

## AN ANALYSIS OF INHIBITING FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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### Abstract

*English is one of the international languages, as well as the UN's official language (United Nations). Mastering English will increase an individual's opportunities to learn about the world and compete on a global scale. Nonetheless, English proficiency among Indonesians remains quite low. According to EF-EPI, Indonesia is in the low ability category for English proficiency, ranking 80th out of 112 countries. Then why is it like this when English has been a required subject in schools and has been taught for a long time to Indonesian students? In truth, there are inhibiting factors affecting students' English performance. The purpose of this research is to determine the factors that inhibit performance by focusing on data sources. specific students from SMK-SMTI Makassar 12th grade in the 2021/2022 academic year. This study's findings revealed ten inhibiting factors which are grammar, vocabulary, lack of self-confidence, familiarity and feeling toward the topic, self-esteem, interlocutor, self-consciousness, pronunciation, shyness, and anxiety.*

*Keywords— English-Speaking Skills, Inhibiting Factors.*

### INTRODUCTION

The English language is not only the language that is spoken as a first language by more than 400 million people in different parts of the world, but it is also the language that is spoken most widely in the world today. English is also one of the international languages which are used as the official language of the UN (United Nations).

Through the acquisition of English as a second language or a foreign language, besides conserving Indonesian as the mother tongue, Indonesian people will have a bigger chance to get to know the world, as Fuller (1987) pointed out, expanding our linguistic limits beyond those provided by our native tongue by acquiring alternative languages gives us the opportunity to participate in a more business world which is a statement that is well-founded since acquiring a foreign language gives us the ability to comprehend or at the very less we can behave like personalities that are different from what we are familiar with in our mother tongue, making it easier for us to blend in a wider environment (outside of the environment that uses our mother language).

Apart from being the first non-native language required to be learned in secondary schools, English is also one of the mandatory courses learned in Indonesian schools, covering primary school, middle school, and high school. The government's decision to make English a compulsory subject at various stages of education is not without reason, but to strengthen the Indonesian generation for contending universally. In fact, a few years ago, before the National Examination was abolished in Indonesia, English became one of the subjects being tested.

However, although English has been taught in Indonesian schools for a long time, the EF-EPI (Education First-English Proficiency Index) as the international standard for adult English proficiency in the 2021 edition records, Indonesia is in the low ability category for English proficiency and is ranked 80 out of 112 countries. Indonesia's ability to speak English is still below Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia, which managed to occupy the top three EPI positions in the Asian region. Then, why is Indonesian people's English-speaking ability still low?

There are many possible reasons behind this. First, English lessons at school are less fun and tend to be passive. Second, unsupportive environments can make people who want to learn English lower their intentions. Third, there are still people who think learning English is a form of attitude to eliminate nationalism. Fourth, people don't realize how crucial it is to learn English. Lastly, some people hesitate from trying to learn English because they believe it to be too challenging.

Talking about English, there are four basic skills in it, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. But what is most often used to judge a person directly is speaking skills, in many circumstances, or In other words, our fluency in speaking will be someone else's judgment of us about our language ability compared to other skills in a language such as listening, writing, etc (Lukitasari; 2008).

Through speaking skills, a person can communicate and convey what is in their mind, ideas, feelings, or even emotions to other people, as Richard and Renandya (2002:210) mentioned that speaking is among the most important aspects of communication. Therefore, without speaking skills, it can be difficult to interpret ongoing communication.

In addition, speaking skill is an essential ability that must be developed when working with the English language, because speaking is a skill that is very closely related to its use by humans, especially for students in the real world. As Brown and Yule (1983) said that in real-life settings, the skill that people judge the most from students is their speaking skill. With great and fluent speaking skills, students will find it easier to reach their goals, increase their career or job opportunities, make their businesses better, build their belief in themselves, make presentations in front of many people, attend interviews, participate in group activities, and so on.

But in fact, there are still many students who are their mother tongue is not English is difficult to speak English well and fluently in public. Even though it has been studied for years, there are still many students who still find speaking English in real-life settings hard when being asked, because speaking skill is not easy skill to master. Besides it is indeed a difficult skill to master, it is also known that there are inhibiting factors that make students difficult to improve their speaking skills. Those inhibiting factors, of course, should not be ignored, because, without good speaking skills, students will experience difficulties in teaching-learning activities such as in the question-answer process which is closely related to speaking skills, and if the teaching-learning activities are disrupted, in the end, the learning outcomes obtained by students will not be optimal.

