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Students' Psychological State Degree and Their Speaking Ability: To What Extent is the Link?

Abstract

Effective communication among students is often hindered by various obstacles, including reticence, self-doubt, inadequacy, apathy, fear of making mistakes, and apprehension. These challenges are notably evident in their speaking skills. This study aimed to explore the psychological conditions of students from the English Language Education Department (ELED) and relate these conditions to their speaking abilities. A quantitative approach was adopted, using an explanatory correlation design. Data was gathered from 117 third-year students at a private university using a survey and a written assessment. Results showed students' mental well-being was categorized as poor with a mean score of $M=45.03$. Contrastingly, their speaking proficiency was rated excellent, with a mean score of $M=64.24$ on the Pearson scale. Correlation analysis was applied to determine the relationship between the two variables. The results yielded a p-value of 0.001, below the 0.05 threshold, thus accepting the alternative hypothesis (H1). A significant relationship between the students' psychological states and speaking abilities was established.

Keywords: Psychological aspects, speaking ability, interrelationship

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INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of English language skills is widely recognized as an essential component of educational curricula in many countries around the world, including Indonesia. The importance of proficient oral English skills is increasingly evident in contemporary society, as supported by scholarly works such as those of Ahmad (2016) and Qi (2016). This is particularly relevant to Indonesians, who aspire to compete on a global scale. However, many students are reluctant to speak English in public for fear of humiliation. They may also hesitate to engage in English conversation with their peers and teachers. Despite extended periods of English language learning, many students remain unable to communicate fluently in this language. Several factors have been identified as potential barriers to students' oral communication abilities, including reticence (Aksoy-Pekacar et al., 2020; Hasanah et al., 2022), low self-confidence (Inawati, 2022; Jamila, 2014), anxiety (Sultan, 2012; Qurnia & Marline, 2020), and fear of making mistakes (Maulidar et al., 2019; Noguchi, 2011).

The proficiency with which students navigate the complexities of speaking English is shaped by a multitude of factors, including motivation, aptitude, anxiety, self-confidence, as well as apprehensions of making errors, and inherent shyness. Nijat et al. (2019) pinpoint nervousness and shyness as pivotal deterrents inhibiting students from embracing English discourse. A complex web of psychological impediments often hampers their verbal engagements, underscoring the need for educators to intervene constructively (Ahsan et al., 2016; Farokhi Pour, 2018). Schwarz (2005) contends that a gamut of psychological sentiments—from diffidence and reluctance to anxiety—severely curtails students' speaking prowess. Yet, Mahripah (2014) introduces another dimension, arguing that factors such as motivation and linguistic nuances play a significant role in shaping speaking abilities. This sentiment is echoed by Ariyanti (2016), who identifies anxiety, the dread of errors, and self-worth as consistent impediments, irrespective of individual or group settings.

Delving further, Juhana (2012) emphasizes that English-speaking classrooms often resonate with feelings of shyness, anxiety, and a palpable lack of motivation among

students. Dincer et al. (2013) offer an intricate perspective, suggesting that psychological states profoundly influence students' choices to vocally participate in English interactions, emphasizing the urgency to recognize and address these barriers for effective language acquisition. Elhadi (2015) advances this narrative, asserting a multifaceted interplay between psychological factors and speaking performance. This intricate relationship has been the focal point of various scholarly endeavors. Bourezzane (2014) underscores the detrimental impact of psychological nuances on speaking, a sentiment further validated by Putri (2014), who identifies stress as a formidable barrier. Meanwhile, Gurler (2015) establishes a robust nexus between self-confidence and speaking acumen, suggesting that those with introverted dispositions often grapple with self-assurance, a quintessential element for verbal communication. Conclusively, the psychological equilibrium of students emerges as a linchpin in determining their oral English capabilities.

Prior research has explored the connection between psychological states and speaking ability, the central focus of the current study. Mustafa (2016) conducted a quantitative analysis of the psychological factors impacting the oral performance of Sudanese EFL students. The study revealed that elements such as confidence, fear, and aptitude played significant roles. Importantly, aptitude and self-confidence were the primary drivers of English-speaking proficiency among Sudanese students. To summarize, findings from Mustafa (2016) emphasize the marked influence of these psychological dimensions on participants' speech.

Further supporting this, Bourezzane (2014) suggests that psychological variables can negatively impact students' speaking activities. This perspective is echoed by Putri's (2014) research, which identified a substantial correlation between anxiety—a specific psychological factor—and students' speaking challenges. In addition, Gurler (2015) highlighted the strong relationship between self-confidence and speaking skills, noting that confident verbal expression requires solid self-assurance. Consequently, students with more introverted tendencies often face challenges in verbal exchanges, frequently marked by uncertainty. In conclusion, the psychological state of students significantly shapes their speaking abilities.

