



Investigating Students' Fear of Making Mistakes in English Speaking Performance in EFL Contexts at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing

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Abstrack. *Fear of making mistakes is one of the psychological factors that may hinder students' participation in English speaking activities. In vocational high school settings, speaking competence is particularly important because students are expected to communicate effectively in both academic and professional contexts. However, many learners remain reluctant to speak English due to concerns about making errors. Understanding this phenomenon is essential for supporting students' oral language development. This study investigated students' fear of making mistakes in English speaking performance at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing, East Java, Indonesia. The study aimed to explore the factors contributing to students' fear of making mistakes and examine how this fear affected their speaking performance in classroom activities. A qualitative case study design was employed. Twenty students were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. The findings revealed four major factors associated with students' fear of making mistakes: fear of pronunciation errors, fear of negative evaluation from peers, limited vocabulary knowledge, and fear of teacher correction. These factors influenced students' speaking performance by reducing confidence, increasing hesitation, limiting classroom participation, and encouraging avoidance of speaking opportunities. Fear of negative evaluation and pronunciation-related concerns were reported most frequently among participants. In conclusion, fear of making mistakes remains an important challenge affecting students' English speaking performance. Creating supportive classroom environments and providing meaningful speaking opportunities may help students participate more confidently in English communication activities.*

Keywords: *English as a Foreign Language; Fear of Making Mistakes; Speaking Anxiety; Speaking Performance; Vocational High School Students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most important international languages used in communication, education, technology, business, and various professional fields (Akther, 2022). In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and is considered an essential subject for students, especially in vocational high schools where communication skills are needed to prepare students for future careers (Mukadimah & Sahayu, 2021; Zein et al., 2020). Among the four language skills, speaking is often regarded as the most challenging skill because it requires learners to produce language directly and interact with others in real-time situations. Speaking performance plays a significant role in English language learning because it reflects students' ability to communicate their ideas, opinions, and feelings effectively.

However, many EFL learners experience difficulties in speaking English despite having learned the language for several years (Wang et al., 2024). One of the most common psychological barriers that affect speaking performance is the fear of making mistakes. This fear often prevents students from actively participating in classroom discussions, presentations, and other speaking activities. According to Alrasheedi (2020), speaking performance among EFL learners is influenced by various factors, including psychological factors such as anxiety,

lack of confidence, and fear of making errors. These factors can negatively affect learners' willingness to communicate and reduce their participation in speaking activities. Students who are afraid of making mistakes tend to avoid speaking opportunities because they worry about receiving negative evaluations from teachers or peers. Fear of making mistakes is closely related to students' self-confidence in using English. Fadillah et al., (2025) found that fear of making mistakes significantly influences students' self-confidence and engagement during English classroom presentations. Students who are highly concerned about making grammatical, pronunciation, or vocabulary errors often demonstrate lower confidence levels and become reluctant to express their ideas. As a result, their participation and speaking performance may decrease.

Similarly, Saltos Pazmiño (2026) reported that fear of making mistakes has a strong relationship with low speaking skill production among English learners. Students frequently hesitate to speak because they are afraid of being laughed at, criticized, or judged by others. This fear creates psychological pressure that limits students' opportunities to practice speaking and develop their communicative competence. Consequently, learners may possess adequate linguistic knowledge but fail to demonstrate their abilities effectively during speaking activities. Another factor contributing to students' fear of making mistakes is speaking anxiety. Tran (2022) identified several causes of anxiety in learning English speaking skills, including fear of negative evaluation, lack of preparation, limited vocabulary, insufficient speaking practice, and concern about making errors. These factors often lead students to feel nervous and uncomfortable when speaking English in front of others. Anxiety can interfere with students' cognitive processes and negatively affect their speaking fluency, pronunciation, and overall performance.

Based on preliminary observations in many EFL classrooms, including vocational high school contexts, students often show hesitation when asked to speak English. Some students remain silent during classroom discussions, while others prefer using their native language instead of English. They frequently report feeling afraid of making pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary mistakes. Such conditions indicate that fear of making mistakes remains a significant issue that requires further investigation, particularly in vocational high schools where communication skills are essential for academic and professional success. Although previous studies have examined speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and speaking performance among EFL learners, limited research has specifically investigated students' fear of making mistakes in English speaking performance within vocational high school contexts in Indonesia, particularly at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the

factors contributing to students' fear of making mistakes and explore how this fear influences their English speaking performance. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to English language teaching by providing insights into the psychological challenges faced by EFL learners. Furthermore, the results may help teachers develop effective strategies to create a supportive classroom environment that encourages students to speak English confidently without excessive fear of making mistakes. Ultimately, reducing students' fear of making mistakes may enhance their speaking performance and promote more meaningful English language learning experiences.