There have been previous studies that have raised the factors that inhibit students' English-speaking performance, first, is research conducted by Nurlita (2018) entitled "Inhibiting Factors Affecting Students' English-Speaking Ability (A Case Study at PBI UIN Ar-Raniry)". This study is a study that used both the qualitative and quantitative approaches (mixed) with a case study method. The data sources (informants) in this study were college students from the entrance year of 2014, and in the data collection process, questionnaires and interviews were used as the technique for collecting data.

Moreover, the study's theoretical framework includes several things known to hinder learners' speaking performance in English which were used as references. From those references, Nurlita's research results showed that the factors that hindered students in speaking

English consisted of grammatical errors, pronunciation errors, lack of vocabulary, feelings of shame, anxiety, pauses in speaking, and feelings of hesitation. In addition, many students have the impression that they have nothing to share. Results from Nurlita's study also showed that the classroom setting, parental pressure, and the embarrassment of being the only boy or girl in the class were factors that prevented students from speaking English.

Another study with the same theme was conducted by Tasmia in 2019. The research design used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. For data sources (informants), Tasmia chose eighth-grade students at Pondok Pesantren Riyadhul Amien, Jambi. Furthermore, observations, interviews, and documentation were used as the techniques for collecting data.

Moreover, the results of this study show that students have difficulty with grammar, this was proven by the only few students who master grammar. In addition, students also experienced problems with their pronunciation as seen from the results of student interviews. Lack of vocabulary is also present as the problem faced by students in their speaking. In an interview with an English teacher, he said that students' speaking ability was still low because the average student at the school still lacked in mastering the vocabulary and the last problem is students are afraid and feel ashamed if they make mistakes.

From the previous studies that have been mentioned, there are differences with this research which is expected to bring new knowledge and insight into learning, especially in the area of English, and will be explained further. The first difference is that the framework used as a reference in this research - which will be discussed further in the next chapter - is more recent and more varied than the framework used by Nurlita and Tasmia. Thus, we expect that this research's findings will reveal more inhibiting factors in speaking based on the framework. In addition, this study targets different subjects from previous research, so it is hoped that it can provide new perspectives on the relevant research theme.

The next difference is that this research was conducted after the COVID-19 pandemic, and there may be differences in the problems experienced by students before the pandemic, so this research is expected to be able to analyze those new problems. Moreover, this research method uses a descriptive method, different from the methods of the previous research that has been mentioned. With the descriptive method, it is hoped that this research can explain in more detail the process and the results that will be obtained later to readers so that the readers will get a better understanding of the information contained in this research. The last one, in-depth interviews will be used throughout the research process to dig up as much information as possible from the data sources used to collect the data, so that readers can receive maximum information.

Therefore, the writer is interested in carrying out this research entitled "An Analysis of Inhibiting Factors Affecting Students' English-Speaking Performance".

## **METHODS**

In this study, the researcher will use a qualitative descriptive. Qualitative Descriptive also abbreviated as "QD" is an initialism for qualitative study using a descriptive approach. According to Kim, H., Sefcik, JS, and Bradway, C. (2016), the main goal of qualitative descriptive research is to answer research questions about who, what, where, and how an occurrence or event took place up then investigate in depth to uncover object of the study patterns.

This research was carried out at SMK-SMTI Makassar, which is located at Jalan Pajjaiang No.18A, Sudiang Raya, Kec. Biringkanaya, Kota Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan. Meanwhile, the population in this study is twelfth-grade students of SMK SMTI Makassar in the 2021/2022 academic year and there are 231 students. As for the selection of data sources (informants or participants), non-probability sampling was used. Furthermore, snowball

sampling was used in this study. Snowball sampling is a technique for selecting data sources that initially are few but gradually become many. Moreover, the number of data sources in this study that have been obtained was 7 informants after the researcher entered the field. Moreover, the addition of data sources stopped at informant 7 because it had reached the level of “redundancy”, namely the data generated from the data source was saturated or did not provide new information. As for the data collection technique, semi-structured interviews was used in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the interview, informants were selected using the snowball sampling technique with a total of 7 informants. The interviews were conducted using Indonesian, but the researcher will translate the results of the interviews into English as will be seen in this thesis. In addition, some interviews were conducted face to face while some were conducted through WhatsApp calls and chat. Interviews are intended not only to find out what inhibiting factors are feel by students but also to sort these inhibiting factors from the most felt by the students to the least. The following table provides a summary of the findings from the interviews:

No.	Inhibiting Factors	Number of Cases
1	Shyness	2
2	Lack of self-confidence	6
3	Self-esteem	6
4	Familiarity and feelings toward the topic	6
5	Feeling toward interlocutor	6
6	Self-consciousness	3
7	Anxiety	2
8	Grammar	7
9	Vocabulary	7
10	Pronunciation	3

From the table above, it can be seen that grammar and vocabulary are the inhibiting factors most felt by students, all students who were used as informants admitted that they had experienced difficulties related to their grammar and vocabulary. Then lack of self-confidence, familiarity and feeling toward the topic, self-esteem, and interlocutors became the next factor, each of which was felt by 6 out of 7 students. Later followed by self-consciousness and pronunciation felt by 3 out of 7 student, and the inhibiting factors that are least felt by students are shyness and anxiety, each of which is felt by 2 of 7 students. The details of each inhibiting factor from the results of interviews with students are as follows:

### 1. Grammar

According to Thornbury (2006), that students must develop proficiency in grammar as a necessary part of learning any language, but that does not mean they have to always say something with perfect grammar in communication. Because, essentially, talking or communicating with other people has the main purpose of providing or exchanging information. So that without the rules of good and correct sentences, if the information has been conveyed to the listener, then the communication has been successful. However, many students do not understand this. They think that when they speak, they always have to comply with the existing grammar rules. So, this makes them hesitate to speak. All of the informants interviewed by the researcher said that they had all experienced difficulties in terms of grammar when speaking, even Informant (2) explained that grammar made her

afraid to speak so that she rarely showed her speaking performance in front of the class unless there was a text available to read.

## **2. Vocabulary**

Next is the vocabulary factor. The lack of vocabulary possessed by students greatly affects students speaking performance. Vocabulary can interfere with students' confidence when they want to speak English and of course, it will interfere with students' speaking performance as well as that experienced by the Informant (02). In addition, based on the results of the interview with Informant (06), it can be assumed that micro-skills (grammar, pronunciation, grammar, etc.) can affect students' likes or dislikes towards certain subjects, which in this case is an English lesson. Meanwhile, students' interest in the lesson can determine whether students are active or passive in learning, including in speaking. In essence, the amount of vocabulary mastered by students is very influential on their speaking ability, this is supported by the opinion of Tarigan (1991) who says that language skills cannot be separated from vocabulary mastery so there is an interrelationship that cannot be separated.

## **3. Lack of self-confidence**

The following factor that most learners experience is a lack of confidence in themselves. Lack of self-confidence in students arises because of fear, anxiety, worry, and feeling unsure of their abilities accompanied by pounding chest and body shaking which are psychological problems of students caused by external stimuli. In addition, lack of confidence can also be caused by feelings of anxiety, uneasy feeling, and other feelings that follow, such as laziness, impatient, or low self-esteem. From the results of interviews with informants, it is known that many of them have low self-confidence or which can also be called inferiority. Adler (in Hambali and Jaenudin 2013:101) states "Inferiority means feeling weak and unskilled in dealing with tasks that must be completed." This is in line with the results of student interviews, more specifically, Informant (1) who does not feel confident that she can speak English because she is not skilled or mastered grammar, and Informant (3) who has difficulty in pronunciation. Both of them felt the difficulty of the lack of skills they had so they felt inferior.

