

## ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' INHIBITIONS IN SPEAKING SKILL

**Disa Afifah**

*English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Universitas Kuningan, Indonesia*  
E-mail: disaafifah28@gmail.com

**Nani Ronsani Thamrin**

*English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Universitas Kuningan, Indonesia*  
Email: nani.ronsani.thamrin@uniku.ac.id

**Endang Darsih**

*English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Universitas Kuningan, Indonesia*  
Email: endang.darsih@uniku.ac.id

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the phenomenon of students' inhibitions in speaking skill in Senior High School 2 Kuningan and the solutions. The data which were collected from observation, and interview were analyzed qualitatively. The research participants were 35 students of XIIPS 3 of Senior High School 2 Kuningan. It was found that 5 of 35 students (14.29%) had high score of inhibitions signs (> 60%). As a result, it was found that students' inhibitions in speaking skill were influenced by internal (low cognitive aspects, and psychological aspects) and external factors (teacher's role in speaking classroom, classroom atmosphere, and English as foreign language). In order to reduce the inhibitions, the teacher should speak more slowly, create a friendly atmosphere, improve speaking practices, and give appropriate feedback, while the students can explore vocabulary, and ask to a friend whose speaking is better. It is suggested for further researchers to investigate other inhibitions of students speaking skill and the solutions or conduct similar research with different framework.

**Keyword:** *Speaking skill; students' inhibitions in speaking skill.*

### INTRODUCTION

English speaking skill has been considered as one of primary goals in order to be able in communication. However, speaking in foreign language is not as simple as speaking in first language, students are not only demanded to master more than just speaking skill, but also the aspects of its language, such as vocabulary building, pronunciation, grammar, and many more. Furthermore, speaking activities require a student to have all eyes on him, exposure to an audience can often give students stage fright (Normawati & Muna, 2015). Thus, performing this skill in EFL classroom requires inhibition self-control of the student. Nevertheless, if students have no confidence in their speaking ability, they tend to be

reluctant to speak, and avoiding eye contact to steady their nerves. Afraid of being judged at, laughed at, and afraid of the audience perception becomes the reasons of their reluctance in speaking. The statement is in line with Indrianty (2016), "The students feared making mistakes and being laugh at, which made them (very) anxious when speaking English to other in class" (p.31). This is due to speaking performance set audiences' attention on the speaker. Somehow, this causes their anxiety to emerge as much as they concern about the audiences' impression.

Normawati & Muna (2015) stated, "Speaking does not only involve knowledge of speaking, but also psychological factors. In this case of motivation, self-confidence, without having high

motivation and self-confidence students will get many troubles to speak English in the classroom” (p.52). From the statement, it shows that speaking requires not only knowing about how to speak, especially in classroom setting, it also requires psychological factors, such as high motivation and self-confidence to get rid of any potentially difficulties that might appear. However, public speaking is much more than just speaking, especially in English (target language). It requires the ability of English speaking, high motivation, and self-confidence, and the knowledge of the English speaking skill. Speaking skill reflects the language mastery of the learners as it shows how extent their knowledge about the language. This is due to the exposure of the skill and its aspects such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. During the field experience practice activities, Ica, Mardian, & Oktavia (2017) found that one of several factors behind the low level of speaking is the lack of speaking practice applied in learning. They state that speech skills are not skills that can be taught through explanations. It means the speaking skills only can be cultivated with practice, not theory. This is clearly proven by their finding. Moreover, Normawati & Muna (2015, p.52) added, “They actually know what they want to say but they don’t know how to say it. The problem faced by students in speaking activities are ‘shame’ and ‘nothing to say’.” It can be seen that mostly the speakers’ problem in English speaking is confidence and lack of English knowledge.

Nation (2001) further described the relationship between vocabulary knowledge with the language use as it enables learner to use the language. As stated by Alqahtani (2015, p.22), “Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication.” Similarly, in previous study, conducted by Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel (2013), the respondents revealed that lack of grammatical knowledge and practice made them markedly uncomfortable when speaking English, one of the respondents indicated that she had to use gap fillers such as “hmm”, “errr” to gain some time to think about the correct usage and compensate for his poor grammar. Their study also revealed that some learners were being most disturbed by the perception of their poor pronunciation.