Numerous studies emphasize the importance of psychological factors in shaping students' speaking abilities, but the intricate relationship between these two variables hasn't been extensively examined. Existing studies consistently indicate the profound impact of psychological conditions on students' speaking competencies across different contexts. However, despite these observations appearing well-founded, there remains a pressing need for empirical evidence to support them. Distinctly, there's a noticeable gap in the literature regarding studies that directly analyze the correlation between these two aspects. In light of this, the present study embarks on exploring the potential connection between students' psychological states and their speaking capabilities within a quantitative research framework. We aim to deepen the understanding of the interplay between students' mental conditions and their proficiency in spoken language. This research revolves around three primary questions: the degree of ELED students' psychological state, the level of their speaking ability, and the possible correlation between these two variables. Building on this foundation, our study hypothesizes that a significant relationship exists between the psychological state of ELED students and their speaking ability.

METHOD

In this research, a quantitative research approach was employed to explore the connection between students' psychological states and their speaking abilities. Creswell (2012) highlighted that quantitative research methodologies allow for statistical evaluation and analysis. Given this perspective, a quantitative framework was deemed most appropriate for the study's goals. An explanatory design was adopted, focusing on correlating two specific variables: the psychological factors of students (variable x) and their speaking proficiency (variable y).

The research took place at a private university in Yogyakarta, an environment where certain phenomena—like students' hesitation to speak English—were evident. This university was a fitting choice due to the observable patterns and a dearth of research in this particular area. Classroom activities often surfaced students' psychological challenges such as anxiety, fear of errors, or hesitancy during presentations. The findings of this study will be beneficial for educators to potentially identify patterns in students' speaking challenges that may arise from their psychological state. For students, the insights can help them address their psychological barriers to English communication.

Data was gathered using a questionnaire designed by Mustafa (2016). Echoing Cohen et al. (2011), questionnaires are efficient tools for structured and quantitative data collection. Their administration doesn't require the researcher's immediate presence, making the process more streamlined. The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Indonesian to minimize potential misunderstandings. Ensuring instrument validity was crucial. Heale & Twycross (2015) emphasized the importance of validity and reliability in affirming research outcomes. An expert review of the translated 16-item questionnaire confirmed its high validity, with scores ranging between 0.89 and 1.00. A subsequent pilot distribution of the questionnaire was conducted to test its reliability, and the results, processed through SPSS, demonstrated a consistent reliability with values above 0.7.

Another data source was a record of students' final scores from their speaking assessments, encompassing tasks like role-plays, simulated conversations, interviews, and oral presentations. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were employed to answer the two primary research queries about the students' psychological state and speaking skills. Cohen et al. (2011) point out that descriptive statistics effectively illustrate and provide insight into collected data. Using SPSS, the data was evaluated for means, frequency, and standard deviation, offering clarity on the study's main questions. A specific table was then used for a more detailed analysis of the findings.

Table 1. Interval of Students' Psychological State Degree

No	Interval	Category
1	16.00 – 32.00	Very Low
2	32.01 – 48.00	Low
3	48.01 – 64.00	Average
4	64.01 – 80.00	High

The table presents a classification of students' psychological states, addressing the first research question. Students' psychological conditions are segmented into four tiers: high, average, low, and very low. A score bracket of 64.01 to 80.00 signifies a student's robust psychological well-being. Conversely, scores spanning from 48.01 to 64.00 denote

an average psychological condition. Scores from 32.01 to 48.00 reflect a diminished psychological state. The most concerning bracket, termed "very low", encompasses scores from 16.00 to 32.00, highlighting considerable emotional challenges. This categorization offers researchers a systematic framework to evaluate and interpret students' emotional well-being based on specific score intervals.

Table 2. Interval of Students' Speaking Ability Degree

No	Interval	Category
1	0 – 25.00	Low
2	26.00 – 50.00	Fair
3	51.00 – 75.00	Good
4	76.00 – 100.00	Excellent

The table classifies students' speaking capabilities into four distinct grades: excellent, good, fair, and low. This categorization simplifies the evaluation process. Those ranked as "excellent" consistently showcase high expertise and confidence in their verbal communication. Students identified as "good" are adept at conveying their ideas orally. Those designated as "fair" display satisfactory speaking talents, though they might occasionally falter. In contrast, the "low" group often grapples with expressing their thoughts effectively. This organized grading system offers educators and researchers a clear framework to assess and tailor instructional methods for enhancing students' linguistic capabilities.

