

Beyond Silence: EFL Teachers' Insights into Students' Shyness in Speaking Activities

Hanna Sekar Nirmala¹, Devinta Puspita Ratri¹, Pratnyawati Nuridi Suwarso¹

¹Universitas Brawijaya, Jawa Timur, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: devinta@ub.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how EFL teachers perceive and respond to students' shyness in speaking activities at the secondary school level. The research addresses the problem of speaking reluctance among EFL learners, particularly how shyness influences classroom participation and oral performance, and how teachers interpret and manage this psychological barrier in instructional contexts. A qualitative narrative inquiry design was employed to capture teachers' lived experiences and professional reflections. Four female EFL teachers from a public secondary school in Malang, Indonesia, were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. Member checking was conducted to enhance credibility and trustworthiness. The findings indicate that teachers clearly recognize physical and behavioral manifestations of shyness, including blushing, trembling, gaze avoidance, and avoidance behaviors. Shyness was perceived as a multifaceted construct shaped by internal factors (e.g., introversion, fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, limited proficiency, and low motivation) and external factors (e.g., limited exposure to English and peer mockery). To mitigate these challenges, teachers implemented strategies such as small-group discussions, role plays, code-switching, motivational reinforcement, gentle corrective feedback, and drilling exercises. The study concludes that addressing shyness requires supportive classroom environments and adaptive pedagogical strategies that integrate emotional, social, and linguistic considerations to enhance students' speaking confidence and participation.

Keywords: Shyness, EFL Teachers, Speaking Skills, Teaching Strategies

To cite this article: Nurfadillah, W., Mevina, M., Lidya, M., Adhiya, N. (2026). Investigating strategies in reading academic text of EFL university students. *Enhancing Language Learning with Innovation and Technology*, Vol 01 no. 01, pp.51-67 <https://doi.org/10.21315/ellit>.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate effectively in English has become an increasingly essential competence in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Speaking, as one of the productive language skills, plays a central role in enabling learners to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and participate actively in social and academic interactions. In contemporary educational settings, oral proficiency is not only viewed as a linguistic achievement but also as a form of social capital that may influence academic success, professional opportunities, and global engagement. However, despite the recognized importance of speaking skills, many EFL learners continue to experience considerable difficulty in oral communication. A growing body of research has identified psychological factors such as self-confidence, anxiety, motivation, and shyness as influential variables shaping students' speaking performance (Bakhtiar & Suwandi, 2022). These affective dimensions often determine whether learners are willing to participate in classroom interactions or remain silent.

Among these psychological variables, shyness has received increasing scholarly attention as a potential barrier to language learning. Shyness is commonly understood as a form of social anxiety characterized by discomfort, inhibition, and self-consciousness in interpersonal situations (Oflaz, 2019). In EFL contexts, shyness may limit students' willingness to communicate, reduce participation in speaking tasks, and negatively affect overall academic performance. Empirical findings, however, present nuanced perspectives. Mohammadian (2013) identified a positive correlation between shyness and certain aspects of language learning motivation, whereas Santos and Barcelos (2018) reported that shyness had an unfavorable effect on students' oral production. These contrasting findings suggest that shyness is a multidimensional construct whose impact may vary depending on contextual and individual factors. Furthermore, pronunciation, as one of the most salient aspects of speaking performance, often becomes a source of anxiety for learners because it is easily noticed and evaluated by others (Ayu et al., 2021). This visibility may intensify shy learners' fear of negative evaluation.

Although shyness can be considered a relatively common emotional response in social interaction, its presence in EFL classrooms warrants serious pedagogical attention. Oflaz (2019) conceptualized shyness as closely linked to anxiety in language learning contexts, while Safaee and Sobhanifar (2015) emphasized that neglecting students' shyness may lead to long-term negative consequences for their academic achievement. When teachers overlook the emotional dimensions of speaking activities, students may develop avoidance behaviors that hinder language development. Gebhard (2000) argued that teachers play a crucial role in establishing supportive classroom environments that facilitate communicative competence. Therefore, understanding how shyness manifests in classroom interactions and how teachers interpret and respond to it becomes essential for promoting effective speaking instruction.

In addition to individual psychological factors, classroom practices and instructional priorities may contribute to the persistence of speaking reluctance. In some EFL contexts, teachers may prioritize grammar and vocabulary instruction over communicative practice, assuming that structural competence will naturally lead to oral proficiency. Al Hosni (2014) reported that teachers sometimes consider explicit speaking instruction unnecessary, particularly in environments where students rely heavily on their native language. This tendency may inadvertently reduce opportunities for authentic oral practice. Bakhtiar and Suwandi (2022) further noted that limited speaking proficiency can function as an internal factor reinforcing shyness, as students fear making mistakes in front of peers. Consequently, the interplay between instructional practices and psychological barriers creates a complex challenge that extends beyond individual personality traits.

