

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY: WHAT MAKES THEM ANXIOUS?

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Abstract

English is a crucial global language for effective communication, but learning it in countries like Indonesia can be challenging. Speaking anxiety is a prominent factor causing difficulties, especially in countries like Indonesia where it is still considered foreign. This study examines the anxiety levels of 40 first-grade students at SMP Islam Soerjo Alam Malang using a descriptive, quantitative research methodology. The FLCAS Questionnaire was used to gather data, and the study found that 25% of students feel very anxious when speaking English, while 45% feel anxious, 27.5% are mildly anxious, and only 2.5% feel relaxed. Communication apprehension is the dominant factor causing English speaking anxiety, affecting about 57.5% of students. The study recommends that English teachers be aware of students' speaking anxiety and use techniques to create a relaxed classroom environment. Students should focus on their studies, engage actively with the language, and ask questions about their emotions and challenges. Further research on speaking anxiety in English classes can provide valuable insights.

Key Words: *Speaking, speaking anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

English is a widely used global language, but learning it, particularly in countries like Indonesia, presents challenges. The process is similar to learning to speak for the first time. Mastering English skills includes listening, conveying ideas through speaking, obtaining information from written text, and writing. Speaking is the most crucial skill for effective communication, as it allows for the exchange of ideas and information. Regarding to this, Zipfing and Paramasivam (2013) emphasized the importance of speaking English in today's globalized society for global communication. The ability to hold discussions in the target language is a key indicator of a language learner's progress. Clear and fluent speaking is essential for students to acquire the language necessary for communication both within and outside the classroom.

Being able to speak English well has become an essential part of mastering the language. Speaking is one of the most crucial skills that must be learned in order to communicate via language (Ngan, 2013). It means that speaking is the most important skill to be learned by students because it involves communication with other people. In Indonesia, students struggle with expressing themselves in English, according to Katemba and Buli (2018). They believed that speaking is a difficult task for learners, as it requires direct interaction and requires finding someone to talk to. Speaking is seen as the most fundamental and effective way for people to communicate with one another.

According to Brown (2001), speaking is an interactive process of meaning construction that entails the creation and acceptance of information processing. Moreover, Speaking is the act of creating meaningful words as a means of communication required to convey concepts, messages, viewpoints, and data (Christy et al., 2021). In addition, Al-Roud (2016) asserted that speaking is the most difficult skill to acquire as it requires the mastery of several subskills connected to speech production, including vocabulary learning, grammatical structure selection, and sociocultural competency. Foreign language learners may experience frustrations such as difficulty remembering new vocabulary, difficulty keeping up with the teacher, and anxiety while speaking in front of people, especially in a language they are not very proficient at. Speaking requires several aspects to be implemented successfully. Yunus (2021) stated that students are required to speak English as much as possible because hands-on practice is one way to increase confidence and speaking fluency.

Students' speaking abilities might be impacted by a number of factors. Language anxiety is one of these factors that frequently interferes with students' ability to speak. Indrianty (2016) asserted that students' motivation to speak properly and confidently in speaking class is impacted by nervousness. She also affirms that worry has a major negative influence on students' learning, especially on their speaking skills. Sutarsyah (2017) argued that this anxiety significantly influences students' performance in speaking, as it leads to uncomfortable attitudes towards learning English. English speaking anxiety can lead to students feeling shy, unfamiliar, or losing ideas. Wu (2010) also revealed that apprehension is one of the big challenges for students who learning languages, they tend to experience anxiety while learning the language. Studies by Irawan et al. (2018) and Derakhshan (2022) showed that anxiety negatively impacts students' speaking skills and

psychological health, as it is closely correlated with learning outcomes in language learning. This implies that speaking success is now influenced by a number of factors, both favourably and adversely, including language anxiety.

