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Creating Low-Anxiety EFL Speaking Classrooms through Fun Media: Insights from Indonesian Secondary Education

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Abstract

Speaking anxiety acts as a major affective obstacle for EFL learners, especially in junior high schools, restricting their active participation and oral communication development. This descriptive qualitative research was conducted at MTs Al-Ma'arif 1 Singosari, engaging 32 seventh graders and one English instructor as participants. Data collection encompassed classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, teaching material evaluation, and documentation of Food Festival activities utilizing Canva, Wordwall, peer discussions, and speaking exercises. The interactive analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña served as the analytical framework for interpreting the collected data. The results indicate that integrating fun media into EFL instruction fosters a more interactive and emotionally supportive atmosphere, effectively mitigating students' speaking anxiety. Integration of playful media in EFL lessons demonstrably lowers students' affective barriers. Learners became more willing to take risks, enriched their vocabulary, engaged more actively with classmates, and exhibited greater confidence in English communication. Furthermore, utilizing fun media transcends its conventional role as a teaching aid; it acts as psychological scaffolding that diminishes learners' apprehension during English speaking tasks.
Keywords: speaking anxiety, fun learning media, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking confidence, low-anxiety learning environment.

INTRODUCTION

The pervasive role of English in international diplomacy, commerce, and academia has elevated communicative competence from a mere academic goal to a necessary life skill for Indonesian learners. This is particularly relevant for students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), where they begin to engage with English through more structured classroom instruction and learning activities. This prioritization of speaking skills resonates with the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) a policy initiative formally introduced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2025 which underscores the importance of affective engagement and learner autonomy in madrasah

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instruction (Directorate of Madrasah Curriculum and Student Affairs, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025). Learners' proficiency in oral communication is widely regarded as a meaningful marker of both their linguistic ability and their self-assurance in conveying ideas within the context of English language learning. It also demonstrates their preparedness to interact and communicate in broader social and academic settings.

Nevertheless, speaking continues to pose a considerable challenge for secondary school students learning English in Indonesia. This challenge is closely associated with psychological factors, such as anxiety when speaking, concerns about negative responses from classmates, and limited self-confidence when communicating in English during classroom activities. Speaking anxiety is often manifested in a range of verbal and non-verbal indicators, such as reticence, disjointed speech, avoidance of eye contact, and overt physical symptoms such as trembling. This affective barrier is widely acknowledged for impeding oral proficiency in EFL settings (Khafidhoh et al., 2023; Fauzi & Asi, 2023). It frequently triggers adverse self-perceptions, heightens fear of peer or instructor judgment, and significantly lowers learners' willingness to communicate (Hidayati et al., 2022; Marpaung & Fithriani, 2023).

This difficulty is exacerbated by students' limited previous experience with English. At the elementary school level, the provision of English instruction has historically depended on individual school policies rather than being anchored in national curriculum requirements, with the consequence that many students entering junior high school with only rudimentary English proficiency (Salim & Hanif, 2021). When considered within the framework of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), such anxiety can be understood as an internal psychological barrier, commonly termed the affective filter, that obstructs the processing of target language input and suppresses learners' inclination to speak (Mulyono et al., 2019). Krashen contends that emotional factors hold considerable weight in the language acquisition process. When the affective filter is elevated typically as a result of anxiety or diminished self-confidence students tend to withdraw from speaking tasks, whereas a supportive learning atmosphere can help lower that filter, allowing students to feel more at ease and enabling more effective language acquisition.

This issue is exacerbated by the continuing predominance of teacher-centered and grammar-focused pedagogies, which consequently afford students minimal chances for oral production in a supportive, pressure-reduced setting (Mohammad et al., 2025). Comparable circumstances can be observed at MTs Al-Ma'arif 1 Singosari, wherein the prohibition on learners' personal devices means that LCD projectors and speakers remain the primary tools utilized for conducting lessons with the entire class (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025). The absence of innovative well-planed instructional strategies may cause speaking classes to become intimidating for students, ultimately increasing their anxiety when using English.

To address these pedagogical challenges, educators have increasingly integrated multimodal resources, including visual presentations, audiovisual materials, gamified platforms, and digital flashcards, into English language instruction to support learners' engagement and reduce affective barriers to oral production. Among the available digital resources, Canva presentations and Wordwall interactive flashcards offer complementary instructional affordances. Canva enables teachers to organize vocabulary and learning content through images, colours, illustrations, and visually structured slides, helping learners connect linguistic forms with contextual representations. Recent research by Anggraini and Maruf (2026), for example, demonstrates the potential of Canva-based multimodal materials to support vocabulary learning and student motivation in an Indonesian junior high school EFL context.

