The Analysis of Students' Inferiority Feeling on Speaking Ability

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A B S T R A C T

Speaking is an English language skill that should be mastered by EFL learners. This study aims to know the factors that induce students' inferiority in speaking English in the second semester of English education at the Muhammadiyah University of Kendal Batang. This research is the Descriptive-qualitative method and uses applied purposive sampling techniques in choosing sampling. 26 students as respondents experienced inferiority feelings in class, second-semester students of English education at the Muhammadiyah University of Kendal Batang. The data was obtained through an observation checklist, distributed open-ended questionnaire, and an interview. There were 5 factors the results in this research showed caused students' inferiority feeling in speaking English. The majority of factors are lack of vocabulary 26%, followed by unconfident about 24%, fear of making mistakes 21%, fear of negative reaction 18% and grammar problems 11%. So, it can be concluded that the problems of students' speaking are not only from the internal, but it's also from external. Teacher should influence the students to speak up without anxiety. Using some appropriate methods and supportive environment may can help students in speaking well.

I. Introduction

English is one of the official languages used by all people in the world to communicate and interact with each other. In the education sector, English is very important for students because it will be the basis for being able to improve self-quality. English is a compulsory subject that has to be learnt by Indonesian students at every level of education [1]. English has been taught from an early age from elementary level to higher education level. But in reality, to be able to master English skills must be studied well. In Indonesia, English is an unfamiliar language so it is still very difficult for students to master it. It can be said that learning English has been studied at all levels of education. However, the result is that students are still unable to use English to communicate in daily life. Learning to speak English does require special treatment starting from habits and also other supporting factors. For Indonesian students, hard to speak is a natural thing because English is a foreign language so it needs to be improved so they can be fluent. Then because of the difficulty of speaking, the students should master the pronunciation [2].

There are still many students in higher education who have difficulties in speaking. Anxiety in speaking skills is often experienced by the student that cannot be overcome even though they have strengths and weaknesses in the process of learning [3]. Anxiety is a normal response to stressful conditions, but it becomes a pathological disorder when it is severe and difficult to manage [4]. Anxiety presents feeling of nervous, worried and fearful to doing something [5]. So that learning can occur concurrently, the appropriate type of verbal interaction should be frequent in the EFL classroom [6]. Therefore, speaking ability must be improved. Students' incapability in speaking is affected by some factors such as cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Affective factors are factors that are associated with a person's capability to feel, such as emotions, empathy, motivation, anxiety, attitude and inferiority. External discomfort arising from anxiety is another factor that influences students' ability to speak English [7]. The result of anxiety will have an impact on

limiting the capacity of thinking and behavioral disturbances [8]. Feelings of inferiority in speaking English can be seen when students are at a loss for words. The personality of each student is certainly very different, especially in the psychological condition. This can lead to decreased motivation, frustration, and discomfort in learning English, especially speaking. Any anxiety that arises will affect anxiety and make students' thinking processes take a long time [9]. This case occurs not only in students who learn English but also in other subjects. In other words, speaking is one of the language skills that should be mastered by the students who learn the language. Why speaking is an important one in language learning, it's because of the speaking is a process in which people share information, idea or delivering feeling [10].

Inferiority has become one of the obstacles in language learning especially for speaking skills. Language anxiety particularly has a big impact on learning foreign languages [11]. English language classroom activities are a source of speaking anxiety [12]. Anxiety is actualized as pivotal factors that has devitalizing effect on the oral performance [13]. Thus, it correlates with the student's desire to speak English. Lack of confidence, shyness, and passive communication caused by limited opportunities to practice in class. Lack of confidence, shyness, and passive communication caused by limited opportunities to practice in class. It relates to [14] that speaking is a tool of communication in helping students to share some arguments during class. In communication, body language, and language style can make communication more powerful. The message can deliver clear, so the interaction happens without misunderstanding between the listener and speaker. Moreover, all normal people have the ability in speaking and always do every time with communicating each other. Inferiority learners are potential learners despite their inferiority as indicated by students who can perform well in everyday class tasks, yet they get bad marks on their tests.