Before establishing a correlation between students' psychological well-being and speaking skills, the instrument's normality was first verified. The Parametric Test of Skewness and Kurtosis, implemented via SPSS, served as the chosen method for this validation. The foundational assumption of the study proposes a linkage between a student's mental well-being and their speaking prowess. The Product Moment in the statistical software was used to interpret the findings. A significant relation between the two aspects is recognized if the r-value exceeds the determined threshold. A hypothesis is negated if its significance (p-value) is above 0.05 but upheld if it falls below this mark. When the hypothesis stands validated, its correlation coefficient will be interpreted as outlined by Cohen et al. (2011): values closer to zero suggest a negligible correlation, whereas those near or at 1 underscore a potent correlation.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Degree of Students' Psychological State

The researchers explained the findings to answer the first research question. The first research question is "What is the degree of students' psychological state?". There were 16 statements in this variable to find out the result of this part.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic of The Degree of Students' Psychological State

Statistics Aspects	Students' Psychological	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
		117	45.03	45.00	45	7.258

The computation results showed that the mean score from the 117 responses on the degree of students' psychological state was 45.03, meaning that the students had a low psychological state. According to Mustafa (2016), psychological states, including aptitude, anxiety, and self-confidence, have essential roles in foreign language learning as those

aspects influence the students' speaking ability either by obstructing or increasing it, and those aspects are related to each other. The data on the students' psychological state showed that several students still felt anxious, diffident, and lacking aptitude by noticing the minimum score below the mean score. Students with a lack of aptitude usually find hardship in learning a foreign language, such as English Ortega (2009), as cited in Mustafa (2016).

Students' Speaking Ability

The researchers presented the outcomes related to the second research question: "What is the level of the students' speaking ability?" Analyzing document scores from the speaking course provided the answer.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistic of Students' Speaking Ability

Statistics Students' Speaking Ability	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
	117	45.03	45.00	45	7.258

The findings revealed that the average speaking proficiency score among students was 64.24, indicating that a predominant number of students showcased a proficient level of speaking. To flourish in English speaking, it's not just about classroom lessons but also the application in real-world scenarios. To this end, students were consistently encouraged to communicate their ideas and insights in classroom assignments and informal interactions. The lecturers had designed various speaking tasks, encouraging students to immerse themselves more deeply in the language.

However, despite these efforts and the clear understanding of the benefits of English immersion—as endorsed by Tuan and Mai (2015)—there remains a prevalent inclination among students to revert to their native languages during casual interactions, even when aware of the advantages of English communication (Rao, 2019). This inclination, noted by researchers such as Ahdal (2020), Biesenbayeva (2020), and Yadav (2014), suggests that sporadic engagement with English limits the potential for true proficiency.

Normality test

The researchers checked the normality of the data before analyzing the data. In addition, the researcher found the result of normality by using Parametric Test Skewness and Kurtosis by Excel and SPSS. Based on Resi (2017), as cited in Rahayu (2018), the data is considered normal if the Z Skewness value is < 2 and the Z Kurtosis value is < 7 . The result of the normality test is presented below.

Table 3. Normality Test Result

Variable	Z Skewness	Z Kurtosis
Degree of Psychological State	2.52588360777	1.58530107551

The table above indicated that the Z Skewness of psychological state was 2.526, and the Z Skewness of speaking ability was -3.652. The data was considered normal if the skewness was less than 2. Based on the result, the value of psychological state was moderated normal because the data was in the range of values 2 and 7, and the speaking ability represented a normal category. The Z Kurtosis calculation showed that the psychological state was at 1.585, and the Z Kurtosis of speaking ability was at 1.036. The

outcome was rated as normal if the kurtosis was less than 7, and the result stated that the data was normal.

The Correlation between the Degree of Students' Psychological State and Their Speaking Skills

After analyzing the data, the researchers employed a Pearson Correlation to identify the correlation between the degree of students' psychological state and speaking ability. The researcher applied SPSS 22.0 to measure the two variables. The variables correlated to each other if the significance value was <0.05 , while the hypothesis would be rejected if the value was >0.05 . It is revealed that H1 was accepted with a significance value of 0.001. The result will be presented as follows:

Table 4. The Correlation between the Degree of Students' Psychological State and Their Speaking Skills

Correlations		Degree of Psychological State	Speaking Ability
Degree of Students' Psychological State	Pearson Correlation	1	.312**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	117	117
Students' Speaking Ability	Pearson Correlation	.312**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	117	117