English speaking anxiety is a significant issue in the current English language pedagogical situation, as it interferes with students' development and learning of English. According to Phillips (1999), speaking is the most anxious activity for foreign language learners, impacting their self-perception and perception of the learning experience. This anxiety can affect their behavior, leading to timidity, forgetfulness, or out of character. Fatma (2012) identified two main factors contributing to student anxiety: internal and external influences. Internal factors include restricted vocabulary, fear of being wrong, motivation, humiliation, lack of confidence, and lack of preparedness. External factors include friends, environment, challenging subject matter, learning strategies, ineffective teaching methods, and disinterest in foreign language courses. Speaking anxiety can result from internal issues like attitudes, dread, guilt, and concern. Their incomplete knowledge of English is also a factor in anxiety, so students have difficulty communicating and explaining their ideas or opinions. Syahfutra (2021) stated that speaking anxiety is a consequence of various factors, such as insufficient knowledge, low preparation, and fear of making mistakes. They do not know much about English, especially for students who do not get specific English learning in primary schools. This condition affects their psychology and makes them nervous when speaking English. Therefore, it is important to conduct study about exploring causes of speaking anxiety on students.

Previous research has shown that language anxiety is a significant barrier to English language acquisition in Indonesia, impacting students' self-worth and confidence. This anxiety can degrade their ability to learn new languages. Research shows that language anxiety is a significant barrier to English language acquisition in Indonesia, impacting students' self-worth and confidence, ultimately degrading their ability to learn new languages (Crookall & Oxford, 1991). According to Meidina (2019) that examined students' speaking anxiety levels and the factors that cause them and found that the majority of the students had speaking anxiety at a medium level, according to the study's findings. The primary causes of this anxiety are exam anxiety, communication anxiety, and worry of receiving a poor grade. Another study by Maysari (2020) determined the

causes of students' speaking anxiety as well as the elements that influence students' anxiety when learning English and found that educational practices, technique, and the instructor themselves are important elements that contribute to students' speaking fear. Furthermore, Mitha et al. (2018) indicated that the students' speaking anxiety was on the medium side. Fear of the speaking test was the most common kind of speaking anxiety. Nevertheless, the research revealed that all forms of speaking anxiety were related to one another following in-depth interviews regarding their fear.

Considering previous research, this study is unique in its focus on junior high school students' nervousness when speaking English in first grade, using a descriptive quantitative strategy. This study focuses on the skill component of speaking anxiety among first grade students at SMP Islam Soerjo Alam Malang, examining the degree and main variables influencing it.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive, quantitative research methodology which aims to detail the characteristics of a population or phenomenon by gathering and analyzing data to produce summary in the form of percentages. This research was conducted in SMP Islam Soerjo Alam, a private school that located in Malang, East Java. It is a junior secondary school which located in Sembon Durenan RT.01/RW.09, Ngajum, Malang, East Java. The participants of this research were all students who are still active in the first grade of SMP Islam Soerjo Alam Malang. The amount used total sample, and the number of participants was 40 students. In this study, students' anxiety about their speaking ability was measured.

The instrument used in this study is the FLCAS Questionnaire (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale). This instrument was adopted from Horwitz et al. (1986). This instrument consists of 33 questions that must be answered regarding student anxiety in the classroom which represented as scales including Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) were the five possible responses on the scale. The causes that contribute to students' nervousness when speaking English in class are also identified in this study, as per the FLCAS Questionnaire's classification of questions. The researcher also used a table of students' speaking anxiety levels based on Mayangta (2013). This is because the researcher used manual methods to sum up the