Previous research has proposed several pedagogical strategies to mitigate speaking anxiety and encourage participation. Small-group discussions have been widely recommended as a means of reducing performance pressure and fostering collaborative learning. Husain (2019) demonstrated that small-group discussion techniques significantly reduced speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Similarly, Hidayati et al. (2020) found that supportive group settings and positive teacher attitudes toward error correction contributed to lower anxiety levels. These findings suggest that social context plays a decisive role in shaping students' willingness to communicate. By restructuring interaction patterns in the classroom, teachers may create conditions that alleviate the psychological burden associated with public speaking.

Beyond grouping strategies, other instructional approaches have been identified as effective in addressing speaking reluctance. Pair work has been shown to reduce anxiety by allowing learners to practice in less threatening environments (Aulia et al., 2020). Code-switching between English and the students' first language may also reduce fear of negative evaluation and increase confidence (Sholikhah & Isnaini, 2024). In addition, motivational reinforcement has been linked to improved speaking performance, as learners who perceive English as relevant to their future goals tend to demonstrate greater engagement (Kafryawan, 2019). Drilling techniques, when implemented systematically, have been found to enhance pronunciation accuracy and gradually build confidence (Tika, 2022). These pedagogical solutions indicate that shyness is not an immutable trait but a condition that can be moderated through appropriate instructional design.

While these studies provide valuable insights, much of the existing literature has primarily focused on students' perspectives regarding speaking anxiety and shyness. For example, Afandi et al. (2014) examined shyness among university students, identifying several perceived causes of reluctance to speak. Oflaz (2019) investigated the effects of anxiety, shyness, and language learning strategies on speaking skills, highlighting gender differences in strategy use. Al Hosni (2014) explored speaking difficulties encountered by young EFL learners, revealing both student and teacher perspectives but without specifically emphasizing teachers' interpretive frameworks regarding shyness. Although these studies acknowledge the presence of shyness in various contexts, limited research has examined how secondary-level EFL teachers interpret students' shy behaviors and how these interpretations shape pedagogical

decisions. Furthermore, relatively few studies have been conducted in well-regarded public secondary schools, where expectations for academic performance and institutional reputation may influence instructional practices. This gap suggests the need for a focused investigation into teachers' perceptions of shyness within specific institutional contexts.

In light of these considerations, the present study aims to explore EFL teachers' opinions about students' shyness in speaking activities at a secondary school in Indonesia. The study seeks to identify how teachers recognize manifestations of shyness, how they interpret its underlying causes, and what strategies they employ to address speaking reluctance. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on teachers' narrative accounts rather than solely on students' self-reported experiences. By examining teachers' interpretive perspectives, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between psychological factors and pedagogical responses in EFL classrooms. The scope of the study is limited to secondary-level EFL teachers within a specific school context, with the intention of providing in-depth, contextually grounded insights rather than broad generalizations. Through this focused exploration, the research aims to illuminate how teachers conceptualize and manage shyness as a multidimensional phenomenon that intersects with emotional, social, and linguistic dimensions of language learning.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry design to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of students' shyness in speaking activities. Narrative inquiry was selected because it allows researchers to examine participants' lived experiences and interpret how individuals construct meaning from their professional practices. Rather than quantifying levels of anxiety or measuring speaking performance statistically, this approach focuses on understanding how teachers interpret, respond to, and make sense of shyness within their instructional contexts. The design is particularly appropriate for investigating complex psychological and pedagogical phenomena, as it captures nuanced perspectives that may not be accessible through quantitative instruments.

The analytical framework of this study was guided by thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method enables systematic identification, categorization, and interpretation of recurring patterns within qualitative data. By applying this approach, the researcher was able to organize teachers' narratives into coherent themes that reflect their interpretations of shyness, its contributing factors, and the strategies implemented to address it. The credibility of the analysis was further strengthened through member checking, a process described by Lopez and Willis (2004), in which participants were given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of the transcribed data and interpretations.

Research Setting

The research was conducted at SMP N 10 Malang, a public secondary school in East Java, Indonesia. The school was selected purposively due to its reputation as an “Adiwiyata” institution, a designation awarded to schools that demonstrate commitment to environmental education and institutional quality. As a well-regarded public school, SMP N 10 Malang is expected to maintain high academic standards, including competence in both Bahasa Indonesia and foreign languages such as English. The institutional context is relevant to this study because expectations for student performance may influence teachers’ awareness of speaking proficiency and their sensitivity to psychological barriers such as shyness.