However, in order to be fluent in language means that the learners have to master all of the production language aspects. Brown (2004) stated that fluency is probably best achieved by allowing the “stream” of speech to “flow”; then, as some of this speech spills over beyond comprehensibility, the “riverbanks” of instruction on some details of phonology, grammar, or discourse can channel the speech on a more purposeful course. Therefore, fluency in learning foreign language is required to be achieved as it covers students’ phonology, grammar or discourse of speaking skill. Furthermore, psychological aspects are also one of factors that give a huge impact in speaking. As claimed by Tridinanti (2018, p.35), “The students who have high level of anxiety, worry, fear and low level of self-confidence in foreign language classes may have difficulties in developing their speaking ability.”

As learner’s anxiety rises up, they tend to be down, and prefer to be silent in the speaking classroom. Therefore, teachers have to take their role of showing positive behaviour by encouraging them to speak, and get engaged in speaking classroom activity. This is in line with Humaera (2015), stating that teachers can set up such connection to the students by showing interest in each student as a person, giving feedback on each person’s progress, openly soliciting students’ idea and feelings, valuing and respecting what students think and say, laughing with them and not at them, working with them as a team, and not against them, and developing a genuine sense of vicarious joy when they learn something or otherwise succeed. Additionally, teacher has to give a chance to the students to express their opinion and ideas in classroom activity. Thus, students have more time to practise their speaking skill. Therefore, in speaking classroom, teacher has to choose appropriate activities where students can practise their speaking skill. However, the low chance of speaking the target language will cause learners to get difficulties in speaking. Therefore, as a language teacher, the teacher has to find a solution for the learners where they can practise their speaking skill as much as possible.

In exploring the students’ factors of being anxious and reluctant in speaking English, this research is inspired by the phenomenon which is found by the researcher in Senior High School 2 Kuningan, as the students are being reluctant in

speaking English and anxious when they are asked to speak English. Thus, the researcher decided to investigate the factors of students' inhibition in speaking English and the solutions to improve students' speaking skill.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This research intended to investigate factors of students' inhibition in speaking skill, and the solutions to reduce students' inhibitions in speaking skill and used largely qualitative descriptive method as this research focused on the description of the phenomenon, and its problem source to find the proper solution. This research was conducted in XI IPS 3 of Senior High School 2 Kuningan, which consists of 35 students. The data collected by applying observation and interview then analyzed qualitatively. In assessing students' inhibitions signs, the researcher used ten signs based on Krishnasamy (2015) as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Obvious signs of students who have inhibitions*

No.	Signs of Students Who Have Inhibitions	Checklist
1.	Blushing	
2.	Rubbing the palms	
3.	Perspiration	
4.	Staggered voice	
5.	Reluctance	
6.	Poor performance in spoken activities	
7.	Less enthusiasm or willingness to speak	
8.	Less interpretation of communication used	
9.	Less eye contact	
10.	Reading from the script while giving presentation	

Adapted from Krishnasamy (2015)

The result was categorized by the score of inhibitions sign afterwards before the students who has high score of inhibitions signs were chosen to be interviewed. In analyzing the data, the researcher used six phases process of analysis based on Creswell (2014). *Organize and prepare the data for analysis*: the researcher prepared all the data gathered from observation and interview; *Read or look at all the data*: the researcher read the information taken from the observation sheet

and the interview students' answers; *Start coding all of the data*: the researcher started to transforming students' gesture during speaking performance into categories of signs in students' speaking inhibition and classified students' answer during interview into groups; *Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis*: the researcher classified the kind of students' inhibitions factors in speaking skill and the solutions to reduce students' inhibitions in speaking skill, and the information data by involving a detailed information during observation and quotations of students' answers in interview as specific evidences; *Interrelating Themes/ Description (e.g., grounded theory, case study)*: the findings discussion was clarified with the interconnected research theme of students' inhibitions in speaking skill and solutions to reduce students' inhibition in speaking skill; *Interpreting the Meaning of Themes/ Descriptions*: the researcher made an interpretation based on the findings.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on observation data, the researcher found that there were 5 of 35 students or 14.29% of XI IPS 3 students who had inhibition signs more compared to others which were interviewed afterwards. The findings covered the factors of students' inhibition in speaking skill and the solutions to reduce the students' inhibition in speaking skill.