Several research about inferiority have been carried out. Some of them have been researched on anxiety in speaking, [15] they conducted research that focused on the teacher's role in reducing students' anxiety in speaking. However, the results of his research found that one of the reasons why students were not fluent in speaking English was due to an inferiority complex with the highest dominating results. Then another study was conducted by [16] in which he found several psychological problems faced by students when speaking English, the most dominant of which was feelings of excessive anxiety with a percentage of 62%. This shows that feelings of anxiety are very influential in the ability to speak English. Another statement from [17] stated that in their research, there were 2 aspects that affected students' speaking fluency, they are lack of vocabulary and lack of accurate pronunciation, even though, it those were examined in depth, it can be concluded that due to excessive anxiety in students. The last one is the research from. Briefly, the anxiety in speaking and feeling inferior are the main reasons students were unable to speak English fluently.

Referring to those studies and English as foreign language, so there are two things that influences the students' speaking ability. Those are psychological and environmental of students. So that, the students' motivation is important things that should be having by them. Some studies have conducted randomly to find out the students speaking ability without analysis of students' desire in studying English. Based on this, so many struggle that encountered by the students in learning English. Therefore, the researcher interested to conduct research to students that have motivation in learning English but, they cannot speak English fluently. In short, the researcher is interested to conduct the research entitled Analysis of Students' Inferiority Feeling on Speaking Ability.

While many previous studies have examined speaking anxiety, general psychological factors, and teacher roles in reducing anxiety, they mostly focus on general classroom anxiety without isolating inferiority feelings as a specific construct; Students' speaking performance without considering the motivational factor—in other words, students who are actually motivated yet still experience difficulties; Broad populations or mixed education levels, rather than a focused context such as speaking classes at a specific university.

On the other hand, there is something that has not been done by previous research, namely no clear differentiation between students who are unmotivated and those who are motivated yet still suffer from speaking difficulties due to inferiority, limited focus on inferiority complex as the primary psychological barrier, often being grouped under general anxiety, lack of context-specific analysis, especially in the setting of speaking classes in a university like Muhammadiyah Kendal Batang, and absence of qualitative insight into how students with motivation experience and cope with inferiority in real classroom speaking contexts.

This study specifically targets motivated students who still cannot speak English fluently due to feelings of inferiority, thus providing: A narrowed psychological focus on inferiority (not just

general anxiety). Insights into the paradox where high motivation does not equate to high performance, due to psychological barriers. A situated analysis within the real experience of speaking classes, making the findings contextually relevant and practically applicable. Contribution to pedagogical strategies for addressing inferiority in speaking classes, especially for learners already motivated to improve. This research fills the gap by examining inferiority as a distinct and impactful psychological factor in motivated learners, a perspective that has not been thoroughly addressed in previous studies.

II. Method

The researcher uses descriptive qualitative in this research. It is because the researcher observing and finding the information of the phenomenon describes the research design used. In this research, the researcher analysis the students' inferiority feeling on speaking ability. The population of this research was the second-semester students of English education at the University of Muhammadiyah Kendal Batang. The amount of sample in this study was 26 students which was taken by using purposive sampling. Two reasons why the researcher chooses this subject. First, they learn English for two semesters, and second, some students don't have an interest in speaking the subject. The fact is most of the student become silent and only listening the material when participated in speaking class.

Research instrument has an important role to obtain the result of the research. Several data collecting techniques using observation, interview and questionnaires. The observation was conducted by observing the performance of students' speaking to support the result of the interview and questionnaire. The researcher observed all the students' activities when they perform in front of the class.   From class observation, they noticed was appeared starting the way students mispronounced, had lots of pauses to think about what going to say, seems confused about what we're going to do, had wrong grammar which cannot be understood, and shyness makes them scary to speak. The researcher used a questionnaire as the instrument to analyze the students' inferiority feeling on speaking ability. The analysis of each instrument was elaborated. The questionnaire was constructed for the informant to answer the questions. Then to get additional answers, it was followed by with in-depth interview. Afterwards, the data were analyzed by generalizing and interpreting the data from interviews and questionnaires. Interview data will be displayed first, then observation, and supported by data from supporting documents to be able to complement and strengthen the data.