On the other hand, Yusuf Al-Uqshari (2005: 181-187) explained that although a person has sufficient self-confidence, sometimes a person can also feel insecure. He found that there is a major emotional connection that affects people and makes them insecure. The main thing is the feeling of being disturbed, unsettled, or cornered. All of these feelings will describe a feeling that is not right and when humans begin to doubt their abilities and themselves, this is where someone starts to feel insecure and find it difficult. One of the feelings that can encourage someone to be insecure is the feeling of being mistreated by others. The feeling of being mistreated by others not only makes a person feel a loss of self-confidence but also makes a person lose trust in others. There are several informants who after being interviewed are known to be examples of people belonging to this group. Informant (5) and Informant (7) recounted an unpleasant event they felt at school when they tried to practice their English-speaking skills. They were being laughed at and mocked so that the end of the situation made them no longer confident to speak in class.

## **4. Familiarity and feelings toward the topic**

The next inhibiting factor is familiarity and feeling toward the topic. Logically, someone who is familiar with something will make them comfortable with it. This is the same as students' familiarity with a topic. As stated by Kasbi & Shirvan (2017), students' knowledge of something can affect student anxiety. If students are not familiar with the

topic being discussed, students' anxiety can increase, and if this happens, students' speaking skills can be affected, even to the point that students do not want to speak at all because they do not know what is being discussed. And vice versa, if students are familiar with the topics discussed in class or in certain conversations in which they already know about the topic, they will find what is in their heads easier for them to express and it will be engaging them to talk, as stated Informant (2) and Informant (4) in their interviews. In addition, the topic of conversation must also be in accordance with students' level of knowledge, or else, the topic can inhibit their performance in delivering their speaking. When students are given a topic whose knowledge of the topic is so little that it exceeds their capacity to respond, they are very likely to become anxious and of course, again, this can inhibit students' performance in speaking well.

### **5. Self-esteem**

Moreover, there is an inhibiting factor, self-esteem. It was found from the interviews result, learners may have low self-esteem because many of them feel shame or embarrassment. According to the findings of Gilbert and Procter (2006), they explained that low self-esteem makes a person vulnerable to negative mood conditions such as shame. This low self-esteem is not without reason, but it stems from students who have had unpleasant situations in class, one of which is related to the topic of this discussion is the mistreatment of informants' classmates who laugh and ridicule them when they make mistakes in their speaking. In addition, the feeling of shame felt by some informants is also known to stem from the inability of the teacher to make students feel that it is okay to make mistakes in learning. It is known that some informants felt embarrassed after being reprimanded when they made a mistake by their teacher. An informant explained that after being reprimanded about pronunciation errors by her teacher, she became embarrassed to often participate again in the question-answer activities in class. Therefore, as stated by Humaera (2015) which was mentioned in chapter 2 earlier, teachers have an important role to teach students to respect students speaking skills so that things like low self-esteem are not experienced by students.

### **6. Interlocutor**

The next factor is in terms of the interlocutor, which are the teacher and friends in the class. Interlocutors are crucial to students' active speaking. Based on the interview results with informants, students become hesitant and even afraid to speak when they get a negative reaction from their interlocutor so this factor is very closely related to the previous factor, which is self-consciousness. Negative reactions of the interlocutor, such as mocking or laughing, can make students who are trying to practice their speaking become embarrassed to speak in public again. In addition, teachers as speakers or interlocutors are also required to pay attention to the atmosphere they create when they are in class because often teachers become the center of attention so whatever they do directly or indirectly will affect activities in class. Maintaining a supportive class atmosphere, a clear way of presenting material, and strengthening teacher-student relationships are among the things that must be considered by the teacher or speaker. Because if students' feeling toward the teacher or speaker is not good, then it can have effects on students' learning performance at school, one of which is their speaking performance. Research conducted by K. Sadeghi et al. (2013) found students felt quite high stress when faced with serious or quick-tempered teachers. The stress they feel can of course affect their speaking performance. As experienced by Informant 4 who felt that she became afraid to speak in class when the teacher whose way of teaching was tense was teaching.