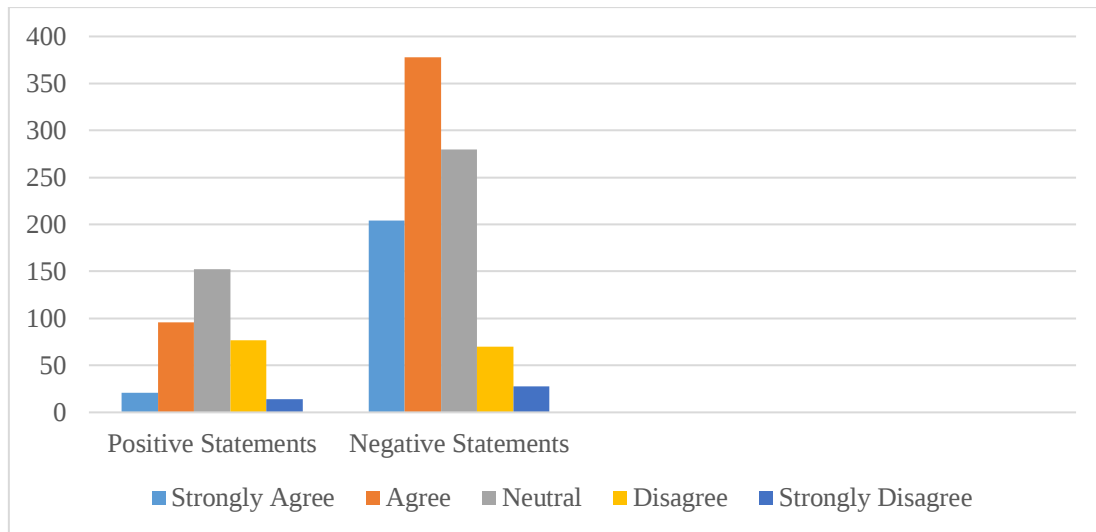
answers of each student, so that the number of students' answers was classified according to the score range by Mayangta (2013).

This study was conducted online through a Google Form survey that was distributed with the aim of shortening time. The researcher provided the FLCAS Questionnaire to all participants through a link that had been given to the school principal. The distribution of questionnaires was carried out using a google form that had been briefed on the purpose of this study. Then the participants were given two days to answer the questions given. Respondents' responses were automatically sent to the spreadsheet. The data analysis consisted of few steps, the first step is to know their anxiety level. After knowing the student's anxiety level, an outline could be drawn for the most dominant factor that makes students anxious. From these two research problems, a conclusion would emerge about what makes them anxious. FLCAS Questionnaire was used to measure students' anxiety levels related to student anxiety in the classroom. This questionnaire has been adopted and translated into Bahasa Indonesia so that students can understand the meaning of the questions. FLCAS is used to gauge students' anxiety levels using Likert's scoring scale table. The scale for the positive statement scale will range from 1-5, while the negative statement scale ranges from 5-1. Furthermore, the data is calculated manually with a range of scores. The results of each student's answers are summed up as a whole. After the researcher found the results of each student's anxiety level, it is categorized into several levels ranging from very relaxed, relaxed, mildly anxious, anxious, and very anxious. The Mayangta (2013) scoring table is used.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher presented data from 40 first-grade students' FLCAS questionnaires at SMP Islam Soerjo Alam Malang, dividing responses into positive and negative statements. The study aimed to provide a better understanding of the students' responses by presenting summarizing results in the following charts.

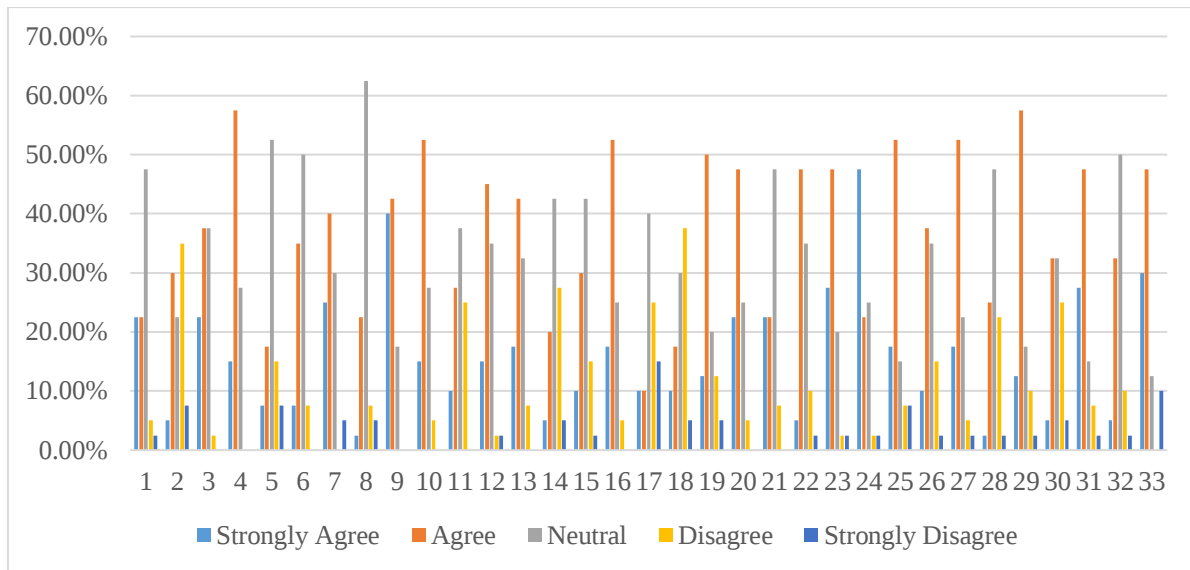
Figure 4.1 An Overview of the Student Questionnaire Answers