#### *Factors of Students' Inhibitions in Speaking Skill*

Based on the observation and interview, it was found that students' inhibitions in speaking skill came from internal and external. The internal factors were cognitive aspects and psychological aspects which made them reluctant in speaking, as they considered their English speaking skills were not competent enough and felt they could not speak English well. Mostly, the students were not confident with their grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation. These low proficiencies made learners anxious and hindered them from speaking fluently which created reluctance. Furthermore, their fear of making mistakes and getting judged at also became their factors of their inhibition in speaking skill only made them more reluctant, as

they did rather not to participate in classroom discussion.

The researcher found that there were some indicators of students having inhibitions in speaking skill, such as the students being reluctant to speak up, less interpretation of communication used (memorizing the text), asked for a help to their friend, nervous, doubtful, less eye contact, staggered voice. These indicators caused by two factors namely internal and external factors which were their inhibitions in speaking skill and led them being reluctant to speak.

Most of students felt they were not competent enough to speak English which made them reluctant, and they were afraid of being judged at which made them rather not to speak in the class. This is shown in illustration below:

“I have not known many vocabularies yet.” (Student #3)

The students found speaking was really difficult to do for their low vocabulary knowledge, they knew what they were about to say, but they found it was difficult to express in different language. Lack of vocabulary causes the speaker to be restrictive in speaking, and be an inhibition in successful communication. Furthermore, learning vocabulary is not only on knowing the pronunciation of the word, but also on how the word choice put into the context. Somehow, some words which have same meaning can have a different context, or even different in appropriateness. However, the learners have to know vocabulary context, and word choice in sentence in order to arrange an appropriate sentence.

“Even if I have known the vocabulary, I need to think the grammar afterwards.” (Student #4)

Furthermore, the students found it difficult to arrange the sentence of what they were going to say. They admitted that although they knew the vocabulary, somehow, they were still confused about the sentence arrangement due to its different sentence structure. However, grammar is important in EFL communication as it has sentence pattern and rule in it. Somehow, as the learner overthinks

about grammar as a sentence pattern, that affects their speaking performance. Also, learners of different cultures have different modes of paragraph patterns. As a result, there is likelihood that they will transfer their mother tongue paragraph pattern into target language one. The mother tongue also affects the way they arrange the grammar structure on their sentence due to their habitual mother tongue sentence making. However, as they always overemphasis grammar structure, it will only cause themselves to be reluctant in speaking. Therefore, the importance of grammar should not be overemphasised as it can turn into one of reluctance causes in speaking due to learners' fear of making mistakes.

“I'm afraid if I mispronounced the word, I'm shy and anxious over how they will judge me.” (Student #2)

The students felt shy and anxious to speak English due to their fear of mispronouncing words, and the audience' attentive eyes toward them. As most of learners' perceptions towards good pronunciation are those who are able to pronounce words like how native speaker sounds like, their high standard of good pronunciation is how native speaker sounds like, which creates an anxiety as they are afraid of others' perception of their pronunciation. However, pronunciation priority is not on a native speaker's sound like, but on its intelligible. What is considered as a wrong pronunciation is one which is not understandable, and possibly can cause misunderstanding. As long as it is acceptable to listen to, the pronunciation does not matter.

“I never engage in speaking classroom because English is very difficult.” (Student #5)

From the data, it can be seen that the students found language cognitive aspects were difficult to master. Either vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation was the same difficult aspect of the language. They revealed these cognitive aspects made them not able to be fluent in speaking skill and made them reluctant to speak in the class. In order to be fluent in language, the learners need to master all of production language aspects as fluency covers students' phonology, grammar or

discourse of speaking skill. However, English and Indonesian have different structure, syntax, and pronunciation which leads to hesitation of the learners as they start to speak, conveying what they have in their mind. This shows how learners have to think about what their saying is, put it into sequence of words, and think about the grammar to arrange the sentence structure at the same time before they turn their idea into utterances. Mostly, these difficult processes cause learners to be hindered from being fluent. Therefore, they need to master all production language aspects in order to speak fluently.