Several previous studies have investigated the issue of fear of making mistakes and its influence on English language learning. However, there are still some limitations that create opportunities for further research, particularly in the context of vocational high school students in Indonesia. Alrasheedi (2020) examined factors influencing the speaking performance of Saudi EFL learners and found that psychological factors, including anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes, significantly affected students' speaking ability. Although this study provided valuable insights into the determinants of speaking performance, it focused on identifying various influencing factors rather than specifically exploring fear of making mistakes as the main phenomenon. Moreover, the study was conducted in a Saudi Arabian context, which differs culturally and educationally from the Indonesian EFL context. Fadillah et al. (2025) investigated the influence of fear of making mistakes on students' self-confidence and engagement during English classroom presentations. Their findings indicated that fear of making mistakes negatively affected students' confidence and participation in speaking activities. However, the study primarily focused on the relationship between fear of making mistakes, self-confidence, and classroom engagement. It did not comprehensively examine how this fear directly influences students' overall speaking performance or explore the underlying reasons behind the fear experienced by learners.

Similarly, Saltos Pazmiño (2026) explored the relationship between fear of making mistakes and low speaking skill production. The study revealed that students who frequently feared making mistakes tended to demonstrate lower levels of speaking performance. While the findings highlighted the negative consequences of fear on speaking skills, the research mainly investigated the correlation between the two variables and provided limited understanding of students' personal experiences, perceptions, and contextual factors contributing to the fear itself. Furthermore & Tran (2022) examined the causes of students' anxiety in learning English speaking skills and identified several contributing factors, such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of vocabulary, insufficient preparation, and limited speaking

opportunities. Although this study offered a broader understanding of speaking anxiety, it treated fear of making mistakes as only one component of speaking anxiety rather than investigating it as a distinct psychological phenomenon that may independently affect students' speaking performance. Based on the review of previous studies, it can be observed that most researchers have focused on the relationship between fear of making mistakes and other variables such as self-confidence, engagement, anxiety, or speaking achievement.

In addition, many studies have been conducted in different educational settings and cultural contexts, including universities, junior high schools, and international EFL environments. Limited attention has been given to vocational high school students, who have unique learning characteristics and communicative needs due to their preparation for future workplaces. Therefore, a significant research gap exists in the investigation of students' fear of making mistakes as a specific phenomenon influencing English speaking performance among vocational high school students in the Indonesian EFL context. In particular, there is a lack of studies exploring how students at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing experience, perceive, and respond to fear of making mistakes during English speaking activities. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the factors that contribute to students' fear of making mistakes and examining how such fear affects their English speaking performance in an EFL vocational school context.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate students' fear of making mistakes in English speaking performance at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, emotions, and interpretations of a particular phenomenon within its natural setting. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. More specifically, this study adopted a case study design. Yin (2018) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The present study focused on a specific group of vocational high school students to gain a comprehensive understanding of how fear of making mistakes influences their speaking performance in English classrooms.

The study was conducted at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing, a vocational high school located in Malang Regency, East Java. The site was selected because English speaking activities constitute an important component of the curriculum, yet many students appear reluctant to participate actively in oral communication tasks. This context provided an appropriate setting for examining students' fear of making mistakes in EFL speaking situations. The population of this study consisted of all tenth-grade students of SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing in the academic year 2026/2027. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Patton (2015) states that purposive sampling involves selecting information-rich cases that can provide in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Therefore, students were chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives rather than through random selection. The inclusion criteria were as follows: Students enrolled in English classes, Students who had participated in classroom speaking activities, Students who demonstrated hesitation, anxiety, or reluctance when speaking English, Students willing to participate voluntarily in interviews and observations. Approximately 20 participants were involved in the study, depending on the point at which data saturation was achieved. Creswell & Poth (2018) explain that qualitative research typically continues data collection until no substantially new information emerges. To obtain comprehensive data, this study employed classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Using multiple sources of evidence can strengthen the credibility of qualitative findings through triangulation (Yin, 2018). Observation was conducted to examine students' behaviors during English speaking activities. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) argue that observation allows researchers to obtain first-hand information about actions and interactions occurring in natural settings.

