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# Students Anxiety in Speaking English at Second Semester Students of English Department in Nommensen HKBP Medan

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### **ABSTRACT**

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This research aims to investigate students' anxiety in Speaking English at Second Semester Students of English Department in Nommensen HKBP University Medan. The objectives of this research are (1) to identify the factors or situations that make the students' feel anxious when they are speak English and (2) to find out and describe the strategies to minimize anxiety for the student. The researcher used descriptive qualitative method, with phenomenology approach. The participants in this research were 25 students in 1 class. The instrument of the collecting data interview and questionnaire. Both of them were conducted online. The researcher gave several questions and questionnaires to be answered by students via Google Forms, and from the students' answers, the researcher saw that the students felt uncomfortable when speaking English, so that from this discomfort, a feeling of anxiety arose when they spoke English. The result of the research showed in two factors, they are internal factors (shyness, lack of self -confident, and fear of making mistakes, and the external factors (lack of preparation, limited vocabulary, and friends/classmates). And there were five strategies to minimize anxiety when speaking english showed in this research (preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, concentration and peer seeking).

Keywords

Speaking, Anxiety, Students.

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### INTRODUCTION

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English is one of the lessons to be learned in school. Learning English is not easy for several students because English is not language belong to our country. Speaking is the way to use language to communicate each other. Speaking is one of the four language skills learned by the students besides reading, listening and writing., As one of the four English skills being developed, speaking is pivotal for students (Bright & McGregor, 1970) There are four of basic skills that students should master in language: they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To build good relationships with

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others in life humans must be able to communicate well. Speaking can be a tool to make students easier to convey ideas, information and feeling.

Speaking can be a challenging task for many students because it needs interactions. The other skills can practice alone, but for speaking, the students cannot really speak alone. That is why the students should find somebody else to speak. To enable students to communicate, it needs to apply the language in real 2 communication. To communicate, the students can use verbal and nonverbal language. In context of speaking, it will be easier if the students use verbal language or speaking orally. Speaking is a speech that has a purpose or intention to be recognized by the speaker and the recipient processes the statement to recognize their intention (Rickheit & Strohner, 2008).

In learning English, the ability to speak English is one of the skills that students need to master, but there are still many students who feel anxious when speaking in front of many people. There are several factors that affect the students speaking ability in learning English. (Thornburry 2005) in Indrianty, 2016 states that, lack of vocabularies, improper grammatical, fears of mistakes are some factors that can contribute to speaking failure and cause an acute sense of anxiety when it comes to speak. Those factors are always found in the students. They always make reasons if the teacher asks to them. The Encyclopedia Britannica 2008 ultimate reference suite provides the following definition for anxiety: "a feeling of dread, fear, or apprehension, often with no clear justification" (Amiri & Ghonsooly, 2015). Specifically, anxiety as an unpleasant emotional state or condition that is characterized by subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, and worry, and by activation or arousal of the 3 automatic nervous system" (Spielberger, 1983). It means that anxiety is the result of a negative reaction that arouse when learning English. The reaction also causes excessive fear and nervous effects.

According to (Horwitz et al., 1986), Speaking in the target language is a threatening aspect of foreign language learning. English is not the student first language or mother tongue, speaking English can be a stressful activity for the student. (Al-Saraj, 2014), state that in an English classroom, students don't feel comfortable to speak in front of others. Most of the students become more anxious when they are asked to speak in front of the classroom. (Sinaga et al., 2020), found that students feel afraid and embarrassed to speak in front of the class, because they think that other students will laugh at them when they try are speak in front of the class. This might make the student still stay silent instead of speaking.

This phenomenon happens because of many factors and anxiety is one of the most influencing factors. Anxiety is the main problem of learning process in

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foreign language especially in speaking English. As suggested by (Horwitz et al., 1986), teachers and also students feel strongly that anxiety is the main factor of obstacle to speak another language especially English. Speaking is an activity that makes students anxious while in class, many students are highly anxious because they participate in speaking activities.

Based on the observations I have made, the researcher observed the second semester students of English department in NOMMENSEN HKBP UNIVERSITY MEDAN, when students were having a conversation in the Transactional Speaking class with the lecturer, Mrs. Susan, at 1 pm, on the topic of Difficult Subject in College. Researchers observed the signs of anxiety when speaking English experienced by students, to find out which students felt anxious when speaking in front of the class based on the three characteristics of anxiety illustrated by Nevid et al., (2005), such as physical, behavioral and cognitively.