To analyze the collected data, all interview responses were first transcribed verbatim. The researcher then performed a thematic analysis by grouping the data into recurring themes related to students' feelings of inferiority, such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Questionnaire responses were categorized based on these themes and quantified using percentages to highlight dominant trends. Observational notes were used to cross-validate findings from the interviews and questionnaires. This triangulation helped ensure the credibility and consistency of the data. The transition from data collection to interpretation involved identifying patterns across all instruments and interpreting them in the context of students' speaking performance and psychological barriers.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Result

The purpose of this study was to analyze the students' inferiority feeling on speaking ability. The result of this study presented the data from the questionnaire and interviews about the factors causing students' inferiority feeling on speaking ability at the second-semester students of English education at the Muhammadiyah University of Kendal Batang. The researcher used an open-ended questionnaire; all the answers is about the difficulties that they face in a speaking activity. The data found that there were 5 main topics of students' problems in speaking English, including less vocabulary, unconfident when speaking English, fear of making mistakes, fear of others laughing at them, and grammar problems. The interview was supported and validated by the open-ended questionnaire.

The following questionnaire to collect the data of the research is presented below:

Table 1. Student Responses to Inferiority-Related Statements

Questionnaire	Questionnaire Results			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	46.33%	53.67%	-	-
3	6.33%	23.67%	45%	25%
4	6.33%	33.67%	53.33%	6.67%
6	6.33%	40%	40%	13.57%
9	23.33%	33.33%	43.33%	-
10	13.67%	43.33%	36.67%	6.33%
11	43.67%	40%	16.33%	-
12	26.67%	33.33%	40%	-
13	16.67%	43.33%	36.33%	3.67%
14	23.31%	66.69%	10%	-
16	20%	63.33%	13.33%	3.33%
17	13.35%	65%	15%	6.65%
18	13.33%	55%	16.67%	15%
19	3.33%	43.33%	46.67%	6.67%
20	-	80%	13.33%	6.67%
21	3.33%	35%	45%	16.67%
22	6.67%	40%	40%	13.33%
23	23.33%	53.33%	20%	3.33%
24	10%	30%	46.67%	13.33%
25	-	36.67%	30%	33.33%

Percentages are based on students' responses using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

From the table above shows that the agreement and disagreement was displayed according to the questionnaire.

• I believe that Almighty God give me the best physique.

It was about 53.33% the students were agreed that statements. While 46.67% was strongly agree. Most of them believe that their physique was in a good shape.

• I feel embarrassed of my accent when speaking English.

It was about 43.67% the students disagree that they were not to be shy to speak English even though as foreign learner. More than that, there were about 16.33% that they strongly disagree. It meant that they didn't have any problem to speak English because the cultural background. On the other hand, there were still some students said that the feel embarrassed according their own accent.

• I'm not able to speak English loud volume.

Not all the student has a courage when they speak English loudly. Approximately 33.67% the students couldn't speak English with high volume. It can be a students' inferiority. There was an implied meaning, they can speak loud but not in English.

• I don't feel confident when my friends speak English fluently.

In fact, there were about 46.33% the students feel unconfident on their friend who speak English fluently. It can be a problem that external factor became the students feel weak and inferior. This case must be overcome in order to motivate students.

• I feel that I'm an interesting person.

It was about 43.33% students disagree on the statement. It means that a lot of them was the person who doesn't care about something. An unattractive something can be affected them on the way do anything.

• I always measure everything with my own self-perception.

Approximately 13.67% students were strongly agreeing and 43.33% was agree on the statement. It can be a good perspective from the student that before doing something, they realize of advantages and disadvantages.

• My parents don't mind if I speak English.

There were about 16.33% parents was not supporting their child to speak English. This can be a big factor of student's inferiority. The family environment is the basis for creating enthusiasm for children to learn. Good parents will always support their children not to become inferior.

• My environment influences me to speak English.

Almost 60% the students were agreeing and strongly agree on the statement. The thought that the environment is the key in influencing them to speak English. They conscious as a student of English, so they have to speak English. On the other hand, it was about 40% stated that environment not influence to speak English.

• My parents demand me to get a good achievement.

There are still many students who are required by their parents to get good grades. Almost 60% they agree on that statement. Sometimes these demands can influence students in their learning outcomes. It can be successful or even inferior.

• My lecturer never discriminates the students

It's about 10% of the students feel that they got discriminates by the lecturer and friends. This can be potential factor in influencing student become inferiority during the class, especially in speaking English.

• I think my English vocabulary is less.

Almost 83.33% the students are very less in vocabulary. It may be a great factor of inferiority in speaking English. Vocabulary became important part in English. While 16.66% the student claimed that their vocabulary was good.