The selection of this setting also reflects the study’s focus on secondary-level EFL education, a level that has received comparatively less attention in previous research on shyness in language learning. By situating the study within a specific institutional context, the research aims to generate in-depth, contextually grounded insights rather than broad generalizations.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly applied in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess relevant experience and knowledge related to the research problem. The study involved four female EFL teachers who were actively teaching English at SMP N 10 Malang at the time of data collection. All participants had prior teaching experience in other schools before joining the current institution, enabling them to reflect on shyness from diverse professional perspectives.

The participants varied in age, teaching responsibilities, and years of experience. They were responsible for teaching different grade levels, including seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. Their teaching experience ranged from five to thirty-six years, indicating substantial professional exposure to varied student characteristics and classroom situations. The inclusion of experienced teachers enhances the depth and reliability of the findings, as their perceptions are informed by long-term engagement with EFL learners.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided consent prior to the interviews. Ethical considerations were maintained by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were identified using pseudonyms (P1, P2, P3, and P4) to protect their identities.

Table 1. The General Information of the Participants

Number	Age (Years)	Gender	Responsible for	Teaching Experience (Years)
P1	42	Female	7th & 8th grade	19
P2	55	Female	7th & 8th grade	5
P3	30	Female	8th & 9th grade	27
P4	59	Female	7th & 9th grade	36

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews designed to elicit detailed narratives regarding teachers' perceptions of students' shyness in speaking activities. The interview protocol consisted of eight open-ended questions adapted from Ali et al. (2023), who developed questions related to speaking difficulties in EFL contexts. The adaptation process involved modifying the wording to ensure contextual relevance to secondary-level students and to emphasize the dimension of shyness specifically.

Prior to implementation, the interview questions were validated and reviewed to ensure clarity, coherence, and alignment with the research objectives. Minor adjustments were made to refine wording and enhance contextual suitability. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in July 2025, either in the school lobby or in the teachers' office, depending on participants' availability and preference. Conducting interviews in familiar school environments facilitated open and reflective discussion.

Each interview allowed participants to elaborate on their observations of shy behaviors, perceived internal and external factors influencing reluctance to speak, and instructional strategies used to encourage participation. The semi-structured format ensured flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe for clarification and elaboration while maintaining consistency across interviews. All interviews were documented through audio recording and complemented by on-site observational notes taken by the researcher to capture contextual details and non-verbal cues.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' responses. The transcription process was conducted carefully to ensure that all verbal expressions, pauses, and emphases relevant to meaning were accurately represented. Following transcription, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for patterns among codes, reviewing and refining themes, and defining and naming the final themes.

Descriptive coding was applied to identify meaningful units of data related to manifestations of shyness, contributing factors, and pedagogical strategies. For example, references to trembling, blushing, gaze avoidance, or fidgeting were coded as physical and behavioral signs, while statements about fear of negative evaluation or limited exposure to English were categorized under internal or external factors. Through iterative comparison, these codes were organized into broader thematic categories reflecting teachers' interpretations.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study incorporated member checking as described by Lopez and Willis (2004). After the initial analysis was completed, transcripts and thematic interpretations were shared with participants to confirm accuracy and ensure that their perspectives were represented faithfully. This process reduced the risk of misinterpretation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

Throughout the analytical process, the researcher maintained reflexivity by acknowledging potential biases and striving to interpret participants' narratives within their contextual meanings. The use of systematic coding procedures and established analytical frameworks supports the methodological rigor of the study and ensures alignment between research objectives, data collection, and analysis.

Table 2. The Examples of Descriptive Coding Used in This Study

The Interview Transcripts	Descriptive Codings
Signs of shyness... [1] Based on my observations, they often seem anxious. [2] They tend to avoid eye contact, which usually indicates they are trying to dodge the task given to them, especially when it involves presenting in English. [3] Sometimes, they would mumble to themselves or distract themselves by fidgeting with something. [4] It is also possible that they might tremble a little bit.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anxious facial Expressions 2. Avoiding eye contact 3. Fidgeting or self distraction 4. Trembling

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Signs of Students Shyness

Physical and Behavioral Signs.

Based on the interview transcript, all four (4) participants reported various physical and behavioral signs of shyness observed during English speaking activities. These manifestations often appeared when students were required to speak in front of the class, participate in discussions, or deliver presentations in English. Two (2) participants reported physiological reactions, including blushing and mild trembling.

“Usually their faces turn red, and there’s a bit of trembling.” (P2) “Yes, it is also possible that they might tremble a little bit.” (P4)

Two (2) other participants noted anxious facial expressions that conveyed confusion, unease, or hesitation. Some students frequently scratched their heads when prompted to participate, which was interpreted as a sign of surprise or uncertainty.

