

Analysing EFL Students' Language Mindset to Overcome Their Speaking Anxiety: A Case Study

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Abstract

This research introduces the idea of how EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' way of thinking can help them deal with their nervousness when speaking a foreign language. The study used a method where they talked to 5 students at a university in Cirebon. Among these students, 2 were female and 3 were male. The researchers looked at how these students' mindset helped them overcome their fear of speaking a foreign language. The results showed that all the students had a positive mindset that believed they could improve, and they reacted to challenges by trying to master them. This really helped them feel more comfortable when speaking a foreign language and dealing with their nervousness. This study not only confirmed that having the right mindset can help with speaking anxiety, but it also looked at the details. This could help future studies explore how mindsets can help with other factors that make speaking anxiety worse. In the real world, this research could be a helpful tool for people learning a foreign language. It can help them understand and improve how they feel when speaking English.

Keywords: EFL students, EFL speaking anxiety, EFL language mindset

Introduction

English, once confined to a handful of nations, has evolved into a global lingua franca due to the march of time (Galloway and Rose, 2017; Tauchid et al., 2022). As noted by (Jain & Kaur, 2013), English has gained prominence across educational tiers, being viewed as crucial for national advancement and global competitiveness. Consequently, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has forged policies regarding English education, shaping the curriculum to encompass the four core language skills—writing, reading, speaking, and listening—aiming to foster comprehensive language proficiency (Mukminin et al., 2015).

Indonesian students, despite grappling with English as a non-native language, embark on a journey encompassing phonetics, vocabulary, phraseology, sentence structure, and societal nuances (Trisnadewi, 2019). Although intricate, English holds national importance, integrated into Indonesian high school curricula, spanning listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Yet, even with English being a mandatory subject, many students encounter difficulties in conversing with peers and teachers (Mukminin et al., 2015). As highlighted by Young in 1990, students identify public speaking and impromptu tasks as high-anxiety triggers (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020).

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Anxiety, an enduring challenge for foreign language learners, often centers around the act of speaking (Güliz, 2013). Over recent decades, second language (L2) anxiety has garnered attention within the realm of second language acquisition (Daubney, Dewaele, and Gkonou 2017; Ozdemir & Papi, 2021). The ability to communicate verbally is fundamental for sharing viewpoints, ideas, and knowledge. From a student's perspective, oral English tasks invoke greater anxiety than other language skills (Young, 1990; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020).

Extensive research has demonstrated the detrimental effects of L2 speaking anxiety across various contexts and factors such as motivation, willingness to communicate, and achievement (Ahmetović, Bećirović, and Dubravac 2020; Ozdemir & Papi, 2021). The need for English proficiency is underscored by the expectations of future employers, with effective communication skills ranking high among sought-after abilities (D. He, 2013; Nordin & Broeckelman-post, 2019).

The concept of mindset, encompassing beliefs and methods, exerts a powerful influence on achievements (Schroder et al., 2017; Dweck, 2016; Gollwitzer, 2012). Mindsets play a pivotal role in tackling challenges, shaping cognitive processes (Schroder et al., 2017; Gollwitzer & Keller, 2016). Educational literature recognizes mindset as a 'noncognitive' factor, intertwined with abilities, strategies, attitudes, and behaviors (Black & Allen, 2017).

Horwitz et al. (1986) pioneered the study of anxiety in language learning, classifying it as a blend of self-perception, emotion, and behavior. Their theory on language learning anxiety encompasses communication, fear of failure, and exam-related anxieties. While various affective factors impact language learning, anxiety assumes a vital role (Balemir, 2019; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). How language mindset aids in surmounting speaking anxiety remains incompletely understood.

This study seeks to enhance our understanding of the interplay between language mindset and the ability to overcome speaking anxiety among university students. It means delves into university students' language mindset and its relationship with foreign language speaking anxiety, grounded in the implicit theory of mindset. With Dweck (2006) highlighting fixed and growth mindsets, this study aims to classify students based on these mindsets and probe their responses to speaking anxiety. Employing qualitative methods and a naturalistic approach, the research aims to address two gaps: the underexplored interaction between mindset and speaking anxiety, and the scarcity of studies linking language mindset with overcoming such anxiety.

In this point, the research sets out to answer the following questions:

1. What is the predominant language mindset among students?
2. How do students from each mindset group cope with foreign language speaking anxiety?