Based on the data, the students thought their English speaking skill were not competent enough as they felt they could not speak English well and be the cause of their reluctance to speak. This is in line with Basri & Zainollah (2015), stating that English language has different structure, syntax, pronunciation with Indonesian which makes learners have to choose, arrange, think, and convey the idea almost at the same time. In this research, mostly, learners found speaking English was difficult due to learners' acknowledgement of their low fluency, and not confident with their grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation. These low proficiencies made learners anxious and hindered them from speaking fluently which created reluctance. In internal factors, the inhibitions of speaking skill were divided into cognitive and psychological aspects. As stated by Oflaz (2019), speaking activity requires students to use vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency which belonged to cognitive aspects. It was revealed that the inhibitions of the students' speaking skill came from their language mastery.

"I feel shy, I'm afraid that I cannot speak English." (Student #2)

It is seen how the students felt shy, nervous when they were speaking in their class. During the interview, student #2 admitted that the student kept staring on the wall, not having eye-contact with the audience due to the student's nervousness. If they are shy due to their lack of skills in speaking, this will emerge anxiety which leads them to be reluctant to speak, not able to convey their ideas and creates disbelief in their ability due to the nervousness. These self-evaluations somehow create their insecurity and anxiety on the behalf of

their speaking skill level. Due to the huge impact of confidence has, the learners need to gain their confidence in order to develop their ability in speaking. They should not be afraid of making mistakes in speaking performance, by having that confidence belief, their English skill is slowly developed. Mostly, the fear of making mistakes, and a belief of lack in speaking only become a hindrance on speaking ability. If the speakers maintain this negative belief in their mind, it only makes them stop themselves from getting improved in speaking.

"I'm shy, afraid of making mistakes, and being judged at by my friends." (Student #3)

Based on the data above, the students felt anxious when they spoke English. Mostly, they were afraid of making mistakes, either in pronunciation or in the sentence they were going to say. Some of them also were afraid of being judged at by their friends. The higher anxiety the learners feel, the more it gives them negative impact in believing themselves on their speaking capability. When they speak English without any preparation, their anxiety even does get worse, their confidence even gets lower as they are afraid of making mistakes. The more they feel the tension in performance, the nervousness does take its place, lead to the difficulty of their speaking ability. In fact, the result of their performance also becomes their psychological inhibition as they are afraid to listen other's people judgement towards their speaking performance in the classroom, and it gets worse as they are well-aware of their poor performance/unprepared performance. It makes them unconfident, afraid to do eye-contact with the audience, and afraid to make mistakes.

"I feel motivated as many of my friends are able to speak English." (Student #5)

The data above illustrates how the students felt motivated to speak English. Somehow, their motivations were still low, as mostly they did not try to train themselves, speaking up in the class. Somehow, language teachers cannot effectively teach a language if they do not understand the relationship between motivation and its effect on language acquisition. Therefore, teachers must tap

into the sources of intrinsic motivation and find ways to connect them with external motivational factors that can be brought to a classroom setting. They should make learners understand why they need to make an effort, how long they must sustain an activity, how hard they should pursue it, and how motivated they feel toward their pursuits. Therefore, teacher must be able to motivate students to be engaged in speaking classroom.

It was also revealed that the factors of students' inhibitions in speaking skill came from their psychological aspects. The students' perspective of low speaking ability was shown as they had low self-confidence toward their own speaking skill. Fear of making mistakes, and getting judged at also became their factors of their inhibition in speaking skill as they did rather not to participate in classroom discussion and chose not to answer when they were asked by their teacher during observation for not knowing what to say. Besides, they had a low motivation as they wanted to be able to speak English yet they did not put much effort to it since they had a perspective on their mind that being able to speak English was difficult.