• I think my English pronunciation is not good.

Pronunciation is the basic part in English. As a foreign learner, pronouncing the English word correctly need good understanding and comprehension. It has 78% on the data that student is not good enough in pronunciation. This is the factor that can impact student psychology. But the other one is not to be a problem if they weren't good in pronunciation.

• I often feel nervous and shy when speaking English in front of the class.

There were 68.33% of the students feel nervous and shy when speaking English. Even though 31.67% was not. It means that feeling nervous and shy is natural reaction of human being when they are not usual in speaking English.

• I prefer to avoid discussion or conversation in English.

Avoiding in speaking English for the student is the wrong way. It was 46.66% of the student chose to keep off from discussion or conversation in English. It can be seen that level of student's inferiority still high. However, it has 53.34% of the students chose to make a discussion or conversation in English.

• I have difficulty in expressing ideas in English.

It has 80% of the student said that they got difficulty in expressing their notion in English. This difficulty really makes them feel inferior in expressing ideas in English. Sometimes, the student knows want to convey their idea but the way to express in English is hard.

• I feel difficult to accept criticism from other.

Not all the student are able to accept the critics from anyone. It can bring down the mental of the student. Except for those who know except for those who understand that criticism is part of mental development. There were 38.33% student was not good at accepting critics. While 61.67% was the students who have a good mental in accepting critics from others.

• I feel disturbed if others laugh at me.

It was about 46.67% student agree that they feel disturbed. Being laughed at when you make a mistake is a very unpleasant thing. This is can be a main factor of student's inferiority. The student feels haunted every time. Meanwhile, there were 53.33% student disagree if the other laugh them. It means they are confident and brave.

• I think hard about other people's views on me.

It almost 76.66% students agree and strongly agree on the statement that they think hard about people's view on them. It can be one of the factors of inferiority in speaking English. On the other side, almost 23.33% disagree and strongly disagree about people's view. The student think that people's view is not their business. So, the students are focus on their ability.

• I doubt that I'm able to speak English very well, true, and fluent.

Approximately 40% student was agreeing and strongly agree that they doubt on their ability to speak English well, true and fluent. But there were almost 60% student was disagreeing and strongly

disagree about the doubt. They are very sure that English can be learnt so they can speak English well, true, and fluent.
• I feel scared and do not accept if I'm blamed.

There were 36.67% student was agreeing that they very scare to be blamed. Whereas almost 63.33% students were disagreeing and strongly disagree that they feel scared and blamed. Being feel scared to be blamed is the normal situation of the student in learning English. But it must be understood, in learning English as a foreign language is impossible to be blamed and scared.

B. Discussion

According to the interview result, the frightened of making mistakes followed by lacking enough vocabulary to speak their ideas, lacking confidence, fearing of friend's evaluations, and lacking grammar become a problem that most students mention.

The following table is about the factors of students' inferiority:

Table 2. Categorized Factors Contributing to Students' Inferiority in Speaking Ability

No	Factors of Inferiority	Percentage
1	Lack of vocabulary	26%
2	Low confident	24%
3	Fear of making mistake	21%
4	Fear of peer evaluations	18%
5	grammar difficulties	11%

The data derived from combined interview, observation dan questionnaire results. Based on the data collected from observation above, show that the student hard to say something in English. The first factor of inferiority feeling on speaking ability was a lack of vocabulary. That was mostly found in students' perceptions. This thing can be the main factor in learning English. Learning vocabulary means involving two activities directly, the students must be memorizing the new words and the way to pronounce them correctly.

In learning English, vocabulary becomes an important thing to be learnt English, it can make us easily use the words we want to convey while speaking [18]. Besides, vocabulary is the first element that students should master. [19] stated that enriching vocabulary will get better skills in using the English language. Data collected from the interview, actually students know what they are going to say but they can't switch to the target language. Inadequate vocabulary makes information not conveyed properly.

This problem is related to the loss of vocabulary, which is psychological difficulty. Along with it, being confident when speaking English is very crucial. Moreover, this mostly happens to EFL young learners in Indonesia. During the observation, most students were silent and didn't want to express their idea and give the response during the class. The reason was in the interview; they explained that, "I know the meaning but I'm shy to express and reply." They can express their idea if they were asked directly and replied with a low voice because of unconfident. According to [20] the teacher in class should pay attention more to developing their students' confidence. An unrealistic or irrational expectation can reduce their confidence to speak English. It can be caused by excessive anxiety. This case affects the student's performance during the class. The teacher needs to improve their learning method to reduce students' language anxiety. Learning activities can be fun and enjoyable when the teacher made the situation [21]. It means the role of the teacher during the class was very important so that can be a motivation for students to master English speaking.