The researcher analyzed data on positive and negative statements. Positive statements that tend to lead to relaxed feelings, students chose the same response in strongly agree (21), agree (96), neutral (152), disagree (77), and strongly disagree (14), while negative statements that tend to cause feelings of anxiety, students choose the same response in strongly agree (204), agree (378), neutral (280), disagree (70), and strongly disagree (28). The highest score for positive statements was neutral with 152 responses, while the lowest was strongly disagree with 14 responses. Regarding the negative comments, agree received the maximum score (378), while strongly disagree received the lowest score (28).

In terms of students' preferences percentages for the 33 FLCAS items. This aims to find out the most responses from the students to each statement in the FLCAS questionnaire.

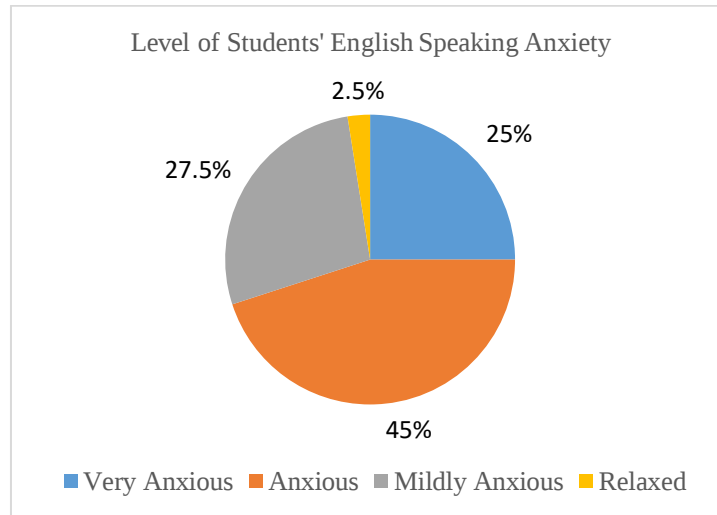
Figure 4.2 Students' Preferences Percentages in the FLCAS Questionnaire



The study examined the total scores of FLCAS statements among 40 participants. High total scores were found in statements with 50% to 100% of respondents choosing the same response, with 20 to 40 students choosing the same response. Low total scores had the lowest percentage value, with only 2.5% choosing one response. Statement number 8 had the highest total score, with 62.5% of respondents choosing the same response. High total scores were found in statements 6, 19, 32, 5, 10, 16, 25, and 27. These findings indicate that most first grade students experience anxiety when speaking English, regardless of their proficiency level. The highest number of anxious students was 18 students, indicating a perceived difficulty in speaking English as a foreign language. This is in line with the study by Arifin and Alaydrus (2020) that both students who have high English proficiency and those who have low English proficiency still have their own anxiety, although the level of anxiety experienced is different. This is related because most students had anxiety when speaking English although at different levels of anxiety. It was evident that there was only one student who was comfortable and relaxed when speaking English. While other students felt anxious, either at a mildly anxious level, only anxious, or very anxious. Moreover, a study by Meidina (2019) and Maysari (2020) found that the majority of students feel anxious when speaking, due to several factors from the most common of fear of making mistakes and to feeling of inferiority or lack of self-confidence.

The researcher categorizes and scores students' English speaking anxiety levels using Likert's Scoring Scale in the FLCAS questionnaire. The results show that students' anxiety levels are significantly affected by their English speaking abilities as follows.