The researcher observed indicators such as Hesitation before speaking, Avoidance of speaking tasks, Nervous gestures, Frequent pauses, Reliance on notes, Responses to teacher correction, Reactions to peer feedback, Field notes were recorded during and immediately after each observation session. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection technique. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), semi-structured interviews provide flexibility while ensuring that key topics related to the research objectives are explored. The interviews focused on Students' feelings when speaking English, Experiences of making mistakes, Sources of fear and anxiety, Perceptions of teacher and peer evaluation, Strategies for overcoming fear. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission. Document analysis was employed to complement observational and interview data. Bowen (2009) explains that documents can provide contextual information and serve as supplementary sources of evidence in qualitative research.

Documents analyzed in this study included English lesson plans, Speaking assessment rubrics, Classroom speaking assignments, Students' speaking performance records.

Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout the research process, the researcher conducted observations, facilitated interviews, reviewed classroom documents, and interpreted participants' responses. Several supporting instruments were also employed to facilitate systematic data collection. An observation checklist was developed to record classroom behaviors commonly associated with fear of making mistakes, including hesitation, nervous gestures, avoidance of participation, and self-correction. A semi-structured interview guide was designed to encourage participants to describe their speaking experiences in detail while ensuring that all research objectives were adequately addressed.

In addition, reflective field notes were maintained throughout the study to document classroom situations, methodological decisions, and emerging analytical insights. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This analytical approach was selected because it provides a systematic procedure for identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns within qualitative data. The analysis began with familiarization, during which interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dataset. The researcher subsequently generated initial codes by identifying meaningful segments of text related to students' experiences of fear during English speaking activities. Similar codes were then grouped to develop broader categories representing common patterns across participants. The emerging categories were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency with the original data and the research objectives. Afterward, each theme was clearly defined and named according to its central meaning. Finally, the themes were interpreted and presented narratively by integrating evidence obtained from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Representative quotations from participants were included to illustrate the findings while preserving participants' anonymity through pseudonyms.

To enhance the rigor of the study, the researcher adopted the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation by comparing findings obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis. Member checking was also conducted by allowing several participants to review interview summaries

to ensure that their perspectives had been accurately represented. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and procedures, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational contexts. Dependability was maintained through comprehensive documentation of all research procedures, analytical decisions, and coding processes, thereby creating a transparent audit trail. Confirmability was ensured by grounding all interpretations in empirical evidence rather than personal assumptions and by maintaining reflective notes throughout the research process. Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the study to ensure the protection of participants' rights and well-being. Before data collection commenced, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the school administration.

All participants received a clear explanation regarding the objectives of the study, research procedures, and their rights as research participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without academic consequences. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by replacing their names with identification codes in transcripts and research reports. Audio recordings, interview transcripts, observation notes, and supporting documents were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher. Throughout the research process, every effort was made to create a respectful and supportive environment so that participants could share their experiences honestly without fear of judgment or discomfort. These ethical procedures were implemented to ensure that the study maintained both methodological integrity and respect for the dignity of all participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This chapter presents the findings obtained from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis conducted at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing. The findings are reported objectively and organized according to the research objective: to investigate students' fear of making mistakes in English speaking performance in an EFL context. Twenty tenth-grade students participated in this study. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in English speaking activities and their willingness to share their experiences regarding speaking English.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Participant Code	Gender	Speaking Participation Level
S1	Female	Low
S2	Male	Moderate
S3	Female	Low
S4	Male	Moderate
S5	Female	Low
S6	Male	Low
S7	Female	Moderate
S8	Male	Low
S9	Female	Moderate
S10	Male	Low
S11	Female	Moderate
S12	Male	Low
S13	Female	Moderate
S14	Male	Low
S15	Female	Moderate
S16	Male	Low
S17	Female	Moderate
S18	Male	Low
S19	Female	Moderate
S20	Male	Low

Of the twenty participants, twelve students were categorized as having low participation during speaking activities, while eight students demonstrated moderate participation. Classroom observations were conducted during presentations, classroom discussions, role-play activities, and question-and-answer sessions. Several behaviors related to fear of making mistakes were repeatedly observed.

