



An Analysis Of Students' Strategies To Overcome Anxiety In Speaking English Of Grade 8 Students At Mts Pancasila Kota Bengkulu

Amanda Novry Oktavia Ningrum¹, Fera Zasrianita², Hanura Febriani³

amandanovry@gmail.com

¹²³Tarbiyah dan Tadris, Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno, Bengkulu, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the strategies used by eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Kota Bengkulu in overcoming English speaking anxiety. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method with data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The data were analyzed descriptively to identify the strategies most frequently used by students in dealing with speaking anxiety. The results revealed that five strategies were identified, namely Preparation, Relaxation, Positive Thinking, Peer Seeking, and Resignation. Among these strategies, Peer Seeking was the most frequently used strategy with an average score of 85%, while Resignation was the least frequently used strategy with an average score of 69%. The findings indicate that peer support helps students increase their self-confidence, feel more comfortable, and reduce fear when speaking English in the classroom. This study concludes that social support and a positive classroom environment play an important role in helping students reduce speaking anxiety and increase their willingness to speak English.

Keywords: EFL students, peer seeking, qualitative study, speaking anxiety, speaking strategies.

INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role in education and global communication. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory subject because it helps students access international knowledge and develop communication skills needed in the 21st century (Journal et al., 2022). Among the four language skills, speaking is considered one of the most important because it enables students to express ideas, interact with others, and participate actively in communication. However, many EFL students still experience difficulties in speaking English confidently due to speaking anxiety.

Speaking anxiety refers to feelings of fear, nervousness, and worry that arise during foreign language learning. (Aghajani, 2017) stated that anxiety can negatively affect students' confidence and speaking performance. Similarly, (Akkakoson, 2016) found that speaking anxiety reduces learners' fluency and willingness to communicate, while (Fadillah et al., 2024) explained that anxiety influences students' concentration and participation during classroom activities. Previous studies mainly focused on identifying the causes and levels of speaking anxiety, such as fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and low self-confidence. However, research investigating the strategies used by students to overcome speaking anxiety remains limited, especially in the context of Islamic junior high schools (MTs).



Preliminary observations at MTs Pancasila Kota Bengkulu showed that several eighth-grade students hesitated, remained silent, or switched to Indonesian during speaking activities, indicating low confidence and speaking anxiety in the classroom. These conditions suggest that speaking anxiety affects students' participation and communicative development.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the strategies used by eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Kota Bengkulu to overcome speaking anxiety in English speaking activities. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on students' coping strategies toward speaking anxiety in the context of an Islamic junior high school.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the strategies used by eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila in Bengkulu City to overcome speaking anxiety. Qualitative research is considered appropriate because it allows researchers to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors in a natural setting (Lim, 2025). A descriptive qualitative approach was used to provide a more detailed understanding of students' speaking anxiety and the strategies they use to overcome it in classroom activities.

The subjects of this study were eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila in Bengkulu City. Participants were selected purposively based on their experiences with speaking anxiety in English class. This study focused on students who exhibited signs of anxiety during speaking activities, such as hesitation, silence, or a lack of confidence when speaking English in front of the class.

Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The questionnaire used a Likert scale to identify the tendencies of strategies used by students to overcome speaking anxiety. Meanwhile, interviews and documentation were conducted to obtain more in-depth information about students' experiences, feelings, and behaviors during speaking activities. The use of multiple instruments aimed to strengthen the credibility of the findings through methodological triangulation.

Data were analyzed descriptively by organizing, categorizing, and interpreting information obtained from the instruments. Questionnaire data were used as supporting data to identify the most frequently used strategies, while interview and documentation data were analyzed to describe students' experiences and strategies for overcoming speaking anxiety. The analysis was based on relevant theories on language learning strategies and speaking anxiety to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Strategies in Overcoming Speaking Anxiety

The study revealed that eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Kota Bengkulu used five main strategies to overcome speaking anxiety during English speaking activities: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation. These findings are consistent with recent studies showing that EFL learners use various coping strategies to reduce anxiety and improve speaking performance in classroom activities.