Figure 4.3 the Result of Students' English Speaking Anxiety Levels

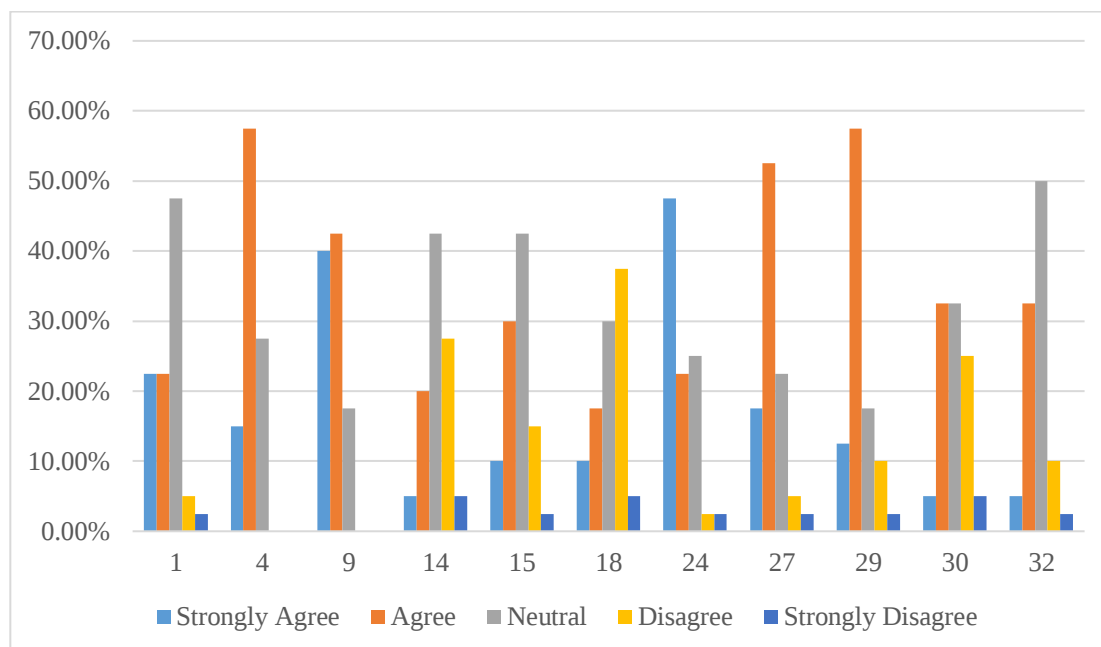


The study revealed that 25% of students experience "Very Anxious" anxiety in speaking English, while 45% experience "Anxiety" between 108-123. 27.5% are "Mildly Anxious" with scores between 87-107, and only 2.5% are "Relaxed" with scores between 66-86. No student experiences "Very Relaxed" anxiety, emphasizing the need for understanding and managing anxiety levels in public speaking. This is also in line with Meidina (2019) studied the English speaking anxiety of third-semester students at Universitas Brawijaya Malang, finding that 91.2% experienced medium anxiety, while 8.8% experienced the highest. The anxiety was primarily rooted in fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension. Moreover, Maysari (2020) also found that speaking anxiety at State Senior High School 2 Pekanbaru was high, with 62% experiencing nervousness during speaking activities. Factors contributing to this anxiety included pedagogical practice and teacher self-efficacy, with 74% of students experiencing high anxiety. Both studies highlight the importance of understanding and addressing students' anxiety in English learning.

The researcher analyzed students' English speaking anxiety using the FLCAS questionnaire, focusing on three sources of anxiety: communication apprehension, communication stress, and stress. The study found that the most prevalent factor was

communication apprehension, with the percentage results indicating a significant impact on students' English speaking anxiety.