Table 2. Observed Behaviors During Speaking Activities

Observed Behavior	Number of Students
Long pauses before speaking	17
Avoiding eye contact	15
Speaking with low voice	14
Refusing voluntary participation	18
Frequently switching to Indonesian	16
Looking repeatedly at notes	15
Nervous gestures (fidgeting, trembling)	13

The observations showed that refusal to volunteer answers and hesitation before speaking were among the most frequently observed behaviors during English speaking activities. Analysis of interview data generated four recurring themes related to students' fear of making mistakes during English speaking performance.

Theme 1: Fear of Pronunciation Errors

A large number of participants reported worrying about incorrect pronunciation when speaking English.

Table 3. Fear of Pronunciation Errors

Indicator	Number of Participants
Fear of mispronouncing words	16
Uncertainty about pronunciation accuracy	15
Avoidance of unfamiliar words	14

Representative statements included:

“I know the answer, but sometimes I am afraid my pronunciation is wrong.” (S4)

“I prefer staying silent rather than pronouncing the word incorrectly.” (S12)

“When I am not sure about pronunciation, I become nervous.” (S18)

Theme 2: Fear of Negative Evaluation from Peers

Many participants reported concern about classmates’ reactions when they made mistakes while speaking.

Table 4. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Indicator	Number of Participants
Fear of being laughed at	17
Fear of embarrassment	15
Fear of peer judgment	16

Representative statements included:

“I feel nervous because my friends might laugh at me.” (S1)

“Speaking in front of the class makes me uncomfortable.” (S9)

“I worry about what my classmates think about my English.” (S15)

Theme 3: Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

Students frequently associated their fear with difficulties in finding appropriate English words during communication.

Table 5. Vocabulary-Related Concerns

Indicator	Number of Participants
Difficulty recalling vocabulary	15
Limited vocabulary repertoire	14
Fear of choosing incorrect words	13

Representative statements included:

“Sometimes I know the idea but cannot find the English words.” (S6)

“My vocabulary is limited, so I hesitate to speak.” (S14)

“I often forget words while speaking.” (S19)

Theme 4: Fear of Teacher Correction

Several participants mentioned that immediate correction during speaking activities increased their nervousness.

Table 6. Fear of Teacher Correction

Indicator	Number of Participants
Anxiety about public correction	12
Fear of grammar correction	11
Fear of receiving negative feedback	10

Representative statements included:

“I become nervous when my mistakes are corrected in front of everyone.” (S7)

“I am afraid of making grammar mistakes because the teacher may correct me.” (S13)

“Correction sometimes makes me lose confidence.” (S20)

Reported Effects on Speaking Performance

Participants described several consequences of fear of making mistakes during speaking activities.

Table 7. Effects of Fear on Speaking Performance

Effect	Number of Participants
Reduced confidence	18
Hesitation before speaking	17
Avoidance of participation	15
Speaking less frequently	14
Switching to Indonesian	13
Forgetting prepared responses	11

The most frequently reported effect was reduced confidence, followed by hesitation before speaking and avoidance of classroom participation.

Analysis of classroom documents, including speaking assessment rubrics and lesson plans, indicated that speaking activities commonly required students to perform oral presentations, dialogues, and question-and-answer sessions. Assessment criteria generally focused on pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. The analysis of supporting documents, including students' speaking assessment records, lesson plans, and speaking rubrics, provided additional evidence regarding students' speaking performance during classroom activities. The speaking records consistently indicated several recurring issues experienced by the participants. Most students demonstrated a lack of confidence when delivering oral presentations, which was reflected in their reluctance to speak and their tendency to avoid eye contact with the audience. Frequent pauses were also observed, suggesting that many students required additional time to recall vocabulary or organize their ideas before continuing their speech. Furthermore, several records noted students' difficulty in maintaining fluency throughout their oral performance, often resulting in interrupted or fragmented communication. Limited vocabulary usage was another common concern, as students tended to rely on a restricted range of familiar words and expressions. In addition, pronunciation inaccuracies were repeatedly documented, indicating that uncertainty about

pronunciation remained a challenge during English speaking activities. Overall, these documentary findings corroborated the evidence obtained from classroom observations and interviews, demonstrating similar patterns in students' speaking performance.