“You can tell from their facial expressions because they look confused and uneasy.” (P1)

“When I require them to speak in front of the class, most of their initial reaction is scratching their heads... you can also see the uncertainty written all over their faces” (P3)

Furthermore, avoidance behaviors were also prevalent. Participant 4 (P4) stated that some students averted their gaze, mumbled softly, or fidgeted with random objects, which can be interpreted as reluctance or coping strategies when facing psychological pressure.

“The students usually look away or keep themselves busy with something.” (P4)

“Sometimes, the students would also murmur to themselves or even fidgeting with something.”
(P4)

Additionally, some students sought peer support before attempting to speak in English. They often chose to sit near classmates they perceived as supportive, which helped increase their willingness to participate.

“Some students tend to get anxious and start looking for speaking partners who they think can support them.” (P1)

In conclusion, all participants acknowledged several signs of shyness in their students that became apparent when they were required to speak English. The signs mentioned by the EFL teachers included blushing, trembling, anxious facial expressions, and various avoidance behaviors. These manifestations may indicate that students experience persistent anxiety in the EFL classroom rather than momentary discomfort. This finding is in line with Henderson et al. (2010), who believed that shyness covers several dimensions, such as physiological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, and may manifest through responses including rapid heartbeat, low self-esteem, and inhibition. In addition, the findings revealed that peer support served as one of the coping mechanisms preferred by shy students. This aligns with Flores et al. (2024), who found that during speaking activities, EFL students tend to rely on peer support as well as the way teachers provide feedback. Overall, these findings indicate that shyness among EFL students is expressed through physical reactions and avoidance behaviors, while seeking peer support may help students feel safer when engaging in speaking activities

EFL Students’ Attitude in Different Social Settings

The interview results suggest that social settings have a considerable impact on students’ willingness to communicate in English. Participants mentioned that group size and group composition affect students’ confidence and participation. Two out of four participants observed that students who speak fluently in small groups often become nervous when speaking in front of the entire class.

“Some students seem to show fluency in English when they are assigned into small groups they become nervous when required to speak in front of the class.” (P1)

“Some students have pretty good speaking skills when they engage in small group activities.... they lose their confidence when speaking in front of the class.” (P2)

Group composition was also found to influence students’ willingness to participate. Within familiar groups, discussions were perceived as more enjoyable, and students appeared more comfortable speaking in English. Participant 3 (P3) confirmed that students were more willing to engage in speaking activities when grouped with close friends.

“When most students placed in a group with their close friends, they keen to engage in discussions... even pretend to speak fluently.” (P3)

In contrast, Participant 4 (P4) offered a different perspective, stating that small group settings do not always guarantee improvement in English participation. According to this participant, students with limited English proficiency were unlikely to participate regardless of the social setting.

“Their English communication skills are still limited, it does not matter whether they are placed in small groups or not.” (P4)

Furthermore, several participants mentioned the significance of social contexts, as they agreed that students showed improvements in speaking proficiency when participating in small-group settings. This was inferred from students appearing more at ease and engaged during speaking activities, and sometimes even making attempts to be playful. This finding is in line with Husain (2019), who believes that small-group discussions in EFL classrooms can reduce speaking anxiety and encourage greater participation, as students feel more comfortable in such settings. Similarly, Hidayati et al. (2020) revealed that students’ speaking anxiety decreased when they were provided with supportive group settings, particularly when teachers also showed positive attitudes toward mistake correction.

Nonetheless, one participant offered a different opinion, suggesting that grouping students with close peers does not always guarantee improved speaking performance, as many students still struggle with low English proficiency. This view aligns with Liu et al. (2023), who argued that students with low perceived speaking proficiency are more prone to shyness. Therefore, support from others may be insufficient, as students with limited speaking skills are unlikely to participate even when encouragement is provided. Overall, while supportive social contexts such as small-group settings positively influence students’ attitudes toward speaking activities, their impact depends on students’ language competence.

Factors Contributing to Students’ Reluctance to Participate in English Activities

Internal Factors

After analyzing the interview transcript, several internal factors were found to contribute to students’ reluctance to engage in speaking activities. There are three aspects, such as personality traits, emotional challenges, and individual attitudes toward English that were emphasized by all participants as significantly influencing students’ willingness to participate in speaking activities. The most frequently mentioned trait was introversion, as EFL teachers admitted that students with reserved personalities found speaking activities challenging. Participant 3 (P3) even stated that some students struggled with shyness when speaking their mother tongue, making speaking English even more difficult. This inference can be drawn from the excerpts below.