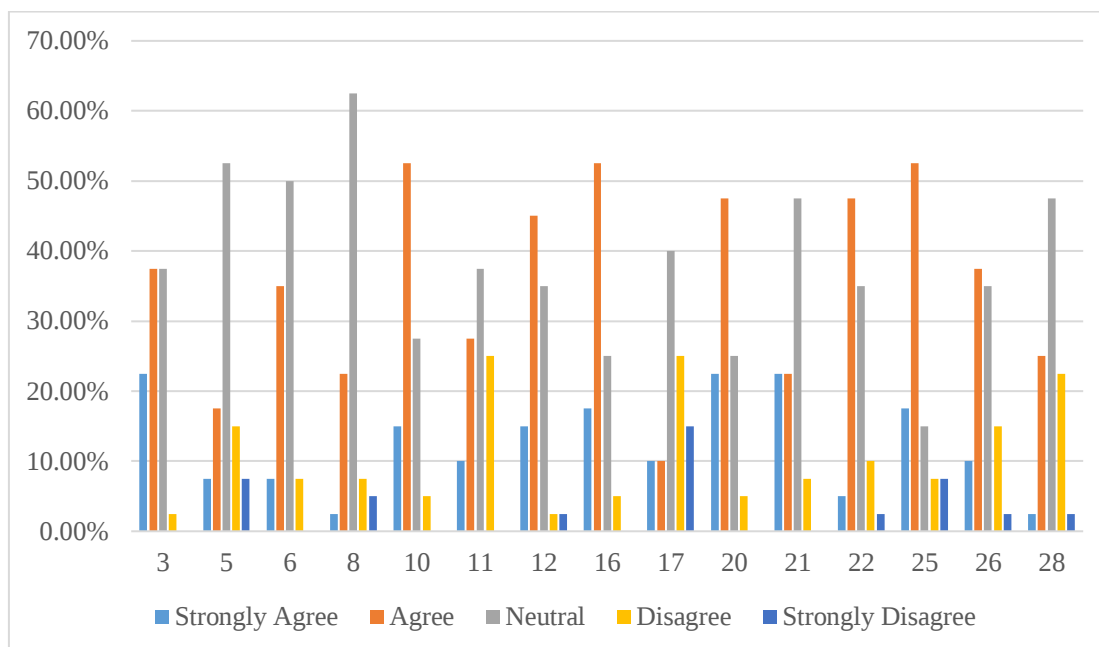
Figure 4.4 An Overview of the Results of Students' Communication Apprehension



The study revealed that students have concerns about communication due to fear of not understanding English teachings and lack of confidence in speaking in front of others. The highest total is found in statements 4, 27, 29, and 32, with a 50% to 100% percentage. This fear leads to nervousness and confusion. In statement 32, a neutral response is found, which can be reasonable but may have varied meanings and imprecise interpretations. The researcher did not fully focus on the statement with the highest score in the neutral response, as it may have varied meanings and imprecise interpretations. Consistently, Meidina (2019) studied the English speaking anxiety of third-semester students at Universitas Brawijaya Malang, finding that 91.2% experienced medium anxiety, while 8.8% experienced the highest. The anxiety was primarily rooted in fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension. Maysari (2020) found that speaking anxiety at State Senior High School 2 Pekanbaru was high, with 62% experiencing nervousness during speaking activities. Factors contributing to this anxiety included pedagogical practice and teacher self-efficacy, with 74% of students experiencing high anxiety. Both studies highlight the importance of understanding and addressing students' anxiety in English learning.

Furthermore, the researcher found the percentage results of test anxiety which one of the three sources of speaking anxiety according to Horwitz et al. (1986).