Physically, researchers saw that when students were having a conversation in front of the class with their friends, one of them showed signs of anxiety, namely his hands were shaking, nervousness, making it difficult for students to speak, and also difficulty breathing, so they felt sensitive or irritable. Behaviorally, researchers also saw avoidance behavior towards something, when students were chosen to come forward to have a conversation with their friends, the students immediately avoided it by giving several reasons, so they were postponed from coming forward. Dependent behavior where they are dependent on the person they are talking to, if the person they are talking to does not explore the topic of discussion then they will only answer questions from the other person, and also shaken behavior where even if they laugh at the slightest bit by their friend, they will immediately feel shaken as can be seen from the sad and embarrassed expression on their face.

Cognitively, researchers saw that there was worry about something, feelings of disturbance or fear that something would happen in the future, belief that something bad would happen soon without a clear explanation, and also fear of losing control, fear of not being able to overcome the problem, difficulty focusing, and difficulty concentrating. It can be concluded from the above problems that students have signs of anxiety when speaking English. when they are anxious, they cannot speak. When they cannot speak, they become more anxious, and it is the main cause of student anxiety when speaking English.

To support the problem above, the researcher also conducted a preliminary interview on January 22 2024 and interviewed two students at the second semester students of English department in Nommensen HKBP

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University Medan and obtained conclusions that speaking in front of the class is the biggest cause of anxiety that faced by the students .In addition, the importance of studying this problem aims to find out what are the factors that dominate anxiety problems and how to handle them, so that teachers can find the right way so that student speaking activities continue to run well. It will make the students can take their chance to have great skills in speaking English.

The objectives of the study which are reached in this research. To identify the factors or situations that make the students feel anxious when they are speak English. To find out and describe the strategies to minimize anxiety for the students.

#### RESEARCH METHODE

In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative with phenomenology approach as a concern with developing explanations of social phenomena. (Creswell, 2012), states that a qualitative research is typically be used to establish the importance of the central idea and to explore the problem and develop an understanding of small individuals in social problem. Qualitative research was employed to explore the phenomenon in order to understand practices and behaviors in real social situations for small individuals' problems. Therefore, this research used a descriptive method to reveal the phenomenon of speaking anxiety in students.

Phenomenology approach is an approach that tries to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Teherani et al., 2015). This approach investigated human everyday experiences while suspending the researchers' assumptions about the phenomenon. The aim of the phenomenology approach was to describe the meaning of the experience in terms of what and how it was experienced. This approach identified a phenomenon as perceived by the individual in a situation. It was also used to study similarities in the behavior of a group of people.

In this research, the population and samples are taken from the second semester students of the English department at Nommensen HKBP University Medan. The researcher chooses group A, which consists of 25 students. The researcher selects the second semester because the students in this class have various anxiety factors, and the researcher wants to know how the students control their anxiety when speaking English.

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### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter's research findings and discussion section discuss the answer from the formulation of the problems mentioned in chapter one. The result of this research was presented from the data obtained by the researcher through interviews and questionnaires by google forms. This chapter contains the research findings that answered the two research questions, the factors affecting students` speaking anxiety and how to minimize them. Data were collected through interviews with 25 participants who were considered anxious in English classroom.

Table 1.
Theme and Subtheme of Students Speaking Anxiety

Theme and subtreme of statements speaking restrictly		
Factors		Result
Internal Factors	1.Lack of self	4 Students
	Confidence	5 students
	2.Shyness	10 students
	3.Fear of Mistake	
External Factors	1.Lack of Preparation	1 students
	2.Limited Vocabulary	4 students
	3.Friends/Classmate	6 students
Strategies	1.Relaxation	12 students
	2.Preparation	7 students
	3.Positive Thingking	5 Students
	4.Concentration	6 students
	5.Peer Seeking	5 students

## **Internal Factors**

There were 3 factors affecting the students' anxiety in internal factor based on the data from interview with the participants.

### Lack Of Self Confidence

Lack of self-confidence is one part of factors that influencing students' anxiety that focused on from internal factors. Based on interview and questionnaire, 4 student's from 25 students reported lack of self confidence was one of the factors anxiety when speaking English.

"Ya, karena takut salah grammar menjadi kurang percaya diri berbicara di depan banyak orang." (P2) ("Yes, because I am afraid of making grammatical mistakes, I am less confident in speaking in front of many people.")
Shyness

Shyness is one part of factors that influencing students' anxiety that focused on from internal factors. Based on the interview and questionnaire, 5

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students from 25 students reported that shyness was one of the reasons they became anxious when speaking English in class. As P5 reports;

"saya bisa tetapi jika disuruh tiba-tiba saya akan panic dan malu jika saya salah pengucapan dan membuat saya merasa cemas." (P5) ("I can, but if I am suddenly asked to do something, I will panic and be embarrassed if I pronounce it wrong and it will make me feel anxious.")

Based on the statement above showed that the student feels embarrassed if she pronounces it wrong so that it makes her anxious. As reported by P13; "iya karena saya akan malu jika saya salah berbicara didepan teman-teman dan juga dengan dosen saya". (P13) ("Yes, because I would be embarrassed if I said something wrong in front of my friends and also my lecturer.")