“There are several factors, such as introverted personalities...” (P1)

“The internal background that causes students’ reluctance to speak English might be their introverted nature, or shyness to put it mildly.” (P4)

“Nowadays many people tend to be more introverted. Hence, when they are asked to speak in front of audiences, they feel shy...” (P3)

Another prominent theme frequently mentioned was fear of negative evaluation. Two (2) participants reported that students worried about wrong intonation, pronunciation mistakes, or being mocked by peers. These experiences often resulted in embarrassment and long-term reluctance to participate. Participant 1 (P1) recalled cases where students refused to speak English again after being ridiculed.

“There was a student being laughed at by his classmates when he was trying to speak in English... that makes them embarrassed and hesitant to speak in English later on.” (P1)

“Students often feel shy because they are worried about using the wrong intonation, fear being laughed at by their peers...” (P2)

Most participants also recognized low self-confidence as a major challenge hindering participation. Some students were already convinced of their inability to speak English, leading to avoidance behaviors. In this context, self-confidence influences speaking performance and mediates the relationship between shyness and participation. This situation can be inferred from the excerpts below.

“I think low self-esteem and shyness are the most prominent internal background that I have seen on my students..” (P1)

“Lack of self-esteem might be the most common internal background that I have noticed from my students.” (P2)

“Shyness and low confidence have contributed in causing speaking reluctance.” (P4)

Low motivation toward learning English was another factor mentioned by most participants. Some students showed little interest in learning English and only recognized its importance after teachers explained its future relevance. Explaining the usefulness of English helped motivate students who were previously reluctant to participate. This conclusion is supported by the excerpts below.

“Some students are simply not interested in learning foreign languages, such as English..” (P1)

“Most of them do not have strong motivation... they might only recognize its importance when I'm trying to explain how valuable English is going to be.” (P3)

“When shy students barely have the motivation to learn English, they unlikely participate speaking activities.” (P4)

Moreover, Participant 4 (P4) emphasized low English proficiency as another contributing factor. Even in familiar group settings, students still struggled due to poor grammar and limited vocabulary. According to this participant, the main challenge was not only shyness but also lack of linguistic competence.

“Even when they are grouped with close peers, it does not make it any easier for them to communicate in English... this also caused by their lack of ability to speak English.” (P4)

The EFL teachers in this study consistently emphasized shyness as a central factor leading to students’ withdrawal from speaking activities. Introversion was identified as the first major challenge, as it made students naturally shy. This is in line with Zhang et al. (2020), who found that students with lower trait willingness to communicate are often associated with introverted personalities, making them less likely to participate in classroom activities. Fear of negative evaluation was also a recurring obstacle, as Kalantar (2024) explained that shy students often worry about being judged by peers, teachers, and themselves, which can result in long-term reluctance to participate in speaking activities. In addition, low self-confidence and motivation further worsened these issues. Gordani et al. (2021) noted that students with low self-confidence in their English ability are more likely to experience communication apprehension. Similarly, Gan (2012) found that limited opportunities to speak English contribute to students’ reluctance to participate due to low proficiency or motivation.

Moreover, limited proficiency was identified as another internal factor. Liu & Jackson (2008) stated that students with high anxiety and low language proficiency are unlikely to engage in speaking activities. This combination of low proficiency and high anxiety keeps many EFL students reluctant to speak, even when they have the desire to improve their speaking skills. Overall, these findings show that emotional and linguistic factors interrelate with shyness, creating a cycle of avoidance that requires intervention from EFL teachers.

External Factors.

Based on the interview responses, several external factors were also found to increase students’ reluctance to engage in speaking activities. These factors were mainly related to learning environment and social interaction. The first external factor identified was limited prior exposure to English. Participant 1 (P1) stated that many students came from backgrounds where English was rarely used, both in school and at home.

“There was limited exposure to English in their previous schools... the students do not have anyone to practice English with at home.” (P1)

Another recurring factor was peer judgment and mockery. Participant 2 (P2) revealed that students were sometimes laughed at for pronunciation mistakes or even for speaking with native-like pronunciation. Such experiences discouraged students and increased their reluctance to participate.

“Once a student correctly said the word “Wi-Fi,” but was mocked by the entire class simply because they simply sounded like a native speaker.” (P2)

Additionally, Participant 4 (P4) mentioned the lack of opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. Students rarely communicated in English, which limited their fluency and confidence and made them reluctant to participate.

“Most students have limited exposure to English, they rarely get the chance to learn how to communicate in English.” (P4)

Alongside internal factors, participants also mentioned several external factors that reinforced shyness among EFL students. These factors are related to students’ social and environmental conditions. Various environmental influences were confirmed by the participants. Marlia et al. (2023) argued that limited opportunities to speak English, including insufficient exposure outside the classroom, can increase speaking anxiety and reduce participation due to limited vocabulary, low self-esteem, and shyness. The absence of real-life English communication makes students dependent on classroom instruction, which lowers their participation as they feel pressure from inadequate speaking proficiency. Furthermore, Zhang (2019) confirmed that negative peer reactions can reduce students’ willingness to communicate, particularly in larger audiences. This aligns with the current study’s findings, which show that external influences can exacerbate shyness, especially when the learning environment is not safe and non-judgmental.

