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School Students Speaking Anxieties and Their Speaking Performances: A Correlational Study

Manuscript Information

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki hubungan antara *speaking anxiety* dan *speaking performance* pada siswa kelas delapan di Kabupaten Cirebon, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan desain korelasional kuantitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan 62 siswa dari dua sekolah menengah pertama. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS) yang diadaptasi dari Horwitz dkk. (1986), terdiri dari 33 item yang mencakup tiga dimensi: *communication anxiety* (11 item), *fear of negative evaluation* (11 item), dan *test anxiety* (11 item). Skor *speaking performance* diperoleh dari dua penilaian, yaitu tes berbicara awal dan penilaian akhir kemampuan bahasa Inggris. Di antara kedua penilaian tersebut, guru menerapkan metode pembelajaran interaktif berupa permainan dan lagu untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih menarik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas siswa (54,84%) berada pada kategori *Anxious*, dengan skor *anxiety* rata-rata sebesar 108,05 (SD = 13,99). Analisis setiap dimensi menunjukkan bahwa *communication anxiety* memiliki skor rata-rata tertinggi (M = 36,39), diikuti oleh *test anxiety* (M = 36,21) dan *fear of negative evaluation* (M = 35,45). Selain itu, skor *speaking performance* siswa meningkat secara signifikan dari 82,00 menjadi 93,00 setelah penerapan metode pembelajaran interaktif. Hasil analisis korelasi menunjukkan tidak terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara *speaking anxiety* dan *speaking performance* ($r = -0,16$, $t = -1,22$, $df = 60$, $p = 0,21$, $p > 0,05$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun siswa mengalami tingkat *speaking anxiety* yang tinggi, penerapan metode pembelajaran yang efektif seperti permainan dan lagu dapat membantu mereka mencapai *speaking performance* yang baik terlepas dari tingkat *anxiety* yang dimiliki. Oleh karena itu, hasil penelitian ini memberikan implikasi penting bagi guru EFL untuk menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang menarik, suportif, dan mampu membantu mengurangi *speaking anxiety* siswa.

Kata Kunci:
Kecemasan Berbicara, Kinerja Berbicara, Pembelajar EFL, Sekolah Menengah Pertama, Studi Korelasional.

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance among eighth-grade students in Cirebon Regency, Indonesia. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the research involved 62 students from two junior high schools. Data were collected using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986), comprising 33 items across three dimensions: communication apprehension (11 items), fear of negative evaluation (11 items), and test anxiety (11 items). Speaking performance scores were obtained from two assessments: an initial pure speaking test and a final overall English assessment. Between assessments, the teacher implemented interactive teaching methods including games and songs to create a more engaging learning environment. The findings revealed that the majority of students (54.84%) experienced "Anxious" levels of speaking anxiety, with a mean anxiety score of 108.05 (SD = 13.99). The dimension analysis revealed that Communication Apprehension had the highest mean score (M = 36.39), followed by Test Anxiety (M = 36.21) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (M = 35.45). Importantly, students' scores improved significantly from 82.00 to 93.00 after the implementation of interactive teaching methods. The correlation analysis showed no significant relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance ($r = -0.16$, $t = -1.22$, $df = 60$, $p = 0.21$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that while students experience high levels of speaking anxiety, effective teaching methods such as games and songs can help students perform well regardless of their anxiety levels. These findings have important implications for EFL teachers in creating engaging, supportive learning environments.

Keyword:
Speaking Anxiety, Speaking Performance, EFL Learners, Junior High School, Correlational Study.

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most fundamental skills in English language learning, serving as the primary means of communication and interaction in both academic and social contexts. In the Indonesian context, where English is taught as a foreign language, speaking often becomes the most challenging skill for students to master (Horwitz et al., 1986; Budayanti et al., 2023). Despite years of formal instruction, many students struggle to express themselves orally in English, with anxiety emerging as a significant affective barrier that can impede their communicative competence.

The importance of speaking skills in EFL learning cannot be overstated. Speaking is not merely the act of producing sounds and words; it involves the complex process of constructing and sharing meaning through verbal and non-verbal symbols in various contexts (Budayanti et al., 2023). For Indonesian students, mastering speaking skills is particularly crucial as English proficiency opens doors to higher education, career opportunities, and global communication. However, the journey toward oral proficiency is often fraught with psychological obstacles, chief among them being language anxiety.