“The teacher speaks so fast that we cannot understand what the teacher is saying, and the teacher only talks to the teacher's self.” (Student #5)

This illustration shows the students' speaking skill inhibition which derived from external factors came from teacher's role in speaking classroom. This data revealed how teacher spoke too fast in speaking classroom which leads them to understand nothing. The teacher also barely initiated a communication with the student/ only used one-way communication, that the students could only listen to the teacher. During the interview, it was revealed that instead of feeling helped by the teacher to be less anxious, they felt they became more nervous because of the teacher's personality which made them scared and the teacher had never helped the students to speak English without being anxious.

“The classroom atmosphere is tensed; the way of teacher teaches English makes us nervous.” (Student #5)

This illustrates how most of the students felt the classroom atmosphere was tensed, either during learning English, or having performance. Most of the students also felt that the way the teacher taught English made the students felt nervous. The tensed classroom atmosphere somehow could only worsen their anxiety and made them being more reluctant to engage in speaking classroom activity.

“I seldom speak English, because the other students also speak Indonesian, even in English class, unless the teacher asks a question.” (Student #3)

Students #3 revealed that their classmates also tended to speak Indonesian even in English class, so they seldom practiced their speaking skill. The teacher also did not create rules to speak English during English classroom, so the students felt free to speak any language they wanted to.

The illustrations above are in line with the aim of the research which is the factors of students' inhibitions in speaking skill which shows the student' inhibitions in speaking skill come from internal factors and external factors.

#### *Solutions to Reduce Students' Inhibitions in Speaking Skill*

From the analysis of the interview and observation data, the researcher found some solutions to reduce students' inhibitions in speaking skill.

“The teacher should speak more slowly, the teacher talks too fast, moreover, we do not understand.” (Student #5)

First, English teacher to speak more slowly during classroom activity. By speaking more slowly, the students would understand what the teacher was saying, so they could join the classroom discussion (speaking practice). Based on the finding above, students had difficulties in catching what the teacher was saying as the teacher's speaking rate was high, leading them to understand nothing. They believed it could be a solution for them if the teacher spoke more slowly so they could learn how to speak English, and understand what the speaker's saying. During the interview, student #1, #2, #3, #4 and #5 had same opinion that the teacher always talked too fast.

According to Gilakjani (2016, p.4), “teachers should teach their learners that slow speech with correct pronunciation is much better than fast speech with wrong pronunciation.”

“The classroom atmosphere was tensed, but thankfully my friends made the tension less, so it helped me.” (Student #2)

Second, a friendly atmosphere also could be another solution to reduce their inhibition in speaking skill. The finding above indicated the tensed classroom atmosphere could only worsen their speaking skill, and elevate their anxiety of speaking English as they did not dare to speak up as they feared to make mistakes and how their nervousness lessened their confidence. As claimed by Zheng & Cheng (2018, p.3), “Similarly, teachers should avoid turning the language classroom into a testing or competitive environment, but rather, create a supportive space conducive to learning comfortably.” In order to ease students’ nerves, the teacher’s role has to be optimistic, warm, & helpful, encouraging the learners to share their ideas with their classmates, and appreciate them verbally or nonverbally no matter how small their participations are. Much more than that, the teacher also has to be good in creating a positive, warm, relax, and comfortable classroom atmosphere, yet engage all of the learners in every discussion. In contrast, the high-tension in the classroom only will make the learners’ willing to learn goes down as their anxiety rises up.

“What needs to be improved is the amount of practice which is lacking” (Student#3)

Third, the teacher set the focus of classroom activity on speaking practice, or during the English classroom the teacher could initiate a communication with the students so the teacher was not the only one who spoke English. Based on the finding above, the students complained on the amount of speaking practices as they pointed out the amount of speaking activity was quite little, and only the teacher who spoke English too much. They wished the teacher to set the focus of English classroom activity to speaking so they could train

themselves more. Additionally, teacher has to give a chance to the learners to express their opinion and ideas in classroom activity. Teacher has to choose appropriate activities where learners can practise their speaking skill. Thus, learners will be comfortable to show their skill, and the teacher can be aware of their lack and see the progress they have been made. They should create a supportive space conducive to learning comfortable and give a chance to the learners to express their opinion and ideas to practise their speaking skill. Moreover, Ica, Mardian, & Oktavia (2017) argued that speech skills are not skills that can be taught through explanations.