Method

The study utilized qualitative methods to delve deeply into students' speaking anxiety concerning their language mindset. The research method employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), aiming to comprehend participants' experiences and perspectives. The research design employed a case study phenomenological approach,

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focusing on understanding complex learning processes. Participants were university students from the same institution and semester, with data collected through interviews and questionnaires.

Table 1 summarise the participants' initial names, gender, age, and linguistic background (first language, second language, third language and English learning experience).

Table 1 : Demographic of Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Linguistic Background			English learning
			L1	L2	L3	
MBA	Male	18	Indonesian	English	-	
MG	Male	20	Indonesian	Russian	-	
L	Female	18	Javanese	Indonesian	English	
JF	Female	19	Javanese	Indonesian	English	
LS	Male	-	Javanese	English	Sign (SIBI)	Language

The data relates to the use of EFL student's language mindset to overcome their foreign language speaking anxiety. The writer conducted interviews and as part of the data gathering procedure to learn more about the language mindsets of the students and how they respond while speaking English in public speaking class. Four first-year students who were enrolling in a public speaking class were the target participants for interview activities and questionnaires. The writer picked randomly among the five students. Three men and two women, each with a unique language background and English-learning history, made up the group of participants. Interviews and questionnaires were carried out at different times. Of the 5 participants, all of them have filled out a questionnaire. The four participants out of 5 who only took part in the interview activities, because one participant was unable to take part in the interview activities.

The interview consisted of 15 open-ended guiding questions with a duration of 30-40 minutes. Each individual interview was audio-recorded (face-to-face interviews) and online interviews using an online chat application called WhatsApp (www.whatsapp.com). The questions asked are modifications of the research of Ozdemir & Papi, (2021), Lou & Noels, (2020) and Anandari, (2015) relating to the use of EFL students' language mindset to overcome their speaking anxiety.

The interview questions include: (1) Do you agree that your language intelligence is something that you can't change drastically? why? (2) Do you agree that you can improve so much on your language skills of your target language, but you can't really change your language intelligence? Why? (3) Do you agree that everyone can always improve the level of their language intelligence? Why? (4) Do you agree or disagree that whatever language intelligence a person has, it can be changed rapidly? (5) Do you agree or disagree that whatever language intelligence a person has, it can be changed rapidly? Why? (6) What is your respond when you speak in English? (7) How do you respond to the difficulty you face when you learn language? (8) Do you think your language intelligence and your speaking anxiety are correlated? Why? (9) Do you think your language intelligence can help you improve your foreign language speaking anxiety rapidly? Why? (10) Do you feel confident speaking in English? (11) How do you feel speaking English in public speaking class? (12)

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What makes you anxious speaking in English? (13) How do you feel when your lecturer/classmates ask you a question in English? Why? (14) Do you feel anxious to speak in front of your public speaking class even though you're Well-prepared? Why? (15) What is the perfect way to help you improve releasing your anxiety in speaking English?

The results of this study based on the interview activity and questionnaire, most of them have a growth mindset where they believe that they can slowly change the difficulties that they face in EFL learning. In Black & Allen, (2017) Dweck (2006) stated that kids who have a growth mentality can do almost anything, and their development mindset is considerably more crucial to academic achievement than natural talent. The data obtained from the interview and questionnaire process would be outlined in the following session.

The analysis involved IPA to uncover patterns in participants' responses, aiming to comprehend their experiences and viewpoints. The study aimed to provide insights to help students overcome foreign language speaking anxiety, using qualitative methods to explore language mindset connections.

This section describes the design of the study, the subject of research, data collection procedures, instruments, data analysis techniques, and procedure of the research. Written as much as 10-20 % of the length of the article

Finding and Discussion

Group of Students' Language Mindset

Blue Print of the question to categorized the students' based on their language mindset. Mindset theory, which has its roots in studying children's beliefs of their intelligence in school settings, impacts how we interpret responses to obstacles or failures (Yeager & Dweck, 2020).

Table 2 : Blueprint Interview Group of Students' Language Mindset

No	Questions	The theory of
1.	Do you agree that your language intelligence is something that you can't change drastically? why?	Mindset theory of Carol Dweck towards language intelligence
2.	Do you agree that you can improve so much on your language skills of your target language, but you can't really change your language intelligence? Why?	
3.	Do you agree that everyone can always improve the level of their language intelligence? Why?	
4.	Do you agree or disagree that whatever language intelligence a person has, it can be changed rapidly?	
5.	Do you agree or disagree that whatever language intelligence a person has, it can be changed rapidly? Why?	