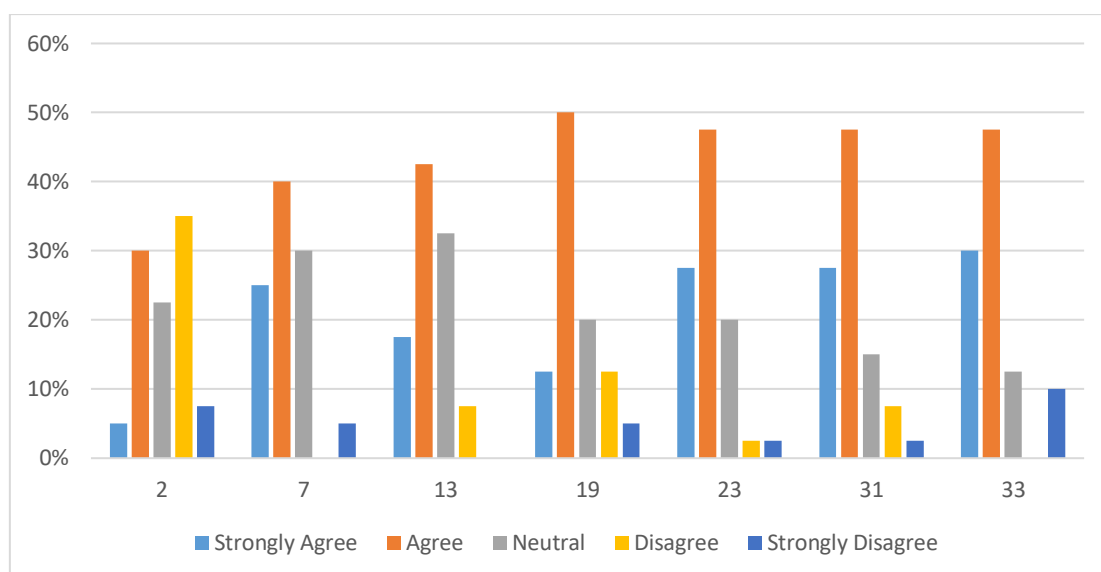
Figure 4.5 The Results of Students' Test Anxiety



The study revealed that students remain anxious despite having prepared for English class, fearing the consequences of failing. Statements with a 50% to 100% response rate, or 20 to 40 students choosing the same response in one statement, are the highest scoring. The researcher does not highlight statements number 5, 6, or 8, as neutral concerns are not the main concern. Some students also feel the English class went fast, worried about falling behind and being one step behind their peers. The study highlights the need for students to be prepared and focused on their English lessons. The result of study by Suparlan (2021) also showed similar result that there are 10 factors contributing students' anxiety, such as being afraid to speak in English, being afraid with teacher's consequence, lack of self-confident, fear of being less competent than others students, embarrassment, insufficient preparation, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, habit in using English language, and language test.

Other than that, the following researcher displayed the percentage results of students' fear of negative evaluation.

Figure 4.6 The Results of Students' Fear of Negative Evaluation



The study revealed that statement number 19 has the highest total score, with 50% to 100% of students agreeing on the same response. Half of the students feel the same fear of their English teacher, who is ready to correct mistakes, and fear negative evaluations from their teachers. This indicates that students are equally afraid of making mistakes and the potential negative feedback from their teachers. This is in consistent with the study by Mitha et al. (2018) who revealed that fear of speaking test type had the highest percentage (44%), followed by communication anxiety (34%), and fear of feedback by peers and teachers which had the lowest percentage (22%). In terms of facing peers and teachers' feedback, Suparlan (2021) also found that the majority of students are fear to speak in English, teacher's consequence, and the feeling of being less competent than others, as well as making mistakes, indicating that this factor is the major cause of speaking anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This study looks at the anxiety levels of first-graders at SMP Islam Soerjo Alam Malang regarding speaking English as well as the main element behind this concern. According to the study's findings, 10 students (or 25% of the sample) experience "Very Anxious" feelings when speaking English, 18 students (or 45%) experience "Anxious" feelings, 11 students (27.5%) experience "Mildly Anxious" feelings, 1 student (or 2.5%) experiences "Relaxed," and none of the students' experience "Very Relaxed" feelings.

Furthermore, they experience anxiety due to communication apprehension, which is the primary reason of students' concern while speaking English in the first grade at SMP Islam Soerjo Alam Malang, with around 57.5% of students experiencing it. The study suggests that teachers should address students' speaking anxiety by using humor and inspirational statements, encouraging active study, and providing support. Further research on English speaking anxiety is recommended for improved outcomes.

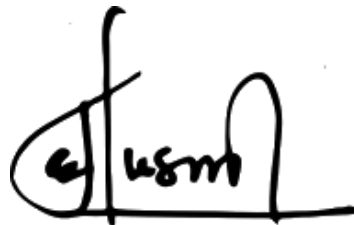
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