The findings obtained from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis consistently revealed that students' fear of making mistakes was influenced by several interconnected factors. Among the twenty participants involved in the study, fear of negative evaluation from peers emerged as the most frequently reported factor, mentioned by seventeen students. This was followed by fear of pronunciation errors, reported by sixteen participants, limited vocabulary knowledge, identified by fifteen participants, and fear of teacher correction, expressed by twelve participants. These findings indicate that students' fear was shaped not only by their linguistic limitations but also by concerns about social evaluation and classroom interactions.

In terms of speaking performance, the collected data showed that fear of making mistakes was commonly associated with reduced confidence, which was reported by eighteen participants. Seventeen students described experiencing hesitation before speaking, while fifteen participants admitted that they often avoided participating in classroom speaking activities because they feared making mistakes. Similar patterns were evident during classroom observations, where students frequently paused before responding, spoke with low voices, relied heavily on written notes, or chose not to volunteer during speaking tasks. The consistency of these findings across observations, interviews, and supporting documents suggests that fear of making mistakes was a recurring phenomenon affecting students' participation and performance in English speaking activities at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate students' fear of making mistakes in English speaking performance in an EFL context at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing. The findings revealed four major factors associated with students' fear of making mistakes: fear of pronunciation errors, fear of negative evaluation from peers, limited vocabulary knowledge, and fear of teacher correction. These factors were found to influence students' confidence, participation, and willingness to communicate during speaking activities. One of the most prominent findings of this study was students' fear of pronouncing English words incorrectly. Most participants reported that uncertainty regarding pronunciation discouraged them from speaking in front of their classmates. Classroom observations also showed that students frequently paused, lowered their voices, or avoided speaking when they were unsure of pronunciation.

This finding supports the study conducted by Alrasheedi (2020), which identified psychological barriers, including fear of making mistakes, as important factors influencing EFL learners' speaking performance. Similar to Alrasheedi's findings, the students in the present study demonstrated reluctance to communicate when they perceived a risk of producing inaccurate language. From a theoretical perspective, this finding aligns with the concept of Foreign Language Anxiety proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), which suggests that learners often experience tension and apprehension when required to use a foreign language publicly.

Pronunciation errors become a visible form of performance failure that students seek to avoid, particularly in classroom environments where they feel their competence is being evaluated. However, unlike Alrasheedi's study, which examined multiple factors affecting speaking performance in a broader context, the present research specifically highlights pronunciation-related fear as one of the most dominant concerns among vocational high school students. This suggests that pronunciation may occupy a particularly sensitive position in EFL speaking classrooms where students have limited exposure to authentic spoken English.

Another significant finding was students' concern about being judged, laughed at, or negatively evaluated by their classmates. Many participants admitted that they felt uncomfortable speaking English because they worried about their peers' reactions. This finding is consistent with Tran (2022), who identified fear of negative evaluation as one of the primary causes of speaking anxiety among EFL learners.

In both studies, students associated speaking activities with social pressure rather than opportunities for communication. The anticipation of negative reactions appeared to discourage active participation. The finding can also be explained through social evaluation theory, which suggests that individuals tend to regulate their behavior when they perceive themselves as being observed and assessed by others. In classroom speaking situations, students may become more focused on avoiding embarrassment than on expressing their ideas effectively. Nevertheless, the current study provides a more context-specific perspective by showing that peer evaluation concerns were particularly evident during oral presentations and spontaneous classroom interactions. This indicates that the social dimension of language learning may be especially influential in vocational high school settings where peer relationships play a central role in students' daily experiences.

The findings further revealed that limited vocabulary knowledge contributed significantly to students' fear of making mistakes. Participants frequently reported difficulty recalling words, selecting appropriate expressions, and maintaining conversations in English.

This result supports Tran's (2022) conclusion that inadequate linguistic resources can increase students' anxiety during speaking tasks. Similarly, several participants in the current study stated that they became nervous when they could not find suitable vocabulary to express their thoughts. From a communicative competence perspective, vocabulary knowledge serves as a fundamental resource for oral communication. When learners perceive their vocabulary repertoire as insufficient, they may anticipate communication breakdowns and become increasingly hesitant to speak. As a result, fear of making mistakes may arise not only from social pressure but also from perceived linguistic inadequacy. Unlike studies that primarily emphasize emotional factors, the present research demonstrates that cognitive and linguistic limitations can interact with emotional responses. Students' fear was often triggered not only by the possibility of being judged but also by concerns about their own language competence.

