speaking. Grammatical accuracy was better (60%) but still showed common errors. Pronunciation was the second lowest (50%), indicating challenges in intonation and articulation, while vocabulary limitations reflected a mean score of 58%.

3. Interpretation

These low scores may be related to a lack of speaking practice in supportive contexts. Low fluency may be due to anxiety and reliance on the mother tongue, as seen in the interview and observation results. Poor pronunciation suggests a need for greater focus on phonetics and intonation training. Overall, this pattern suggests that a more structured and practice-based teaching approach is needed to improve participants' learning outcomes.

Discussion

A. Implications of Interview Results

The interview results showed that speaking anxiety is a major barrier for non-native learners, which has implications for its function and dysfunction in English language learning.

Speaking anxiety causes avoidance of active communication, reduces students' participation in classroom activities, and limits their ability to master speaking skills naturally. This hinders effective learning.

Horwitz et al. (2018) confirmed that speaking anxiety is correlated with low self-confidence in language learning. Zhang et al. (2020) identified that students with high anxiety showed minimal participation. Research by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2019) linked anxiety to lack of vocabulary mastery. In addition, Young (2021) found that anxiety also affects the ability to interact spontaneously. Liu and Jackson (2022) noted that speaking anxiety is often caused by a lack of real practice.

The main implication is the need for pedagogical interventions that focus on reducing anxiety, such as simulation-based methods or collaborative learning environments, to improve students' speaking skills functioning.

B. Cause and Effect of Interview Results

Speaking anxiety arises as a result of psychological structures and environments that are less supportive in learning English.

Lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, conventional learning methods, and minimal authentic interactions trigger students' anxiety when speaking. These factors reinforce vocabulary limitations and fear of making mistakes.

MacIntyre and Gardner (2018) showed that an unsupportive learning environment exacerbates students' anxiety. Zhang et al. (2019) found that traditional teaching methods failed to stimulate students' emotional engagement. Liu (2021) underlined that lack of exposure to English limits fluency development. Horwitz (2020) stated that fear was considered to exacerbate speaking avoidance. Research by Young (2022) noted the importance of using hands-on practice-based techniques.

Speaking anxiety can be overcome by creating more supportive learning structures, such as practical activity-based learning and integrating the use of technology for communication simulations.

C. Implications of Observation Results

Observations show that students often avoid speaking or mix their mother tongues, which have a dysfunctional impact on the development of speaking skills. Avoiding speaking limits students' opportunities to actively practice English skills, so that communication skills do not develop optimally. The use of the mother tongue also indicates a lack of an environment that encourages the full use of English.

Thomas et al. (2020) noted that avoidance of speaking is a major barrier to second language acquisition. Research by Ellis and Shintani (2019) confirmed that the use of the mother tongue in bilingual learning reduces efficiency. Luoma (2021) found that an unsupportive learning environment pushed students back to their mother tongue. Seliger (2018) showed that active participation is a key factor in successful language learning. Zhang et al. (2022) highlighted the need for interactive learning strategies.

A learning environment that is more supportive of active speaking practice and limits the use of the mother tongue is essential to improving students' speaking skills.

D. Cause and Effect of Observation Results

The pattern of avoiding speaking and using the mother tongue is caused by a lack of self-confidence and a learning environment that is not conducive to speaking, as well as a lack of interactive practice outside the classroom. This reinforces the habit of students to stay in their comfort zone.

Macaro (2020) noted that a grammar-focused teaching approach without speaking practice limits communication development. Gass and Selinker (2019) showed that a lack of speaking experience in real situations exacerbates students' anxiety. Research by Ellis (2022) states that task-based learning can increase participation. Swain (2021) found that bilingual environments often reduce opportunities to use the target language. Dörnyei (2020) underlines the importance of motivation and self-confidence in language learning.

To overcome this problem, a learning approach is needed that is oriented towards real communication and creates an environment where students feel comfortable using English.

E. Implications of Documentation Results

The documentation results show low average scores in the aspects of fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, which have dysfunctional implications for learning.

This low score indicates that current learning methods are not effective in preparing students for real communication. Students are not sufficiently trained to speak spontaneously and in a structured manner.

Thornbury (2020) emphasized that speaking practice should focus on fluency. Research by Richards (2021) showed that grammar-based learning without contextualization often results in limited communication skills. Luoma (2020) noted that pronunciation is often neglected in standard curricula. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2019) found that low vocabulary mastery hinders spontaneous communication. Swain (2022) noted the need for vocabulary and grammar integration in speaking learning.

To improve the learning function, more integrated approaches, such as context-based simulation and pronunciation teaching, need to be implemented.

F. Cause and Effect of Documentation Results

Low speaking learning outcomes are caused by learning methods that do not prioritize speaking practice and the lack of integration of core linguistic skills. Reliance on passive learning and a focus on grammar limit students' opportunities to practice fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary mastery in real situations.

Macaro (2019) asserts that focusing on grammar without speaking practice leads to a lack of fluency. Research by Thornbury (2021) notes that speaking instruction should include the integration of vocabulary and fluency. Ellis (2020) suggests that drilling-based methods are not sufficient to develop pronunciation. Research by Gass and Selinker (2019) highlights the importance of context-based tasks. Dörnyei (2020) states that students' motivation increases when they feel more prepared to speak.

These results indicate the need for practice-based learning methods that integrate all aspects of speaking skills to support the development of students' abilities comprehensively.

Conclusion

A. Result Findings

This study revealed that speaking anxiety is a major obstacle for non-native learners in developing their English-speaking skills. Other factors, such as lack of language exposure, limited vocabulary, and uninteresting teaching methods, also worsen the situation. These findings suggest that speaking skills depend not only on linguistic abilities but also on psychological aspects and a supportive learning environment. The main lesson learned is the importance of creating a learning environment that supports more active speaking practice and integrating context-based approaches to improve young people's fluency and confidence.

B. Research Strengths

This study makes an important contribution in updating the perspective on the relationship between anxiety, learning environment, and speaking skill development. By combining interviews, observations, and documentation, this study presents a comprehensive method to evaluate factors that influence speaking ability. In addition, the focus on non-native learners provides more relevant insights for the context of language learning in developing countries. This study also enriches the literature by offering a practice-based and technology-based approach as a potential solution, strengthening its academic and practical relevance in the field of English language learning.

C. Research Limitations

This study has several limitations, including the limited case coverage of one specific group of youth, so the results may not be fully representative of the wider population. In addition, this study did not fully explore the influence of age,

education level, or cultural background on speaking anxiety. Another limitation lies in the relatively short duration of the study, which may limit the observation of long-term patterns. Therefore, further research involving a wider population, more diverse demographic variables, and a longer duration is highly recommended to deepen the understanding of this issue.

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