Table 3 : Interview Answer for EFL students' language mindset

No	Participants	Answer
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1.	Participant 1 (MG)	“I agree, language intelligence that people have can be changed drastically if they want to work hard in the case of improving the level of their language intelligence.”
2.	Participants 2 (L)	“I agree that everyone can change and improve the level of language intelligence if they have willing to work hard and learn hard to be better. They certainly can change and improve it.”
3.	Participants 3 (JF)	“Everyone can change and improve their language intelligence, based on that I agree that people can change and improve if they train hard for changing and improving the language intelligence that they have.”
4.	Participants 4 (LS)	“I disagree if people can change and improve the language intelligence drastically because of the complex points in language that can make it hard to change and improve it drastically, but it still can be changed slowly but surely if they work hard for that.”

As mentioned by Limeri et al., (2020), state that students' academic achievement is determined not only by their cognitive talents and material knowledge, but also by non-cognitive elements such as their beliefs, attitudes, and values. Dweck, (1999) in Limeri et al., (2020) stated that students' perceptions about the degree to which intelligence is a fixed attribute, known as "mindset," are one crucial non-cognitive aspect. As stated by Dweck & Leggett, (1988); Hoyert & O'Dell, (2008); Limeri et al., (2020) students' mindset have an impact because they influence a range of non-cognitive aspects, such as the sorts of objectives they establish. MG, L, JF and LS agreed that their mindset could help them achieving or improving their foreign language speaking anxiety.

The result of the interview regarding students' language intelligence help are showed in the form of table 1. The first participant said that He agreed that his language intelligence helped him reducing the anxiety that he has when speaking in English. The second, the third and the fourth participants also agreed that language intelligence helped them improving the anxiety that they had in speaking English. They also agreed that it could help them increase their confidence.

The Students' Respond of Their Speaking Anxiety

Blue print of the questions to know how the students' response of their speaking anxiety.

Table 4 : Blueprint Interview EFL students' respond to speaking anxiety

No	Statement	The Theory of
1.	How do you respond to the difficulty you face	The socio-cognitive approach from Dweck and

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	when you learn language?	Leggett (1988) mindset leads to student achievement goals, responses to powerlessness and student mastery.
2.	Do you think your language intelligence and your speaking anxiety are correlated? Why?	
3.	Do you think your language intelligence can help you improve your foreign language speaking anxiety rapidly? Why?	
4.	Do you feel confident speaking in English?	
5.	What is your response when you speak in English?	

Table 5 : Interview Result EFL students' respond their speaking anxiety

No	Participants	Answer
1.	Participant 1 (LS)	"I like to be challenged. When I have a difficulty, I feel like I am being challenged to overcome it. And I feel like I work better when I am under pressure. I feel the same speaking in Bahasa Indonesia and English, but I think that my language intelligence quiet help me reduce the anxiety when speak in English and it can boost a little bit of my confidence"
2.	Participants 2 (MG)	"I agree. the language intelligence can help reducing the anxiety when we speak English. When I face a difficulty in learning language I belief that I can overcome it step by step, but sometimes I doubt myself about the ability to overcome the difficulty when I learn language."
3.	Participants 3 (L)	"Learning grammar is a difficult thing and I really don't like it, but by keeping that feeling and mindset I don't think it would help to solve the difficulty in learning grammar. With the hard work that I did by listening carefully to the lecturer's explanation and studying it myself, I finally understood the grammar which was difficult for me earlier. The good mindset that I have could help give me a little self-confidence and reduce anxiety when speaking English. Even though the anxiety didn't completely go away, there was a feeling inside me that I could get through the moment when I was worried about speaking English."
4.	Participants 4 (JF)	"I would try my best to do a good thing, if there is a difficulty in learning language, I would work hard to solve it. I agree that language mindset can assist reducing anxiety when speaking. If we believe and train hard when facing the difficulty that we face, we would become less and less anxious in speaking English. The confidence in speaking English would also slowly grow"

According to Dweck and Leggett (1988) in Vandewalle, (2012) that fixed and growth mindsets produce structures for how people comprehend and react to their experiences. As mentioned by Vandewalle, (2012), stated that this is the example, when people have a fixed mentality and believe that their intelligence is a static trait, they tend to blame their lack of intelligence for their bad performance on intellectual tasks and have a pessimistic view of their chances of success in the future. Poor performance is seen as a sign that more work and a better approach are needed, in contrast, when people have a growth mentality regarding intelligence. With this mindset, the likelihood of future task success is substantially higher.