Based on the statement above, it showed that the student feels embarrassed if she speaks wrongly in front of her friends and also in front of her lecturer.

### Fear Of Mistake

Fear of making mistakes is one of the factors that influences students' anxiety and is focused on internal factors. Based on the interview and questionnaire, 10 students from 25 students reported that the fear of mistakes was one of the reasons why they have anxiety when speaking English. As P6reports;

"Takut salah dalam pengucapan ,dan juga karena kosakata kurang". (P6) ("Afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation, and also because of a lack of vocabulary.")

### **External Factors**

There were 3 factors affecting the students' anxiety in internal factor based on the data from interview with the participants.

## Lack Of Preparation

Lack of of preparation is one part of factors that influencing students' anxiety that focused on from external factors. Based on the interview, 1 student from 25 students reported that lack of preparation was one of the reason why they have anxiety when speaking English. As P12 reports;

"Iyah saya mau berbicara bahasa inggris tetapi kalo tiba-tiba disuruh maju kedepan saya gugup dan cemas karena saya kurang persiapan sebelumnya." (P12) ("Yes, I want to speak English, but if I am suddenly asked to come to the front, I will be nervous and anxious because I was not prepared beforehand.")

Based on the statement above, it showed that students feel nervous and anxious if suddenly asked to come forward because of the lack of previous preparation.

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## **Limited Vocabulary**

Limited vocabulary is one of the factors that affect student anxiety, which is focused on external factors. Based on the interview, 4 students from 25 students reported that limited vocabulary is one of the reasons why they have anxiety when speaking English. As three participants report:

"Ya ,karena saya gugup,dan itu disebabkan karena kosakata saya yang kurang." (P6) ("Yes, because I was nervous, and that was because of my lack of vocabulary.")

## Friends/Classmate

Friends and classmates are one of the factors that influence student anxiety, which is focused on external factors. Based on the interview, 6 students from 25 students reported that their classmates were the main reason why they have anxiety when speaking English. As three participants report;

"Ya. Karena takut salah dan ditertawakan oleh teman-teman sekelas." (P15) ("Yes. Because I was afraid of making a mistake and being laughed at by my classmates.")

The statement above showed friends/classmate that the cause of students' anxiety is the fear of being laughed at by their classmates. As P10 reports;

"Ya, karena takut dinilai teman tidak mampu atau tidak kompeten." (P10) ("Yes, because I'm afraid my friends will judge me as incapable or incompetent.")

## The Strategies in Reducing Speaking Anxiety

There are several strategies for reducing language anxiety when speaking English. The researcher analyzed the answers of the participants based on the interview results. Here were the results:

## Relaxtion

Relaxation is the process of reducing the effects of stress on our minds and bodies. In the interview session, 12 students from 25 students answered that relaxing can be an effective strategy to overcome their anxiety when speaking English in front of the class. The data was taken from the results of an interview or transcription that was conducted with the participants. As P1 reports;

"Ya, saya melakukan relaksasi untuk mengatasi kecemasan dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris.seperti mengambil napas dalam-dalam, dan saya melakukan beberapa peregangan ringan untuk melepaskan ketegangan fisik di tubuh, terutama di area bahu dan leher." (P1) ("Yes, I do relaxation to overcome anxiety in speaking English, such as taking deep breaths, and I do some light stretching to release physical tension in the body, especially in the shoulder and neck areas.")

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# Preparation

Preparation is the process of getting ready for some opportunity, test, or assignment. If we want to perform something we must prepare ourselves first so that our performance will be good enough, than not preparing anything. In the interview session 7 students from 25 students reported that preparation can be an effective strategy to overcome their anxiety when speaking English , The data was taken from the results of an interview or transcription that was conducted with the participants. As P10 reports;

"Melakukan persiapan yang matang dengan latihan mandiri atau kelompok untuk mengasah kemampuan dan keterampilan." (P10) ("Make thorough preparations with independent or group practice to hone your abilities and skills.")

# **Positive Thingking**

Positive thinking means that the speaker is trying to divert his mind from negative thoughts that can hinder performance, especially in speaking. Based on the interview, 7 students from 25 students reported that positive thinking can be an effective strategy to overcome their anxiety. The data was taken from the results of an interview that was conducted with the participants. As two participants report;

"Ya, berpikir positif sangat membantu dalam mengatasi kecemasan dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris." (P1) ("Yes, positive thinking really helps in overcoming anxiety in speaking English.")