The findings also indicated that some students experienced anxiety related to teacher correction. Participants reported feeling uncomfortable when mistakes were corrected publicly during speaking activities. This finding partially supports Fadillah et al. (2025), who found that fear of making mistakes can negatively influence students' confidence and classroom engagement. In the present study, teacher correction was not perceived negatively by all participants; however, several students associated immediate public correction with embarrassment and reduced confidence. A noteworthy difference emerged in that students generally recognized correction as beneficial for learning, yet they preferred feedback delivered in a supportive and less public manner. This suggests that the issue may not be correction itself but rather the manner in which correction is provided. This finding reinforces contemporary communicative language teaching principles, which emphasize constructive feedback that encourages risk-taking and active participation rather than focusing exclusively on linguistic accuracy.

The results showed that fear of making mistakes influenced speaking performance in several ways, including hesitation before speaking, reduced confidence, avoidance of participation, and frequent switching to Indonesian. These findings correspond closely with Saltos Pazmiño (2026), who reported a relationship between fear of making mistakes and lower speaking skill production. In both studies, fear appeared to reduce learners' willingness to engage in oral communication. The findings also support the notion that emotional variables can affect language performance. Students who experience fear may allocate substantial cognitive resources to monitoring potential errors, leaving fewer resources available for language production. Consequently, speech becomes less fluent and participation decreases. An important contribution of this study is that it demonstrates how fear of making mistakes

operates not as a single isolated factor but as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by linguistic, psychological, and social factors simultaneously.

The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on EFL speaking anxiety by providing evidence that fear of making mistakes remains a significant barrier to oral communication among vocational high school students. The study extends previous research by showing that fear of making mistakes is not merely a component of general speaking anxiety but can be understood as a distinct phenomenon shaped by multiple interconnected dimensions, including pronunciation concerns, peer evaluation, vocabulary limitations, and feedback practices. Furthermore, the findings support theories of foreign language anxiety and communicative competence by demonstrating how psychological and linguistic factors interact during speaking performance. Several practical implications emerge from the findings. For English teachers, the results highlight the importance of creating supportive classroom environments where mistakes are viewed as a natural part of language learning. Teachers may encourage participation by emphasizing communication over perfection and by providing constructive feedback in ways that minimize embarrassment. For students, the findings suggest the value of increasing speaking practice opportunities in low-pressure situations. Frequent exposure to communicative activities may help reduce fear and improve confidence over time. For schools, the findings indicate the importance of implementing learning environments that foster positive peer interaction and encourage risk-taking in language use. Finally, curriculum developers may consider incorporating speaking activities that prioritize meaningful communication, collaborative learning, and confidence-building strategies alongside linguistic accuracy.

First, the study was conducted in a single vocational high school, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Students from different regions, school types, or proficiency levels may experience fear of making mistakes differently. Second, the study involved only twenty participants. Although this number was sufficient for obtaining in-depth qualitative data, a larger participant pool might reveal additional perspectives and experiences. Third, the findings relied primarily on self-reported interview data and classroom observations. Participants may have been influenced by memory limitations or social desirability when describing their experiences. Finally, the study focused exclusively on students' perspectives. Future research could incorporate teachers' viewpoints, classroom discourse analysis, or mixed-method approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of fear of making mistakes in EFL speaking contexts. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the factors contributing to students' fear of making

mistakes and its influence on English speaking performance in a vocational high school EFL setting.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated students' fear of making mistakes in English speaking performance among EFL learners at SMK PGRI Sumbermanjing. The findings revealed that students' fear of making mistakes was primarily associated with four factors: fear of pronunciation errors, fear of negative evaluation from peers, limited vocabulary knowledge, and fear of teacher correction. These factors contributed to hesitation, reduced confidence, lower participation, and avoidance of speaking activities in English classrooms. Therefore, the study confirms that fear of making mistakes remains a significant psychological barrier affecting students' speaking performance in the EFL context. Scientifically, this study contributes to the existing literature on EFL speaking anxiety by providing contextual evidence from a vocational high school setting, which has received relatively limited attention in previous research. The findings also extend understanding of fear of making mistakes as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by linguistic, social, and psychological factors. Based on these findings, future researchers are encouraged to examine fear of making mistakes in different educational settings and with larger participant groups. Further studies may also employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to explore the relationships between fear of making mistakes, speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and speaking achievement more comprehensively. Additionally, intervention-based research investigating strategies to reduce students' fear and improve speaking confidence would provide valuable contributions to English language teaching and learning.

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