As the result of interview regarding the use of student's language mindset in overcoming the difficulty in language learning. The interview is presented in the form of table 2. From the

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data acquired, the writer concluded that LS, MG, L and JF have a growth mindset with the explanation of the way in responding to the challenge activities in learning based on the social-cognitive theory by Dweck and Leggett 1988. According to LS: when facing a challenge, he believes that he is confidently think he can be better when he finds a difficulty in learning language. Where, depending on the information gained from MG, in facing the difficulties when learning language, the doubts about one's own ability to solve the difficulties encountered are certainly there, but little by little they can be overcome if she works hard to be better. In L point of view, she thinks that she has a growth mindset, when she faces a difficulty, she tends to try her best to understand the difficulty that she has so she can overcome it. As stated by JF, working hard to be a better version of oneself is what she believes.

The acquiring data from the participants regarding the use of language mindset to overcome foreign language anxiety give opportunity for self-evaluation in facing the difficulties in learning foreign language. This study was set to explore the students' language mindset and the respond when speaking English that could influence the foreign language speaking anxiety of four participants. Based on the findings, we can make several important observations. First, although the participants have the belief in solving the difficulty that they face when learning a foreign language, it does not make them easily relieve anxiety when they speak English. It takes a long time and habits to get rid of anxiety when speaking English, especially in front of many people. Second, based on the theory of social-cognitive by Dweck and Leggett 1988 the participants show positive respond in overcoming their foreign language speaking anxiety, especially in front of a lot of people. They also have different cause that can arise their anxiety when speak English.

In the interviews conducted, the writer noted that the EFL language mindset can help the students' way of solving the difficulty that they face in learning language especially the anxiety when speak English. In addition, it is interesting to note that there are different responds in overcoming their foreign language speaking anxiety. And also, language mindset can influence the way how to overcome the difficulty in learning a foreign language.

More specifically, the writer has summarized the students' mindset can influence how they respond to the difficulty in overcoming foreign language speaking anxiety. Even though LS, MG, L, JF had different caused that provoked their anxiety when they speak English such as lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding and lack of pronouncing the correct word, yet they still agreed that they could conquer it slowly. As the result, they can feel more confident in speaking English especially in front of a lot of people. This study states that it has a relationship with other studies from Khajavy et al., (2022) that examine language mindset in students' language learning with a different skill focus and the research from Ozdemir & Papi, (2021) that examine the mindset as sources of L2 speaking anxiety and speaking confidence in the international teaching assistant (ITA).

From the result findings, the writer hopes can assist the students' speaking anxiety through understanding their language mindset.

Conclusion

This study aimed to present the findings of an in-depth qualitative investigation into how EFL students used their language mindset to overcome their speaking anxiety. The results of this study indicated that most participants had a growth mindset, which was in line with Carol

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Dweck's theory. According to Zilka et al. (2022), students with a growth mindset tend to perform better as it motivates them to put in effort. People with a growth mindset believe that personal qualities can be improved through hard work.

In conclusion, this study has the potential to aid language learners in reflecting on their own learning experiences and boosting their confidence in speaking English. The insights provided could prove valuable for students aiming to enhance their EFL skills. Future researchers are encouraged to delve further into this topic, exploring a wider range of factors related to language mindset and speaking anxiety in language learners.

Further research is recommended, maybe using a larger sample size than in this study, to further understand the language mindset use of EFL students to overcome their foreign language speaking anxiety. In addition, more in-depth research on the use EFL students' language mindset to overcome their speaking anxiety based on the foreign language anxiety factors. Finally, (Denise, 2015) asserts that investigating students' learning contexts (such as the classroom or a larger community) is essential to developing a thorough knowledge of children as language learners. The author also offers the following further recommendations:

1. This research is expected to be a means self-introspection for language learners or readers, to overcome their anxiety when speak English.
2. This research is expected to be a reference for a student to be able to improve more in EFL learning especially EFL skills.

This research is expected to be a reference for future researchers to investigate more deeply and with a broader subject related to language mindset and factors that cause foreign language speaking anxiety in all language learners.

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