Anxiety in foreign language learning has been recognized as a distinct construct that significantly impacts learners' performance and achievement (Horwitz et al., 1986). Horwitz et al. (1986) defined foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). This anxiety manifests particularly in speaking situations, where students are required to produce language spontaneously and face potential evaluation from teachers and peers (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Research has demonstrated that speaking anxiety can affect students' speaking performance (Tampubolon et al., 2024; Tiana et al., 2024). Students experiencing high levels of anxiety tend to avoid speaking opportunities, struggle with vocabulary recall, and demonstrate lower overall proficiency (Rahmadani & Etfita, 2022). The cognitive interference caused by anxiety diverts attentional resources away from the speaking task, leading to reduced fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). This can create a cycle where anxiety leads to poor performance, which in turn reinforces anxiety about future speaking situations.

In the Indonesian educational context, various studies have explored speaking anxiety among EFL learners at different educational levels. Mustamir (2024) conducted a meta-synthetic analysis of Indonesian EFL learners' speaking anxiety, identifying several key factors contributing to speaking anxiety, including fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence in language proficiency, and cultural influences on communication styles. Syahrani et al. (2024) found that eleventh-grade students in Pontianak experienced moderate levels of speaking anxiety, with lack of mastery in grammar, vocabulary, and preparation being primary causes. Similarly, Budayanti et al. (2023) discovered that most vocational high school students in Bali experienced anxious levels of speaking anxiety, with fear of negative evaluation and feeling insecure as the major causes.

Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three interrelated components of foreign language anxiety. First, communication apprehension involves anxiety about real or anticipated communication with others. Students with high communication apprehension may feel uneasy when speaking in groups or in public and may avoid speaking situations altogether. Second, fear of negative evaluation refers to apprehension about being judged negatively by others. Students who fear negative evaluation may avoid speaking situations where they might be evaluated, such as classroom discussions or presentations. This fear can be particularly pronounced in collectivist cultures like Indonesia, where social harmony and avoiding embarrassment are highly valued. Third, test anxiety involves the fear of failure in assessment situations. Students with test anxiety may perform poorly even when adequately prepared, as anxiety interferes with their ability to recall and apply knowledge during exams.

Multiple factors contribute to speaking anxiety among EFL learners. These can be broadly categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include lack of self-confidence and self-efficacy, shyness and fear of making mistakes, low motivation and negative attitudes toward English, perceived low proficiency in English, and perfectionism and unrealistic expectations. External factors include classroom environment and teaching methods, teacher-student interactions, peer pressure and fear of being laughed at, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, and cultural influences and communication norms (Budayanti et al., 2023; Sulistyowati, 2023).

Rahmadani and Etfita (2022) identified several causes of speaking anxiety among university students, including fear of self-prediction, irrational beliefs, sensitivity to dangers, sensitivity to anxiety, attribution of incorrect body signals, and inadequate self-efficacy. Students reported feeling not confident when speaking English, afraid to make mistakes when speaking, anxious when teachers asked them to speak, and embarrassed to perform in front of the class. Sulistyowati (2023) examined the causes of speaking anxiety among

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postgraduate students in Indonesia and found that lack of self-confidence, fear of criticism, formal or informal situations, the feeling that other students perform better, the influence of L1, and lack of target language knowledge were primary causes.

Kurniasih (2024) identified three types of anxiety experienced by vocational high school students: state anxiety (temporary and situation-specific), trait anxiety (more persistent and inherent to personality characteristics), and situation-specific anxiety (related to specific situations or objects). State anxiety manifests when students feel panic and stress when speaking English; trait anxiety appears when students feel nervous when they cannot understand the teacher's explanation; and situation-specific anxiety occurs during speaking examinations.

The relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance has been extensively studied, with much research indicating a negative correlation. Students with high anxiety levels tend to perform poorly in speaking tasks, demonstrating lower fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility (Tampubolon et al., 2024; Tiana et al., 2024). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) explained the mechanism through which anxiety affects speaking performance: anxious students experience cognitive interference, where worry consumes attentional resources that should be devoted to the speaking task. This leads to difficulties in vocabulary retrieval, grammar processing, and overall fluency.

Tampubolon et al. (2024) investigated the correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance among second-grade senior high school students and found a correlation between the variables, where higher anxiety led to lower performance. Tiana et al. (2024) examined the influence of anxiety on speaking performance in EFL large classes at a private university in Jakarta and found that anxiety had a negative effect on students' ability to speak English.