“What we need to do is exploring the vocabularies.” (Student#2)

Forth, enhancing vocabularies by themselves through dictionary. Some of the students revealed that the reason why they could not be able to speak fluently was because of their limited vocabularies. Based on the transcript data above, as the students believed by enhancing the vocabularies, it would help them to express their thoughts into words. As each word has its meaning, this definitely shows one of the importance of vocabulary. As how the speaker puts their mind into words, this shows how great impact that vocabulary has in speaking skill. Lack of vocabulary causes the speaker to be restrictive in speaking, and be an inhibition in successful communication. Furthermore, learning vocabulary is not only on knowing the pronunciation of the word, but also on how the word choice put into the context. Somehow, some words which have same meaning can have a different context, or even different in appropriateness. Vocabulary becomes one of the main mastery that learners needed, starting from learning spelling, delivering our thoughts, and comprehension of the language. That is why vocabulary is very important in language. However, the learners have to know vocabulary context, and word choice in sentence in order to arrange an appropriate sentence. According to Alqahtani (2015, p.22), “Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication.”

“I think more practices are needed as well as having speaking performance in front of the class.” (Student #2)

Fifth, practice. The students revealed that the teacher did not give them a sufficient time of practices, and the teacher barely did two-ways communication that the students could only listen to the teacher. The low chance of speaking the target language will cause learners to get difficulties in speaking, and their dialect of mother tongue will affect their language learning. Therefore, a chance of speaking the target language is very important to improve their speaking skill. Therefore, as a language teacher, the teacher has to find a solution for the learners where they can practise their speaking skill as much as possible. Moreover, insufficient chance of speaking the target language will affect their language learning as it makes learners not to be fluent in a short time. Therefore, as a language teacher, the teacher has to find a solution for the learners in order to improve their speaking skill. Furthermore, Coşkun, (2016, p.3) stated “lack of speaking practice opportunities can be regarded as a cause of English speaking failure.”

“The feedback is given in front of the class, so it affects us.” (Student #4)

Sixth, appropriate feedback. Based on the transcript data above, the students conveyed that the feedback given by the teacher affected them. Student #5 also revealed that if the teacher gave feedback in front of the class inappropriately, it could lower their confidence. Helping them lessening their speaking skill anxiety could be a better way to make them willing to speak, and be confident. So, they could be braver and not feeling intimidated by their teacher. Somehow, the corrective feedback must be given in a positive behaviour where the role of the teacher is as a supportive advisor not as an assessor. As stated by Arnold (2007) that learners’ error in an insensitive manner can reinforce their belief that they are not capable in learning language and might cause them to be unwilling to try again and be less productive.

“If I don’t know how to speak, I usually ask to the teacher.”  
(Student #5)

Seventh, asking for a help to teacher or friend who has better speaking skill. Based on the data above, the students conveyed that when they did not know how to speak English, they usually asked their friends or the teacher to translate the language, as they were afraid of making mistakes. This is in line with Aziz, Fata, & Balqis, (2018), stating that appeal for assistance can be one of strategies in which the student asks for the correct lexical term to the interlocutor because of their limited knowledge of lexical terms in the target language.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the researcher can draw conclusions as follows. There are two factors of students’ inhibitions in speaking skill internal factors (cognitive and psychological aspects) and external factors (teacher’s role in speaking classroom, classroom atmosphere, and English as foreign language). As the students tended to be reluctant in speaking and classroom discussion, the solutions to reduce the students’ inhibitions are the teacher to speak more slowly, create a friendly classroom atmosphere, and give appropriate feedback, choose a proper classroom activity and give sufficient speaking practices. Meanwhile, the students can enhance their vocabulary, and ask their friends who have better speaking skill.

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