Additionally, Afidawati et al. (2024) reported that many post-pandemic EFL students use personal strategies to cope with speaking reluctance, such as preparing their speech and seeking peer support, highlighting the importance of real-life communication opportunities in reducing shyness. In summary, these findings indicate the importance of a supportive learning environment, as students may experience setbacks in fluency and participation without it. This issue was also echoed by the participants, who confirmed that SMP N 10 Malang does not have English extracurricular programs

Teaching Strategies and Observed Progress to Encourage Students Participation

Based on the analysis of the interview transcripts, all participants employed various strategies to address shyness that influences students’ speaking performance. Participant 1 (P1) reported using several approaches to encourage participation, including small group activities, role-plays, code-switching between English and Indonesian, and peer correction. According to P1, small group work and role-plays help reduce shyness by focusing on collaboration rather than individual performance. Code-switching allows students to express themselves more easily, while peer correction creates a cooperative learning environment where students learn from one another. This inference is drawn from the excerpt below.

“I usually use small group activities, or even role-plays... I also allow them to use a mix of English and Indonesian in the classroom... Peer correction is also encouraged as their speaking skills have been improved gradually” (P1)

Participant 2 (P2) emphasized the importance of motivational advice before lessons to encourage participation. By explaining the practical value of English in daily life, P2 aimed to help students recognize the relevance of developing speaking proficiency. This can be inferred from the excerpt below.

“Before I begin the speaking lessons, I always make attempts to motivate the students by explaining how useful it is to have decent English speaking proficiency.” (P2)

Regarding corrective feedback, Participant 2 (P2) preferred providing individual feedback in private settings to prevent embarrassment and maintain students’ confidence.

“Sometimes, when a student does not take conventional correction methods very well, I call them aside to provide private feedback. (P2)

Participant 3 (P3) also employed strategies focusing on gentle correction and confidence-building through practice. She believed that providing reinforcement before corrective feedback was more effective than harsh correction, helping students maintain confidence even when making mistakes. This conclusion is drawn from the excerpt below.

“When a student makes pronunciation mistakes, I would not provide them with harsh correction, especially when their classmates are already around and some of them are even laughing.” (P3)

Participant 4 (P4) highlighted the importance of drilling exercises and role-plays. She explained that drilling provided models of correct pronunciation and intonation, while role-plays were introduced gradually as students’ confidence increased. By combining these approaches, P4 balanced accuracy and communicative function of a target language, creating a supportive learning environment. This is reflected in the excerpts below.

“I usually start with drilling exercises.” (P4)

“After done with drilling exercises, they can proceed to perform simple roleplays based on the dialogues from their textbooks. Over time, these roleplays become more intense.” (P4)

The implementation of these strategies led teachers to observe noticeable progress among students. Most participants reported improvements in confidence, pronunciation accuracy, and willingness to speak English. Some students achieved higher speaking scores, while others showed behavioral progress such as self-correction, asking about pronunciation, and increased participation through code-switching. These outcomes suggest that the strategies reduced shyness and improved confidence and fluency.

“On a scale of 1 to 10, students who initially score around 30 in speaking can improve to 60 or even 70.” (P1)

“Whenever they recall that their initial pronunciation was corrected, they usually make an effort to self-correct the next time they say the same word.” (P3)

“They also start to gain more confidence as most of them still mixed English with Indonesian... they would also ask how to pronounce certain words when they want to speak fully in English.” (P3)

“When students get plenty of drilling practice, their confidence increases...” (P4)

In conclusion, the participants in this study employed several strategies to help students overcome shyness in speaking performance. These strategies included small group work, role plays, motivational advice, gentle correction, and drilling practices. These strategies align with previous studies on teaching methods proven effective in reducing speaking anxiety and increasing participation. For instance, peer collaboration and small group discussions were found to make students feel more at ease during speaking activities. This is supported by Aulia et al. (2020), who discovered that pairing highly anxious students with less anxious peers helped reduce speaking anxiety as measured by the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety scale. In addition, code-switching between English and Indonesian was also used by the participants. This strategy aligns with Sholikhah & Isnaini (2024), who reported that code-switching reduces speaking anxiety, test-related anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These findings show that combining English with students' native language can increase confidence and participation in speaking activities.