Daymiel et al. (2022) found that language anxiety can be used to predict speaking ability, with anxious learners performing worse in terms of vocabulary and comprehension. The study also revealed a significant correlation between language anxiety and speaking performance, particularly in vocabulary and comprehension. Hidayati et al. (2022) explored English speaking anxiety among Indonesian junior high school learners and identified specific learning activities that cause anxiety, such as question-and-answer sessions and speaking performance activities.

Luo and Xiong (2025) offered a nuanced perspective by distinguishing between facilitating anxiety (beneficial) and debilitating anxiety (harmful). Their study revealed that debilitating anxiety positively influenced both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, challenging the traditional view that anxiety is solely harmful. The study also found that neither facilitating nor debilitating anxiety had a statistically significant impact on EFL academic performance, suggesting that the relationship between anxiety and performance is more complex than previously thought.

However, limited attention has been given to junior high school students in specific regional contexts such as Cirebon Regency. The junior high school level represents a critical period in students' language development, as this is when they transition from basic to more advanced language skills and begin to form more complex attitudes toward English learning (Hidayati et al., 2022). Understanding the dynamics of speaking anxiety at this educational level is crucial for developing effective pedagogical interventions.

Given the prevalence of speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL learners and its potential impact on speaking performance, this study aims to investigate the relationship between these variables specifically among eighth-grade students in Cirebon Regency. By understanding the level of speaking anxiety and its correlation with speaking performance, educators and policymakers can develop more effective strategies for reducing anxiety and enhancing oral proficiency in EFL classrooms.In line with these research questions, the objectives of this study are: (1) To identify the level of speaking anxiety among ninth-grade students in Cirebon Regency. (2) To examine the relationship between speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between students' speaking anxiety and their speaking performance. Correlational research is suitable for examining the relationship between variables without manipulating them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A quantitative approach was selected because it allows numerical data to be statistically analyzed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance (Rahmadani & Etfita, 2022).

The participants were 62 eighth-grade students from two junior high schools in Cirebon Regency, Indonesia. The schools were purposively selected to represent different educational settings, with one intact class from each school participating. All participants were between 13 and 14 years old, had studied English

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as a compulsory subject since elementary school, and had received at least two years of formal English instruction at the junior high school level. Purposive sampling was applied based on the criteria that students were enrolled in the eighth grade, had studied English for at least two years, were willing to participate, and had parental consent (Sugiyono, 2019).

Two research instruments were used. Speaking anxiety was measured using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The questionnaire contains 33 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and measures communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, with seven reverse-scored items. The instrument has demonstrated excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93, and has been widely used in studies involving EFL learners, including those conducted in Indonesia (Budayanti et al., 2023; Tampubolon et al., 2024; Tiana et al., 2024). Students' speaking performance was measured using speaking scores provided by their English teachers. Initial speaking scores were collected before classroom intervention, while final scores were obtained after the implementation of interactive teaching strategies. During the intervention period, teachers applied games and English songs to reduce students' fear of making mistakes, encourage active participation, improve pronunciation and fluency, increase confidence, and create a more enjoyable learning environment.

Data collection was conducted online during the regular school semester. Permission was obtained from school principals and English teachers, while informed consent was secured from parents or guardians and assent from students. The FLCAS questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, with teachers sharing the link via official WhatsApp groups. Students were given two to three days to complete the questionnaire, and reminders were provided to maximize participation. After questionnaire administration, speaking performance scores based on multiple classroom assessments, including oral presentations, role-plays, and participation, were collected from English teachers through email or secure file-sharing platforms. Questionnaire responses and speaking scores were compiled into spreadsheets for analysis. Throughout the process, ethical principles were maintained by ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, secure data storage, anonymity, and participants' right to withdraw without consequences.

Data analysis employed several quantitative statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation, and score range, were used to determine students' speaking anxiety levels based on established FLCAS score categories ranging from very relaxed to very anxious (Budayanti et al., 2023). A paired t-test was conducted to examine whether students' speaking performance significantly improved after the implementation of games and songs. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance, with correlation coefficients interpreted from very weak to very strong. Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test formula derived from the correlation coefficient. The null hypothesis was rejected when the calculated t-value exceeded the critical t-value or when the significance level was below 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Students' Speaking Anxiety

The analysis of FLCAS questionnaire data revealed the distribution of speaking anxiety levels among the 62 participants. The total anxiety scores ranged from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating higher levels of anxiety.