The other factor that could create students' inferiority was fear of making mistakes. This is the problem in every single student in EFL learners was afraid of making mistakes. At the college level, students' fear to make mistakes increase especially when they speak to a critical audience [22]. It was noticed during the class observation and interview that most students said that they were fearful when making a mistake. A speaker who has high anxiety always thinks about mistakes and the audience's perspective on their performance. A mistake is like a disgrace or a stigma so they thought they will be bullied by their classmate. This mindset is formed and becomes a culture that causes every child to be afraid to express ideas or express opinions. This also greatly affects the quality of learning, especially in speaking English ability. For many languages, the learner's formal language classroom setting was a major source of stress and anxiety because of its demand to be more correct

and clearer in using the target language [23]. According to participants of the study the friendlier and more informal the language classroom environment, the less it is likely to be anxiety provoking. Most of the students have a good ability in English yet they prefer to be passive rather than answer wrong. Students' fear of negative judgment is one of three components of foreign language anxiety [24].

This factor was the negative impact of the previous factor. As a nightmare for students mostly when they got judgment by classmates during the learning activity. The feeling of being watched by others makes them feel more insecure and unable to perform well in class. In addition, they usually feel like appearing foolish while speaking in English in front of others [25]. There are two reactions that we usually encounter, namely positive reactions that are motivational, reinforcing, and encouraging and negative reactions that lead to bullying, judgment and discouragement in learning. Learning English certainly requires positive vibes to master it. If the teachers correct students' mistakes inappropriately, it can lead them to feel fear of negative evaluation as explained before [26].

Based on the factors above, it seems that the inferiority feeling for EFL learners is the weakest part of their ability to speak. These factors have influenced the quality of speaking ability. It can be said psychological factor give a big impact. This means the teacher's role must attempt to create an enjoyable learning atmosphere to build motivation and performance. According to [27] stated the teacher should find media, methods, strategies and techniques to motivate the students to enhance their English knowledge and to decrease students' anxiety either before or during process of teaching and learning speaking. As an English teacher and foreign language learner need to support each other in the learning process, especially in speaking English. Students' inferiority in speaking ability can be surmounted by a constructive, supportive, fun environment, especially in English.

One of the most prominent findings in this study is students' fear of making mistakes, which significantly contributes to their inferiority in speaking English. This fear is deeply rooted in the broader cultural context of Indonesian education, where mistakes are often stigmatized rather than viewed as part of the learning process. In traditional classrooms, high value is placed on correctness and teacher-centered instruction, which can suppress risk-taking behavior in students. This cultural expectation discourages open participation, especially in language learning, where trial and error are a natural part of acquiring speaking fluency. Students internalize the fear of being corrected or laughed at, leading to increased anxiety and self-doubt. As observed in this study, even students with adequate ideas and vocabulary hesitate to speak because they anticipate negative evaluations from peers or instructors. This aligns with [28] concept of "fear of negative evaluation," a major component of foreign language anxiety. Addressing this fear requires shifting classroom practices toward a more supportive, student-centered environment where making mistakes is normalized as a necessary part of learning.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the result, this study gathered findings. It can conclude that five factors cause students' inferiority feeling on speaking ability. The first factor most face is a lack of vocabulary. Then followed by less vocabulary, unconfident when speaking English, fear of making mistakes, fear of friend's evaluations, and grammar problems. For EFL learners, inferiority feeling when they speak a foreign language is a weakness and barrier. Mastering the English language for EFL needs more practice and deep treatment to reduce inferiority feelings, especially in speaking ability. Improving speaking ability must be supported not only by internal factors but also external factors. External factors give big impacts on EFL students, starting from their teachers in the class during learning activities, the use of appropriate methods, and a supportive environment. [29] stated that learning inside classes should be shifted from traditional practices to student-centered learning. On the other side [30] confirm that there are four strategies that can reduce anxiety in speaking, namely preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, and peer seeking. Students should be helped to increase their self-confidence and autonomy.

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