Moreover, participants preferred providing corrective but gentle feedback rather than conventional correction methods to prevent embarrassment. This finding aligns with Zufikar (2022), who believed that supportive feedback during group assignments can reduce students' speaking anxiety. Participant 2's (P2) strategy of giving motivational advice before lessons also aligns with Kafryawan (2019), who found that high motivation among EFL students leads to improvements in speaking performance. This suggests that motivational reinforcement encourages participation by helping students recognize the importance of learning English for future purposes. Furthermore, the use of drilling exercises and gradually increasing role-play activities, highlighted by Participant 4 (P4), corresponds with Santoso & Prasetyo (2025), who stated that role plays help students practice pronunciation, intonation, and fluency, thereby increasing confidence. This indicates that combining accuracy-based practices, such as drilling, with communicative activities supports the development of speaking proficiency. However, most teachers emphasized communicative approaches, such as gentle correction, motivational advice, and peer support, rather than accuracy-focused methods, as many students still had limited English proficiency. This situation supports Denessen et al. (2022), who noted behavioral and attitudinal differences between male and female teachers, with male teachers focusing more on academic performance and female teachers attending more to students' emotional needs. Hence, these findings highlight the importance of understanding multiple aspects of shyness in order to provide teaching approaches that meet students' needs.

In addition, teachers observed several improvements after implementing these strategies. Participant 1 (P1) noted increased speaking scores, while Participant 3 (P3) observed self-correction behaviors as students became more autonomous. These outcomes align with Dewi & Caldei (2022), who found that cooperative learning strategies improve speaking proficiency. Similarly, Fang et al. (2018) showed that reciprocal peer feedback enhances speaking performance by promoting learner autonomy and confidence. Furthermore, Tika (2022) stated that drilling exercises improve pronunciation through step-by-step practice, which aligns with Participant 4's (P4) observation that students became more confident after drilling activities. Overall, these findings indicate that the strategies not only help EFL students cope with shyness but also improve their speaking proficiency and confidence over time.

CONCLUSION

The primary conclusions were drawn from the participants' responses: (1) EFL teachers acknowledged physical and behavioral signs of shyness during speaking activities, (2) shyness was found to be connected with social, emotional, and linguistic factors that lower students' participation, and (3) EFL teachers implemented various strategies to address low participation in speaking activities.

As elaborated in the findings, EFL teachers recognized the influence of shyness through physical and behavioral signs such as blushing, trembling, anxious facial expressions, gaze aversion, and other distracting behaviors. These signs helped teachers identify shyness when students participated in speaking activities. Moreover, participants emphasized the influence of social context, as students showed more positive attitudes when placed in small groups, especially with close peers. Students also appeared more at ease and engaged, as shown by their playful behavior. Therefore, it is important for EFL teachers to pay attention to these signals, as they help teachers understand students' emotional states and apply appropriate strategies to support shy students.

Most EFL teachers in this study confirmed that shyness lowers students' participation in speaking activities. They viewed shyness as a multifaceted issue shaped by both internal and external factors. Internally, introversion, low self-esteem, and fear of being judged were identified as challenges during speaking activities. Externally, low exposure to English, peer ridicule, and unsupportive social environments contributed to students' reluctance to speak. Thus, shyness in EFL learning can be understood as the result of interconnected psychological, linguistic, and socio-cultural factors.

In addition, the study found that EFL teachers employed several strategies to increase students' willingness to participate, particularly those focusing on communicative performance. Strategies such as small group discussions, role plays, code-switching between English and Indonesian, motivational advice, gentle corrective feedback, and drilling exercises were designed to build confidence and create supportive speaking environments. However, teachers also realized that the effectiveness of these strategies depends on students' individual motivation and English proficiency. This shows that EFL teachers are addressing shyness by tailoring their teaching strategies to meet students' needs.

Future research may involve broader educational contexts or incorporate both teacher and student perspectives to deepen understanding of how shyness is negotiated in classroom interaction. Overall, the study affirms that addressing shyness requires a holistic approach that combines emotional support, structured practice, and a positive classroom climate to enhance students' speaking confidence and performance.