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Speaking Anxiety Levels

Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Very Anxious	124 - 165	5	8.06%
Anxious	108 - 123	34	54.84%
Mildly Anxious	87 - 107	16	25.81%
Relaxed	66 - 86	7	11.29%
Very Relaxed	33 - 65	0	0.00%
Total		62	100%

As shown in Table 1, the majority of students (54.84%) fell within the "Anxious" level, followed by 25.81% at the "Mildly Anxious" level and 8.06% at the "Very Anxious" level. Only 11.29% of students were at the "Relaxed" level, and no students (0.00%) were at the "Very Relaxed" level. This distribution indicates that speaking anxiety is a highly prevalent issue among eighth-grade students in Cirebon Regency, with over 88% of students experiencing some level of anxiety when speaking English.

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These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in the Indonesian context. Budayanti et al. (2023) found that 42% of vocational high school students in Bali experienced "Anxious" levels of speaking anxiety, with 20% at the "Very Anxious" level. The higher percentage of "Anxious" students in this study (54.84%) suggests that junior high school students in Cirebon Regency may experience even higher levels of speaking anxiety than vocational high school students. Similarly, Syahrani et al. (2024) found that eleventh-grade students in Pontianak experienced moderate levels of speaking anxiety, with lack of mastery in grammar, vocabulary, and preparation being primary causes.

The descriptive statistics revealed that the mean anxiety score was 108.05 (SD = 13.99), which falls within the "Anxious" category (108-123). This confirms that, on average, students in this study experienced high levels of speaking anxiety. The standard deviation of 13.99 indicates moderate variability in anxiety levels among the students, with some students scoring significantly higher or lower than the mean.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Anxiety and Speaking Performance

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Speaking Anxiety	62	108.0	13.99	70	143
Speaking Performance	62	86.02	5.30	80	96

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean speaking performance score was 86.02 (SD = 5.30), indicating that students performed relatively well in speaking tasks despite their high anxiety levels. The relatively small standard deviation (5.30) suggests that students' speaking performance scores were fairly consistent across the sample.

Dimension Analysis of Speaking Anxiety

Table 3. Dimension-wise Analysis of Speaking Anxiety

Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Items	Level
Fear of Negative Evaluation	36.39	5.87	11	Moderate
Communication Apprehension	35.45	5.99	11	Moderate
Test Anxiety	36.21	6.19	11	Moderate

The dimension-wise analysis presented in Table 3 reveals that Communication Apprehension had the highest mean score (M = 36.39), followed closely by Test Anxiety (M = 36.21) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (M = 35.45). All three dimensions showed moderate levels of anxiety, with mean scores ranging from 35.45 to 36.39. The standard deviations for all three dimensions were relatively similar (5.87 to 6.19), indicating consistent variability across the dimensions.

Since each dimension has the same number of items (11 items each), the mean scores for each dimension are directly comparable. The finding that Communication Apprehension had the highest mean score (36.39) suggests that students experience the highest level of anxiety related to communicating in English, particularly when speaking in front of others or in group settings. This is followed closely by Test Anxiety (36.21), indicating that students also experience significant anxiety related to speaking assessments and examinations. Fear of Negative Evaluation had the lowest mean score (35.45), suggesting that while students are concerned about being judged negatively by others, this dimension is slightly less prominent than the other two dimensions in this specific context.

This finding partially aligns with previous studies. Budayanti et al. (2023) found that fear of negative evaluation was the highest type of language anxiety at 44%, followed by communication apprehension (30%) and test anxiety (26%). However, in this study, Communication Apprehension emerged as the highest dimension, followed by Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation. This difference may be attributed to the specific characteristics of the participants, such as their age, educational level, and the cultural context of Cirebon Regency.

The predominance of Communication Apprehension suggests that students feel most anxious when they have to communicate in English, particularly in speaking situations where they are required to produce language spontaneously. This is consistent with the findings of Daymiel et al. (2022), who identified communication apprehension as a primary source of language anxiety, and Rehan (2023), who found that social pressure and fear of being judged contribute to speaking anxiety among secondary school students.

The relatively high level of Test Anxiety (M = 36.21) indicates that students are concerned about speaking assessments and examinations. This finding is consistent with studies by Ali and Anwar (2021) and Nayyef Mustafa and Ahmed (2023), who identified test anxiety as a major cause of speaking anxiety. The moderate level of Fear of Negative Evaluation (M = 35.45) suggests that while students are concerned about

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being judged negatively by others, this dimension is slightly less prominent than the other two dimensions in this specific context.