### Concentration

Concentration refers to the action or power of focusing one's attention. This strategy aims to give a good appearance to minimize the chance of making mistakes that can cause anxiety for the speaker. In the interview session, 6 students from 25 students reported that concentration can be an effective strategy to overcome their

anxiety. As P1 report;

"Mengubah Fokus, Mengalihkan perhatian dari ketakutan akan membuat kesalahan atau tidak dipahami oleh orang lain, ke fokus pada kesempatan untuk berlatih dan memperbaiki kemampuan komunikasi saya." (P1) ("Changed Focus, Shifting attention from the fear of making mistakes or not being understood by others, to focusing on the opportunity to practice and improve my communication skills.")

## **Peer Seeking**

Peer seeking is distinguished from students' willingness to seek out other students who appear to have difficulty understanding the class and/or controlling their anxiety. In the interview session, 5 students from 25 students

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reported that peer seeking can be an effective strategy to overcome their anxiety. As P1 reports;

"Ya, mengetahui bahwa teman saya juga mengalami kecemasan saat berbicara bahasa Inggris bisa membantu meredakan kecemasan saya sendiri, karena saya menyadari bahwa kecemasan dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris adalah hal yang umum dan normal dialami oleh banyak orang, terutama yang sedang belajar atau menggunakan bahasa asing. Ini membuat saya merasa lebih didukung dan tidak sendirian dalam menghadapi tantangan tersebut." (P1) ("Yes, knowing that my friends also experience anxiety when speaking English helps to ease my own anxiety, because I realize that anxiety in speaking English is a common and normal thing for many people, especially those who are learning or using a foreign language. This makes me feel more supported and not alone in facing the challenge.")

#### Discussion

# **Factors Affecting Students Speaking Anxiety**

From the interview and questionanaire results, it shows the factors that influence students' speaking anxiety when speaking English. There are two factors that influence students' speaking anxiety found in this study; internal and external factors. There are three internal factors found in this study. First, lack of self-confidence, most students have low self-confidence; they think that they will be laughed at or teased by classmates because they feel less competent than other students.

Second, shyness, they often answer that they feel shy and worried if they are suddenly told by the lecturer to make them panic so that they pronounce or speak incorrectly. In addition, the participants said that they felt uncomfortable because all the students were watching them and the feeling of embarrassment made their minds go blank or they would forget what to say. And the last fear of mistake, the participants were worried because they could not pronounce words correctly, were wrong in pronunciation, lack of vocabulary so that they were afraid of not being understood correctly which caused confusion or misunderstanding. They felt negatively evaluated by lecturers or classmates.

There are three external factors found in this study. First, lack of preparation if students are asked suddenly they will feel anxious because of lack of preparation. Second, limited vocabulary, most participants have limited vocabulary it is difficult for them to remember Third, words. friends/classmates, all students think that people in their class will laugh at them if they make mistakes so they look less competent. They expressed fear that their classmates would mock them and judge them as incapable.

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The research findings on factors affecting student's speaking anxiety were the same as Ernawati & Fatma, (2012), they classify the two factors causing students' speaking anxiety as: (1) Internal Factors such as lack of confidence, shyness, motivation, and fear of making mistake, (2) External Factors such as lack of preparation, limited vocabulary, and friends or classmates.

## The Strategies in Reducing Speaking Anxiety

The result of interview and questionnaire also answered the research question about the strategies to minimize students' speaking anxiety. There are five strategies to minimize students' speaking anxiety found in this research. First, relaxation, the participants tried to calm down and take a deep breath before speaking in front of the class because it really helps them reduce their anxiety when speaking. Second, preparation, students make thorough preparations by studying independently or in groups to hone their abilities and skills. Third, positive thingking, students try to divert their minds from negative thoughts, try to be confident, and believe in themselves. Fourth, concentration, students try to divert their attention from the fear of making mistakes by taking a deep breath and then exhaling. And the last one, peer seeking, students feel relieved if there are peers who also experience anxiety so they feel they are not alone and are able to improve themselves even better.

The research findings were the same as the research conducted by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) in Japan, who designed a typology of techniques to reduce students' anxiety consisting of preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, concentration peer seeking. Researchers are concerned with how to overcome anxiety problems in accordance with the way in this study.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the result in chapter four, this research focuses on the Second Semester Students of English Department in NOMMENSEN HKBP University Medan and provides clear and convincing evidence of the factors affecting students speaking anxiety and the strategies to minimize them. Based on the interview and questionnaire with the participants, there were various factors that affecting their anxiety. There are at least six factors which found in this research, they are lack of vocabulary, friends/classmates, fear of making mistakes, lack or preparation, shyness, and lack of confident. The sources of these factors are from the students as the participants. The result of interview and questionnaire also answered the research question about the strategies to minimize student's speaking anxiety, it shows that relaxation, preparation, positive thinking, concentration, and peer seeking are the strategies to minimize their anxiety. The experiences of the students provide a great deal of

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information about the students' anxiety about speaking English. In other words, students can provide valuable information about their anxiety about speaking English.

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