REFERENCES

- Afandi, N. A., Adhani, D. N., & Hasiana, I. (2014). Perasaan Malu (Shyness) pada Mahasiswa Baru di Program Studi Psikologi Universitas Trunojoyo Madura. *Personifikasi: Jurnal Ilmu Psikologi*, 5(1), 43-63
- Afidawati, H., Arrasyid, F. I., & Ikawati, L. (2024). Minimizing EFL Learners' Speaking Anxiety in The Post-Pandemic Era. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 11(1), 107-130.
- Al Hosni, S. (2014). Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Young EFL Learners. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 2(6), 22-30.
- Ali, Z. R., & Akib, I. (2023). Identifikasi Kesulitan Berbicara Siswa di SD Inpres Pakkolompo. *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang*, 9(3), 1726- 1741
- Aulia, M. P., Lengkanawati, N. S., & Rodliyah, R. S. (2020). The Use of Pair Work to Reduce Speaking Anxiety in an EFL Classroom. In *Twelfth Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 2019)* (pp. 134-137). Atlantis Press.
- Bakhtiar, M. R., & Suwandi, S. (2022). The Psychological Factors Impacts on the Students' Speaking Skill. *English Education Journal*, 12(3), 356-363
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Denessen, E., Hornstra, L., van den Bergh, L., & Bijlstra, G. (2022). Implicit Measures of Teachers' Attitudes and Stereotypes, and Their Effects on Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes: A Review. *Learning and Instruction*, 78, 101437.
- Dewi, N., & Caldei, E. M. D. S. (2022). Implementing Cooperative Learning to Enhance Oral Proficiency Among EFL Learners. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 7(1), 161-169.
- Fang, W. C., Cassim, F. A., Hsu, C. N., & Chen, N. S. (2018). Effects of Reciprocal Peer Feedback on EFL learners' Communication Strategy Use and Oral Communication Performance. *Smart Learning Environments*, 5(1), 11.
- Flores, A., Tandoc, J. J. P., & Eustaquio, T. L. (2024). Coping Mechanisms and Strategies in Overcoming Second Language Speaking Anxiety. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Translation*, 7(2), 42-47.
- Gan, Z. (2012). Understanding L2 Speaking Problems: Implications for ESL Curriculum Development in a Teacher Training Institution in Hong Kong. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 37(1), 43-59.
- Gebhard, G.J. (2000). *Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language*. USA: The University of Michigan Press.

- Gordani, Y., Arabani, A. S., & Moghtader, I. J. (2021). Communication Anxiety and Self-Confidence Among Learners of English as a Foreign Language. *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 11(4), 257-270
- Henderson, L.; Zimbardo, P.; Carducci, B. (2010). Shyness. In I. B. Weiner & W. E. Craighead (Eds.), *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 4th ed. John Wiley and Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470479216.corpsy0870>
- Hidayati, S., Oktaviani, L., & Aminatun, D. (2020) EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety: A Case Study at The First Grade of SMA Al-Huda Jati Agung. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 4(1), 99–110.
- Husain, F. A. (2019). The Reduction of EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety Through Small Group-Discussion Technique: A Case Study at 11th Grades in Islamic Senior High School Al-Ikhlash Cicalengka (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung).
- Kafryawan, W. (2019). The Influence of Motivation on EFL Learners' Speaking Skills. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 2(4), 612- 619.
- Kalantar, O. S. (2024). Factors Affecting Shyness in EFL Classrooms. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 12(3), 67-91.
- Liu, H., Beckmann, N., & Beckmann, J. (2023). Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety and Its Link to Speaking Self-Efficacy, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Self- Perceived Proficiency, and Gender. *Education Frontiers*, 17(2).
- Lopez, K. A., & Willis, D. G. (2004). Descriptive Versus Interpretive Phenomenology: Their Contributions to Nursing Knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(5), 726-735.
- Marlia, F. A. A., Nur, S., & McDonald, D. (2023). EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety in Indonesian Senior High School Kecemasan Berbicara Siswa Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing di SMA di Indonesia. *Jurnal Bahasa dan Pembelajaran Bahasa*, 17(1), 71-81.
- Mohammadian, T. (2013). The effect of shyness on Iranian EFL Learners' Language Learning Motivation and Willingness to Communicate. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(11), 2036–2045.
- Oflaz, A. (2019). The Effects of Anxiety, Shyness and Language Learning Strategies on Speaking Skills and Academic Achievement. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 8(4), 999-1011.

Santos, J., & Barcelos, A. (2018). Não sei de onde vem essa timidez, talvez um medo de parecer ridículo: Um estudo sobre a timidez e a produção oral de alunos de inglês. *Revista Horizontes de Linguística*, 17(2), 15–38. <https://doi.org/10.26512/rhla.v17i2.22627>.

Santoso, I. B., & Prasetyo, S. (2024). Improving Students' Confidence in Speaking Skills Using Scripted Role Play at Yogyakarta Tourism Academy. *Ahmad Dahlan Journal of English Studies*, 11(1).

Sholikhah, M. A., & Isnaini, M. H. (2024). EFL Learners' Views on The Use of Code-Switching in Reducing Speaking Anxiety. *Voices of English Language Education Society*, 8(1), 115-127.

Tika, A. (2022). Improving The Students' Pronunciation Ability Through Drilling Technique. *INSPIRATION (Instructional Practices in Language Education)*, 1(1), 19-30.

Zhang, X. (2019). Foreign Language Anxiety and Foreign Language Performance: A Meta-Analysis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(4), 763-781.