The results indicated a significant correlation between students' psychological well-being and their speaking skills. The relationship between these variables exhibited a strong positive correlation that was statistically significant. After analyzing the data, a positive correlation emerged between students' psychological well-being and speaking ability. This implies that an improvement in psychological well-being is associated with an enhancement in speaking ability, and conversely, a decline in psychological well-being is linked to a deterioration in speaking ability. Further, the Pearson correlation coefficient, with a value of 0.312 in this instance, provides information about the strength and direction of the relationship. In such a case, a value of 0.312 indicates a moderate yet significant positive correlation between the two variables. To clarify, there was a positive correlation between students' psychological state and their speaking ability, indicating that as their psychological state improved, their speaking ability also showed some improvement. However, it is important to note that this relationship was not particularly strong.

Regarding this current research, the result was in harmony with Wulandari et al. (2018), who found that students' internal inhibitions had a major bearing on their speaking abilities. It means that when the students faced hardship in speaking English caused by psychological problems, it indicated that they could not manage their own emotions, such as feeling anxious and diffident. Therefore, their speaking ability will likely decrease when the degree of psychological state decreases. In line with Arifin's (2017) statement, psychological states such as lack of self-confidence and anxiety impact students' speaking

competence. Inevitably, certain psychological variables, such as apprehension, insecurity, and anxiety, both directly and indirectly impeded students' ability to communicate in the English language (Nijat et al., 2019) since confidence is an intrinsic element that plays a pivotal role in facilitating the acquisition of a foreign language (Al-Hebaish, 2012). Although they had practiced before days, some psychological aspects still influenced their speaking performance. This is also supported by Haidara (2016) stated that the psychological state impacts the students' speaking ability even though they have sufficient ability to speak. For instance, lack of confidence, peers' intimidation, and fear of making mistakes impede the students from success in performing great results in their speaking ability (Arifin, 2017; Fitriati, 2016). In addition, Winke (2013) found that it does not only impact speaking but also other skills, such as reading and listening.

Furthermore, according to Riasati (2012), an individual's perceived competence is significantly impacted by their lack of knowledge, motivation, and readiness towards a specific subject matter. This, in turn, can lead to a sense of vacuity and reluctance to contribute, prompting students to choose silence. Therefore, there is an urge for teachers to create stress-free environments for the students. According to Ellis (2005), this can be accomplished by providing ample time for both the preparation and execution of a speaking task. Other scholars have also posited that the act of grouping has been shown to facilitate the alleviation of stress in students' oral communication endeavors (Ihsan & Wahidah, 2019). Furthermore, the provision of ice-breaking activities has been demonstrated to not only mitigate stress levels but also enhance students' speaking ability (Chao & Fan, 2020; Yaganehpour&Takkac, 2016). Furthermore, it is noteworthy to consider the potential benefits of peer support in mitigating the anxiety experienced by students, as posited by Griffiths (2008). Furthermore, as suggested by Alaraj (2017), the establishment of motivational remarks from fellow students has been observed to strengthen the self-confidence of individuals when speaking.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between ELED students' psychological attributes and their speaking skills, highlighting the interplay and influence of these aspects on each other. The initial research question focused on students' psychological attributes revealed that students exhibited a subdued psychological profile, evidenced by an average score of 45.03. The subsequent question, probing into their speaking skills, yielded an encouraging mean score of 64.24, positioning them within the "good" category. In exploring the connection between these two domains, the study found a notable positive association between the psychological facets of ELED students and their speaking prowess. However, this correlation, characterized by a Pearson Correlation value of 0.312, was deemed to be of low strength. Statistical criteria dictate that a significance value below 0.05 confirms a correlation while exceeding this threshold negates it. Given our result's significance value of 0.001, hypothesis H1 was duly validated.

However, this research focused on specific psychological factors influencing English speaking skills, notably aptitude, anxiety, and self-confidence. It didn't address other potential influencers like motivation, shyness, or the fear of making errors. The findings revealed students' psychological health was at a sub-optimal level, scoring 45.03, while their speaking skills were commendable, registering a score of 64.24. A modest yet

significant positive correlation (Pearson Correlation, $r = 0.312$; $p\text{-value} < 0.05$) was evident between the students' psychological well-being and their speaking performance. This connection between emotional well-being and communication skills offers educators crucial insights. By understanding this relationship, teaching methodologies can be designed to simultaneously boost both psychological resilience and speaking skills. More comprehensive research is essential to pinpoint optimal teaching strategies for students facing psychological challenges. Incorporating qualitative methods—like interviews, observations, and focus group discussions—could further enrich our comprehension of the topic.

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