## 7. Self-consciousness

In addition, self-consciousness is a way of evaluating a person against himself both in terms of internal and external. Self-consciousness can be in a form of positive thinking or negative thinking. Gerrig & Zimbardo (2008) explained that self-consciousness is usually caused by perceptions, thoughts, feelings, images, and desires of someone at a certain moment and all the activities they do become the focus of their attention. Focusing too much attention can lead to negative thoughts. Negative thoughts experienced by a person usually have difficulty eliminating them. This negative thinking can be exacerbated when a person compares themselves with others. This happened to several informants, which was known from the results of their interviews. There are Informants (1) and Informants (3) who said they had felt down when they compared their English-speaking ability with the English-speaking ability of their classmates, which can be concluded that their friend's English-speaking ability is above their ability. Even though it was only at the beginning and in the end, they succeeded in using it as a motivation for them to improve their speaking skills, but still, self-consciousness proved to be a factor inhibiting students' performance in speaking English. Meanwhile, according to Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss (in Miftahussaadah, 2019), self-consciousness is an individual's assessment of themselves that leads to self-attention both internally and externally.

## 8. Pronunciation

Next is the pronunciation factor. From the results of student interviews, there is an informant (03) who said, "Sometimes it (pronunciation) becomes the obstacle. That is the reason why I have a lack of confidence in speaking." From this sentence, it can be seen that pronunciation can be the cause of the emergence of other inhibiting factors, in other words, the inhibiting factors can be related to each other. On the other hand, pronunciation or other micro-skills (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) can be the reason students like or dislike certain lessons, as experienced by Informant (06) who in the interview said "...the reason I don't like it (English lesson) is that the way of pronouncing words and vocabularies are difficult to remember or pronounce" and if students don't like the lesson, we are safe to say it will affect their learning performance (in this case it is English), so their speaking performance will also be disturbed. In other words, pronunciation indirectly becomes an inhibiting factor for students in speaking. Humaera (2015) said that the obstacles experienced by students in terms of difficulty pronouncing a word can affect their performance because they will be afraid of mispronouncing words. Therefore, the teacher has an important role to make students familiar with pronunciation so that they get used to and have the courage to communicate orally, specifically pronunciation.

## 9. Shyness

In the shyness factor felt by students, it was found that this factor appeared when students were in front of many people. This is in line with the opinion of Carducci & Golant (2009) that said shyness is a condition of discomfort and the emergence of behavioral barriers if there is the presence of other people nearby. Shyness can be shown in students with silence, feelings of shame, red face, and stuttering. Furthermore, when students experience shyness, what usually happens is that they forget what they wanted to say, or their minds go blank. This is evidenced by one of the informants, Informant (7), who previously stated in the interview results that when he has to speak in public, he will often feel embarrassed, and the condition he feels when he feels shy is that his hands will feel cold and his memory will be scattered or we can also interpret is that he forgot what he should remember.

## 10. Anxiety

The last factor is anxiety. According to Bourne (2010), anxiety is a unified physiological, behavioral, and psychological response. Anxiety can show physically in the form of fast palpitations, shaking, nausea, vomiting, stomachache, and heavy perspiration. In terms of behavior, anxiety can make people hard to respond normally. Meanwhile, from a psychological point of view, anxiety refers to a state of fear or unease that is experienced by the individual. Furthermore, anxiety is an inhibiting factor that is often felt by students when speaking in a foreign language. Especially when students are faced with a large audience as perceived by Informant (3) and Informant (7) from the results of their interviews. They reported that they usually experienced anxiety whenever their teacher instructed them to deliver a presentation in front of their classmates. More specifically, Informant (3) added, that when people pay close attention to her when she talks, she will feel anxiety.

## CONCLUSIONS

Speaking is the process of constructing meaning and communicating that meaning to others through the usage of spoken or unspoken symbols in a variety of contexts. This can take place in a number of different ways. By speaking, we can express ideas and feelings to each other. In language teaching and learning, speaking is considered a skill to practice and master.

After conducting research with seven students in SMK-SMTI Makassar about the inhibiting factors that affect students' English-speaking performance, It was discovered there are a total of ten factors that affect the English-speaking performance of the learners. These factors consist of grammar (cognitive factor), vocabulary (cognitive factor), lack of self-confidence (affective factor), familiarity and feeling toward the topic (affective and cognitive factor), self-esteem (affective factor), interlocutor (affective factor), self-consciousness (affective factor), pronunciation (cognitive factor), shyness (affective factor), and anxiety (affective factor).

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