Improvement in Speaking Performance

Table 4. Comparison of First and Final Speaking Scores

Assessment	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Improvement
First Score (Before Intervention)	82.00	1.50	-
Final Score (After Intervention)	93.00	2.50	+11.00

Table 5. Paired t-test Results

Comparison	t	df	p-value	Interpretation
First Score vs Final Score	28.50	61	< 0.001	Significant Improvement

The paired t-test revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' scores ($t = 28.50$, $df = 61$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that the interactive teaching methods (games and songs) were effective in improving students' overall English performance.

This finding is consistent with previous research on the effectiveness of interactive teaching methods. Atas (2015) found that drama techniques significantly lowered speaking anxiety and improved performance. Similarly, Chen and Hwang (2020) found that concept mapping-based flipped learning approaches positively influenced EFL learners' English speaking performance and critical thinking awareness.

The use of games in language learning has been shown to create a more relaxed and enjoyable learning environment (Rahmadani & Etfita, 2022). When students are engaged in games, they focus on the activity rather than their fear of making mistakes. This reduces anxiety and allows them to practice speaking more freely. Similarly, songs have been shown to improve pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and overall speaking confidence (Syahrani et al., 2024).

Correlation between Speaking Anxiety and Speaking Performance

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' speaking anxiety and their speaking performance.

Table 6. Correlation between Speaking Anxiety and Speaking Performance

Variable	r	t	df	p-value	t-critical	Interpretation
Speaking Anxiety vs Speaking Performance	-0.16	-1.22	60	0.21	1.671	Not Significant

The analysis revealed a very weak negative correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance ($r = -0.16$). The negative correlation indicates that higher levels of speaking anxiety are associated with slightly lower speaking performance scores, but the relationship is very weak. The t-test result ($t = -1.22$, $df = 60$, $p = 0.21$) indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Since the absolute t-value (1.22) is less than the t-critical value (1.671), the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.

This finding suggests that there is no significant relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance among eighth-grade students in Cirebon Regency. The very weak correlation coefficient suggests that only 2.56% of the variance in speaking performance can be explained by speaking anxiety ($r^2 = 0.0256$), meaning that 97.44% of the variance is influenced by other factors such as teaching methods, vocabulary knowledge, motivation, and self-confidence.

Table 7. Correlation between Anxiety Dimensions and Speaking Performance

Dimension	r	p-value	Interpretation
Communication Apprehension	-0.14	0.278	Not Significant
Fear of Negative Evaluation	-0.18	0.162	Not Significant
Test Anxiety	-0.11	0.396	Not Significant

Further analysis examined the relationship between each dimension of speaking anxiety and speaking performance. As shown in Table 7 and Figure 10, none of the three anxiety dimensions showed a significant correlation with speaking performance. Fear of Negative Evaluation showed the strongest correlation ($r = -0.18$), followed by Communication Apprehension ($r = -0.14$) and Test Anxiety ($r = -0.11$). However, all correlations were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide important insights into the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance among eighth-grade students in Cirebon Regency. The high prevalence of speaking

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anxiety, with over 88% of students experiencing some level of anxiety and 54.84% at the "Anxious" level, underscores the need for targeted interventions to address this issue at the junior high school level. The mean anxiety score of 108.05 confirms that, on average, students in this study experienced high levels of speaking anxiety.

The dimension analysis revealed interesting patterns. Communication Apprehension had the highest mean score (36.39), followed by Test Anxiety (36.21) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (35.45). This finding suggests that students experience the highest level of anxiety related to communicating in English, particularly when speaking in front of others or in group settings. This is consistent with the findings of Daymiel et al. (2022), who identified communication apprehension as a primary source of language anxiety. The relatively high level of Test Anxiety (36.21) indicates that students are also significantly concerned about speaking assessments and examinations, which aligns with studies by Ali and Anwar (2021) and Nayyef Mustafa and Ahmed (2023).

The most significant finding of this study is the significant improvement in students' scores after the implementation of interactive teaching methods. Students' scores improved from 82.00 to 93.00 (+11.00 points, $t = 28.50$, $p < 0.001$). This demonstrates that effective teaching methods can make a real difference in students' performance.

The use of games and songs in language learning has several benefits:

Table 8. Benefits of Using Games and Songs in English Language Learning

Benefit	Explanation
Reduces Anxiety	Games and songs create a fun, low-pressure environment
Increases Engagement	Students are more motivated to participate
Builds Confidence	Repetition in songs and practice in games builds confidence
Makes Learning Memorable	Songs and games create positive associations with English

The finding that there is no significant correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance ($r = -0.16$, $p = 0.21$) further supports the idea that anxiety does not have to be a barrier to performance. While anxiety is present, students can still perform well when teachers use appropriate methods. This is actually encouraging for teachers because it suggests that they can overcome the negative effects of anxiety through effective teaching strategies.

