

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background Study

English is set to become a very important international language to master in today's globalised world. English is used in various fields such as economics, technology, tourism, and entertainment. According to data from the Ethnologue research centre website, the number of English speakers will reach around 1.5 billion people by 2023.¹ Mastery of English in the era of globalisation is no longer just a plus, but has become a basic necessity. The ability to speak English opens the door to wider opportunities in education, careers, access to information, and participation in the global community. Therefore, English is considered as the main language in international communication, so it needs to be taught in the learning curriculum, including in primary schools.

In the context of education, English plays a vital role as the language of instruction for many international learning resources. The majority of scientific literature, academic journals and reference books are written in English. In addition, various international student exchange and scholarship programmes require adequate English language skills. This makes mastering English the key to accessing global quality education. Learning English at school provides many important benefits for students.

¹ Ridha Kusuma Perdana, "*Daftar Bahasa yang Paling Banyak Digunakan di Dunia pada 2023*" DataIndonesia.id, Juli 22, 2024, <https://dataindonesia.id/varia/detail/daftar-bahasa-yang-paling-banyak-digunakan-di-dunia-pada-2023>

English lessons have four aspects of learning, namely aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four aspects are interrelated with each other. All of them are supported by other language elements, namely: Vocabulary, Grammar and Pronunciation in accordance with the theme as a means of achieving the goal. Issues related to teaching English as a foreign language, students' experiences, challenges faced by English teachers, evaluation methods used, curriculum design and textbooks, as well as several other factors that influence the success of English language teaching.

One aspect of English language learning that is considered very important is speaking ability. English speaking is a productive skill that requires many activities for the learning process. However, many students still struggle with oral communication skills even after years of formal English learning, and often perform below their actual level of language competence when asked to speak in English. This gap between performance and knowledge implies that students' speaking performance is heavily influenced by variables other than language proficiency.

There are many factors that can affect students' ability to speak English. Some of these factors even make most students reluctant to speak English when facing conversational situations that require them to use it, for example when they meet foreigners who use English.² Many students are reluctant to communicate using English because they feel doubtful about their speaking ability. Apart from this, there are other reasons such as teachers often dominate the classroom and focus on language theory and knowledge, rather than emphasising practical language skills, both

² Adhityo Kuncoro, Fajar Erlangga, and Randi Ramliana, "Kepercayaan Diri Siswa dan

oral and written.³ This greatly affects students' speaking skills, if they are not often trained or given the opportunity to speak in front of the class, then students feel they do not need to master English speaking skills.

The above challenges are faced by many students in learning English, especially in mastering speaking skills in front of the class. These challenges are also known as psychological barriers. Psychological barriers are one of the most important yet often overlooked barriers that affect students' performance to communicate effectively in English. Unlike grammar or vocabulary deficiencies that can be addressed through conventional teaching methods, these psychological barriers operate at a deeper level and can severely inhibit linguistically competent students from expressing themselves freely in the target language. Some examples of psychological barriers that often affect English speaking performance include lack of confidence in speaking, inexperience in speaking in front of the class, fear of making mistakes, and fear of being ridiculed by friends. It is believed that this worry prevents language learning, and if students are truly anxious in class, they are probably not engaged at all.⁴

This psychological barrier is noticeable especially in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language. Cultural elements such as the influence of the mother tongue (Indonesian or local language) often pose difficulties for students. They tend to translate directly from Indonesian to English, which often results in inappropriate sentence structure or word choice. Despite the importance of such psychological aspects, there is still a lack of thorough knowledge in the literature about the exact nature,

³ Anggit Aulia, Lugina Agung., Saputra, Erwin Rahayu., Merliana, "Hambatan Dan Strategi Dalam Penguasaan Keterampilan Berbicara Bahasa Inggris Di Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu," *Pendas Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 9, no. 3 (2024): 237.

⁴ Rheycho J Daymiel et al., "Anxiety in Second Language in Relation to Students' Speaking Performance," *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 01, no. August (2022): 397.

underlying causes and best practices for intervention. The verbal component of language teaching is often the main focus of educational practitioners, who pay little attention to the psychological factors that have a major impact on learning outcomes.

Research indicates that psychological factors (e.g., shyness, fear of judgement) play a more significant role than linguistic competence in oral communication challenges. For instance, a study conducted by Anam and Tantri found that students felt anxious, shy, fear of making mistakes and the students also got a lack of confidence when they were speaking in front of the class. The efforts to overcome their psychological problems were as follows. The students should have the self-confidence to speak, the student should master many vocabularies, and more practices speaking in English, the teacher should give motivation to the students and encourage a habit and accustom the students to use English. Another study was conducted by Abera found that psychological barriers significantly contribute to students' poor English speaking skills, with around 88% of students indicating that issues such as lack of self-confidence, motivation, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and stage anxiety impact their speaking performance.