Students used preparation strategies through activities such as memorizing vocabulary, reading materials before class, taking notes, and practicing pronunciation. These activities helped students feel more prepared and confident when speaking English. Relaxation strategies were also commonly used, particularly deep breathing and self-calming techniques, to reduce nervousness and physical tension during speaking activities. (Bielak & Mystkowska-wiertelak, 2024) explained that preparation and emotional regulation strategies can help students reduce speaking anxiety and improve classroom participation.

Furthermore, students employed positive thinking strategies by convincing themselves

that making mistakes are a normal part of learning English. This strategy helped students reduce fear and increased their willingness to participate in classroom speaking activities. Peer seeking was identified as the most dominant strategy because students felt more comfortable and confident when receiving support, encouragement, and feedback from classmates and teachers. (Teimouri, 2025) emphasized that peer support and positive classroom interaction can reduce fear of negative evaluation and increase students' willingness to communicate in English.

Meanwhile, resignation strategies appeared when students felt unable to manage their anxiety effectively. Some students preferred to remain silent, avoid speaking, or give only short responses due to fear of making mistakes and low self-confidence. According to (Maher & King, 2020), highly anxious learners often avoid participation in speaking activities because they are afraid of making errors and receiving negative judgments from others.

The Most Often Strategy Used in Reducing Speaking Anxiety

The questionnaire results were used to identify the strategies most frequently used by eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Kota Bengkulu in overcoming speaking anxiety during English speaking activities, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The average score results for each aspect:

No	Aspect	Average Score
1	Preparation	83%
2	Relaxation	76%
3	Positive Thinking	74%
4	Peer Seeking	85%
5	Resignation	69%

The findings showed that peer seeking became the most frequently used strategy with an average score of 85%, followed by preparation (83%), relaxation (76%), positive thinking (74%), and resignation as the least frequently used strategy with an average score of 69%. These results indicate that students tended to use active and positive strategies to reduce speaking anxiety during English classroom activities.

Peer seeking became the most dominant strategy because students felt more comfortable and confident when receiving support, encouragement, and feedback from classmates and teachers. Through peer interaction, students were able to practice speaking more freely without fear of negative judgment. This finding is in line with (Alrabai, 2022), who stated that social support and positive classroom interaction can increase learners' willingness to communicate in English.

Preparation also became one of the strategies frequently used by students. Students prepared themselves by memorizing vocabulary, practicing pronunciation, and reviewing materials before speaking activities. This strategy helped students feel more prepared and reduced their fear of making mistakes while speaking English. (Pawlak et al., 2025) explained that preparation strategies can help learners manage anxiety and improve speaking performance. In addition, relaxation and positive thinking helped students manage nervousness and build self-confidence during speaking activities. Students attempted to calm themselves through deep breathing and positive self-motivation, such as believing that making mistakes are a natural part of language learning. In contrast, resignation obtained the lowest score, indicating that most students preferred to overcome their anxiety actively rather than avoid speaking activities completely.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that eighth-grade students at MTs Pancasila Kota Bengkulu used several strategies to overcome speaking anxiety in English speaking activities, namely preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation. Among these strategies, peer seeking became the most frequently used strategy because students felt more confident and comfortable when receiving support and encouragement from classmates and teachers. The findings indicate that social support and positive classroom interaction play important roles in reducing students' speaking anxiety and increasing their willingness to speak English.

This study was limited to eighth-grade students at one Islamic junior high school and focused only on students' strategies in overcoming speaking anxiety. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to broader contexts.

Students are encouraged to continue applying positive strategies such as preparation, relaxation, and peer support to reduce speaking anxiety. Teachers are suggested to create supportive classroom environments and provide collaborative speaking activities to increase students' confidence in speaking English. Future researchers are recommended to investigate speaking anxiety at different educational levels or explore the effectiveness of specific strategies in improving students' speaking performance.

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