This finding is consistent with Luo and Xiong (2025), who found that anxiety alone may not be the primary predictor of academic performance. They distinguished between facilitating anxiety (beneficial) and debilitating anxiety (harmful), suggesting that some forms of anxiety may actually motivate students to perform better. The study by Sulistyowati (2023) also found that postgraduate students overcome their speaking anxiety by practicing and preparing the material they will present well by making a list or summary. This indicates that preparation and practice are effective strategies for reducing speaking anxiety at all educational levels.

The study by Santoso (2021) found that the major factor contributing to students' speaking anxiety was the concern about accuracy and grammar, but interestingly, many students were less anxious when dealing with classroom settings and activities and teachers. This suggests that classroom environment and teaching practices play a crucial role in shaping students' anxiety levels, which may explain why anxiety did not significantly affect performance in this study.

Hidayati et al. (2022) found that students overcome their speaking anxiety by focusing on the learning process and ignoring disruptive behavior from their classmates. This suggests that students can develop coping strategies to manage their anxiety, and teachers can support this by providing a positive learning environment where students feel safe to take risks in their speaking.

Rehan (2023) recommended several measures to overcome speaking anxiety, including increasing exposure to English, creating a friendly learning atmosphere, encouraging students through positive reinforcement, and arranging separate speaking classes. The use of games and songs in this study aligns with these recommendations and has proven effective.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications for EFL instruction in junior high schools:

Pertama, Implement Interactive Teaching Methods. Teachers should incorporate games and songs into their English lessons to create a more engaging and less anxiety-provoking learning environment. These

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methods help students practice speaking in a fun, low-pressure setting. As shown in this study, the use of games and songs resulted in an 11-point improvement in students' scores.

Kedua, Address Communication Apprehension. Given that communication apprehension was the highest dimension (M = 36.39), teachers should provide more opportunities for students to practice speaking in safe, supportive environments. This could include using pair work, small group discussions, and gradually increasing the size of the audience as students become more confident.

Ketiga, Create a Supportive Classroom Environment. Teachers should create a classroom atmosphere that reduces students' fear of negative evaluation. This can be achieved by providing constructive rather than punitive feedback, encouraging peer support, and normalizing mistakes as part of the learning process. Budayanti et al. (2023) emphasized that teachers need to emphasise students to not feel ashamed, afraid, or worried about making mistakes because making mistakes is a natural part of learning.

Keempat, Build Vocabulary and Language Proficiency. Students with stronger language proficiency tend to experience less anxiety. Therefore, explicit vocabulary instruction and grammar practice should be integrated with speaking activities to build students' linguistic competence. Games and songs are effective tools for vocabulary building.

Kelima, Provide Regular Speaking Practice. Teachers should encourage students to practice speaking English regularly in and outside the classroom to build confidence and reduce anxiety. Sulistyowati (2023) found that preparation and practice are effective strategies for reducing speaking anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance among eighth-grade students in Cirebon Regency, Indonesia. The findings reveal that speaking anxiety is a highly prevalent issue, with 88% of students experiencing some level of anxiety. The majority of students (54.84%) fell within the "Anxious" category, with a mean anxiety score of 108.05 (SD = 13.99). The dimension analysis revealed that Communication Apprehension had the highest mean score (M = 36.39), followed by Test Anxiety (M = 36.21) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (M = 35.45).

Importantly, the implementation of interactive teaching methods (games and songs) resulted in a significant improvement in students' scores from 82.00 to 93.00 (+11.00 points, $t = 28.50$, $p < 0.001$) . This demonstrates that effective teaching methods can help students overcome the negative effects of anxiety.

The correlation analysis showed no significant relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance ($r = -0.16$, $t = -1.22$, $df = 60$, $p = 0.21$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that while students experience high levels of speaking anxiety, anxiety alone does not determine speaking performance. The very weak correlation indicates that only 2.56% of the variance in speaking performance can be explained by speaking anxiety, meaning that 97.44% is influenced by other factors such as teaching methods, vocabulary knowledge, motivation, and self-confidence.

This is an encouraging finding for teachers because it suggests that with effective teaching methods and supportive classroom environments, students can still achieve good speaking performance despite their anxiety. The use of games and songs has proven to be an effective strategy for improving students' performance.

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