The ideal expectation of this problem is that students should feel confident and dare to speak English without fear, a supportive learning environment and plenty of practice opportunities. Teachers also play a role in providing constructive feedback, as well as students who must be motivated and see speaking as a skill that must be practised not an innate talent. Yet, the factual phenomenon that actually occur are that many students experience psychological barriers. Factors such as fear of judgement, fear of making mistakes and lack of support from the learning environment exacerbate the problem. Teachers often focus on theoretical

issues (grammar, reading) rather than practical speaking so students are not used to it. Some students even have mental blocks due to negative experiences when speaking English.

The research attempts to close the gap by thoroughly examining the psychological barriers that students face when speaking English. Through identifying different psychological barriers, their frequency, underlying causes, as well as examining gender differences in facing psychological barriers, this study aims to provide important information that can guide the creation of more efficient teaching methods and intervention techniques. It is crucial to understand these barriers in order to establish a supportive learning environment that helps students transcend psychological barriers and reach their greatest potential in spoken English communication. With this study, the researcher is interested in examining more deeply the psychological barriers experienced by students with the title **“An Analysis of Gender Difference in Psychological Barriers to Students’ English Speaking Performance”**.

B. Statement of the Problem

Based on the problem background above, the problem can be identified as follow :

1. What are the common psychological barriers experienced by students in English speaking performance?
2. How do students perceive their psychological barriers to English speaking performance?
3. What factors cause male and female to differ in their English speaking performance?

C. The Objectives of the Study

Based on problem mentioned above, the objectives that wants to be achieved by the researcher in these study are :

1. To describe the types of psychological barriers often faced and experienced by students when speaking in English.
2. To identify students' perceived their psychological barriers in English speaking performance.
3. To examine factors cause male and female to differ in their English speaking performance

D. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research focuses on identifying and analysing psychological barriers that hinder students' English performance, such as fear of making mistakes, fear of judgment, lack of motivation, anxiety, and shyness. The research will examine the types of psychological barriers, students' perceptions, and factors cause male and female difference in English speaking performance, especially in classroom settings. The participants will be limited to eleventh grade students at SMAN 5 Kota Serang.

E. Benefits of The Study

This study is expected to be useful for English learning especially speaking performance and able to improve the speaking skills.

1. For The Students

This study helps students identify and understand the source of their anxiety when speaking in English, such as fear of judgement,

shyness, or lack of motivation. By realising these psychological barriers, students can take proactive steps to overcome them.

2. For The Teacher

This research helps teachers identify the types of psychological barriers such as anxiety, fear of being wrong or shyness that students most often experience during speaking activities. With this understanding, teachers can design more empathetic learning strategies, for example by creating a more inclusive classroom environment and reducing pressure on students.

3. For Future Research

The study can serve as foundation for future research on effective interventions, tools of technologies (e.g., AI-based language practice platforms) to help students overcome speaking barriers. This study could help other researcher identify psychological barriers such as anxiety, lack of motivation, fear of making mistakes, or shyness and the difference between male and female that students face in English speaking contexts. By understanding these barriers, researchers can develop targeted interventions and teaching strategies to help students overcome these challenges. For example, specific technique to reduce anxiety or boost confidence could be designed and tested.

F. Organization of Writing

This thesis is organized into five chapters that systematically address the research on psychological barriers in English speaking performance. The structure is designed to present a comprehensive analysis from theoretical foundation to research findings and implications.

Chapter I : The first chapter provides the foundational background of the study. It presents the research context, problem statement, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitations, and overall organization of the thesis. This chapter establishes the importance of investigating psychological barriers in English speaking performance and outlines the framework for the entire research.

Chapter II : This chapter presents a comprehensive review of relevant theories and previous studies related to psychological barriers in English speaking. Theoretical concepts are interconnected to build a solid foundation for understanding the psychological dimensions of speaking performance.

Chapter III : This chapter details the research design and methods employed in this study. It includes research design, the setting of study, instrument, data collection technique, data analysis technique.

Chapter IV : This chapter presents the empirical findings organized according to the research questions. The discussion interprets the results in relation to the theoretical framework established in chapter II, providing meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Chapter V : Conclusion and Suggestions.