Wordwall, in contrast, provides interactive game-based activities, including digital flashcards, matching exercises, and vocabulary quizzes, which allow learners to practise and revisit language items in an engaging format. Previous research has reported positive student responses to Wordwall-supported vocabulary learning, particularly in terms of engagement and vocabulary recall (Ulya et al., 2025). These features suggest that Canva and Wordwall can serve complementary purposes in speaking instruction: Canva provides visual and contextual support for understanding vocabulary, whereas Wordwall offers opportunities for interactive practice and reinforcement before learners use the vocabulary in oral communication.

Empirical evidence also supports the broader use of interactive learning resources in EFL classrooms. Game-based learning activities have been associated with increased motivation and reduced apprehension about making mistakes (Hikmawan et al., 2023; Firmayanti et al., 2025). Similarly, gamified quiz applications can encourage learner involvement and classroom interaction (Sulaiman & Ramadhana, 2022; Temel & Cesur, 2024), while audiovisual materials can facilitate linguistic comprehension and generate positive affective responses during language activities (Menggo et al., 2022).

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Grounded in the Activity-Based Learning (ABL) framework, the purposeful integration of multimedia can transform conventional speaking exercises from rigid performance-oriented activities into interactive, communication-centred practices. In this study, the combination of Canva presentations and Wordwall interactive flashcards was intended to provide visual preparation and opportunities for vocabulary practice before students engaged in speaking tasks. Such sequencing allows learners to become more familiar with the language resources needed for oral communication and may help reduce the pressure associated with speaking without sufficient preparation. As a result, learners can shift some of their attention away from grammatical precision and toward the meaningful exchange of ideas (Kaplan & Gruber, 2023). This pedagogical approach also relates to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis: when learners participate in enjoyable and supportive activities, their anxiety may be reduced, potentially increasing their willingness to engage in communicative tasks.

Although previous studies have provided valuable insights into speaking anxiety and the use of digital learning media, several gaps remain. Previous research has largely focused on measurable learning outcomes, such as students' test performance and vocabulary knowledge (Ramadhani et al., 2025), providing less attention to learners' emotional experiences and perceptions during classroom activities. This gap is particularly relevant in madrasah tsanawiyah contexts, where institutional characteristics, limited access to personal digital devices, and the psychological dynamics of adolescent learners intersect (Saharani et al., 2022). Moreover, much of the existing research on speaking anxiety and digital learning media has focused on university and senior high school students, leaving younger EFL learners in madrasah settings relatively underexplored. In particular, limited attention has been given to how fun media, such as Canva presentations and Wordwall interactive flashcards, can be implemented as an instructional strategy to address speaking-related psychological barriers and how students perceive their contribution to a supportive and less intimidating speaking environment.

To address these gaps, the present study employs a qualitative descriptive design to examine the use of fun media in EFL speaking instruction at MTs Al-Ma'arif 1 Singosari. Specifically, it addresses two research questions: (1) How is fun media implemented to alleviate learners' psychological obstacles in EFL speaking? and (2) How do students perceive the use of fun media, particularly in terms of fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and less intimidating oral learning environment? The contribution of this study lies in examining both the instructional implementation of fun media and students' affective experiences, particularly in a madrasah context where learners have limited access to personal digital devices. By foregrounding students' voices and classroom experiences, this study is expected to provide insights into how accessible digital resources can be purposefully integrated into speaking instruction to support learners' psychological needs. This focus represents the novelty of the present study and provides insights into how emotionally supportive learning environments can be developed in EFL classrooms.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine how fun media was implemented to address students' psychological barriers in EFL speaking and how students perceived its use in creating a supportive speaking environment. This approach was selected because the study focused on students' experiences, emotions, and classroom interactions rather than measuring learning outcomes or establishing causal relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis served as the theoretical lens for interpreting students' experiences, particularly in relation to speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and willingness to participate in oral activities.

The study was conducted at MTs Al-Ma'arif 1 Singosari, an Islamic junior secondary school in Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The school was purposively selected because of its implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) and its restriction on students' personal smartphone use during school hours. Consequently, shared classroom facilities, including an LCD projector and speakers, were used to support digital learning activities. The participants consisted of 32 seventh-grade students (aged 12–13) from Class VII-D, comprising male and female students, and one English teacher. The class was purposively selected following preliminary observations and discussions with the teacher, which indicated that students experienced difficulties in oral English production, particularly limited vocabulary, low speaking confidence, and reluctance to participate in speaking activities. For the interview stage, two students representing different levels of speaking confidence and classroom participation were purposively selected, together with the English teacher. The researchers served as the primary instruments and

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were responsible for collecting, documenting, and interpreting the data.

Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The data collection process involved three stages. First, pre-implementation interviews were conducted individually with the English teacher and the selected students to explore students' speaking difficulties, psychological barriers, and previous experiences of learning English. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian, lasted approximately 5–11 minutes, and were audio-recorded and transcribed. Second, classroom observation was conducted during an approximately 50-minute English lesson involving all 32 students. The researchers adopted a non-participant observation approach, using an observation checklist and field notes to document students' participation, peer interactions, engagement, and observable signs of speaking anxiety. The instructional activities were organized around a Food Festival theme and incorporated Canva-designed visual presentations, Wordwall interactive flashcards, vocabulary games, peer interaction, and collaborative speaking tasks. These activities were delivered using shared classroom facilities, including an LCD projector and speakers, without requiring students to use personal devices. Third, post-implementation interviews were conducted with the same interview participants to explore their experiences and perceptions of the activities, particularly regarding their speaking confidence, participation, and responses to the learning environment. Relevant instructional materials and classroom documents were also collected to provide additional context for interpreting the findings.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents were reviewed and coded to identify information related to the research questions. Similar codes were then grouped into categories and broader themes concerning the implementation of fun media, students' psychological barriers, classroom participation, and students' perceptions of the speaking environment. The findings were presented descriptively and supported by relevant interview excerpts and observational evidence. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed by comparing evidence from classroom observations, interviews, and instructional documents. Member checking was also conducted by sharing interview summaries with the teacher and student participants to confirm the accuracy of the recorded information and clarify any potential misunderstandings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Implementation of Fun Media to Address Students' Psychological Barriers in EFL Speaking

The findings indicate that fun media, particularly Canva presentations and Wordwall interactive flashcards, were integrated into speaking instruction through a Food Festival theme. The learning activities combined visual presentations, vocabulary practice, interactive games, and collaborative speaking tasks. Data from classroom observations and pre-implementation interviews revealed that students experienced several psychological barriers to speaking English, particularly limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence. The implementation of fun media provided opportunities to address these challenges by offering visual support, interactive vocabulary practice, and collaborative learning experiences.

Table 1.
Triangulated Findings from Interviews and Classroom Observation

Data Source	Triangulated Findings from Interviews and Classroom Observation	
	Aspect Observed	**Key Findings**
Pre-Implementation Interview	Students' initial speaking anxiety	Before the implementation of fun media, students commonly experienced anxiety when speaking English to limited vocabulary, fear of making errors, and a lack confidence.
Classroom Observation	Participation	During the learning activities, students became more involved in classroom interactions and participated more actively in speaking tasks.
Classroom Observation	Vocabulary Learning	The use of Canva and Wordwall helped students remember and understanding vocabulary more easily during the learning process.
Post-Implementation Interview	Confidence	After participating in the activities, students reported feeling more

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		confident when expressing their ideas in English.
Post-Implementation Interview	Learning Experience	Students described the learning activities as enjoyable and stated that they felt more relaxed and less anxious while speaking English.

4.1.1. Addressing Speaking Anxiety through Visual and Interactive Media

The pre-implementation interviews revealed that students experienced anxiety when they were asked to speak English in front of their classmates. Their anxiety was associated with limited vocabulary, uncertainty about pronunciation, and fear of negative evaluation. These difficulties appeared to make some students reluctant to participate in oral activities. One student described this experience:

> "*I often feel nervous and afraid of making mistakes when I'm asked to speak English in class. I'm afraid my classmates will laugh at me if I say something wrong, because I'm also unsure of what to say since my vocabulary is still limited.*" (*P1, April 30, 2026).*

The use of visual and interactive materials appeared to provide students with additional support when approaching speaking tasks. Rather than relying entirely on their existing vocabulary knowledge, students could refer to visual prompts and previously practised words. Wordwall activities also offered a more interactive way to engage with vocabulary before using it in oral activities. These observations suggest that fun media provided a more approachable starting point for students who felt uncertain about speaking English.

This finding can be interpreted through Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of affective factors, including anxiety and confidence, in language learning. When students experience a more comfortable learning environment, emotional barriers may become less restrictive. In this study, Canva and Wordwall appeared to support such an environment by combining visual assistance and interactive practice. This interpretation is consistent with Hidayati et al. (2022) and Marpaung and Fithriani (2023), who identify limited vocabulary and fear of negative evaluation as factors associated with speaking anxiety among EFL learners.

Furthermore, the participating educators observed that a significant proportion of learners transition into junior high school possessing minimal foundational exposure to the English language. This lack of foundational language input frequently undermines their self-confidence, affecting not only their participation in speaking drills but also their broader engagement in classroom activities. These classroom-based observations are consistent with earlier empirical studies by Hidayati et al. (2022) and Marpaung and Fithriani (2023), which similarly identify that speaking anxiety is often driven by insufficient vocabulary mastery and persistent concerns about receiving negative evaluations from peers.

During the implementation phase, the learning materials were embedded within a Food Festival thematic framework, combining Canva-generated slides with interactive Wordwall flashcards. Classroom observations revealed clear improvements in student participation during the lesson. Students who had initially appeared withdrawn and reluctant became increasingly active, readily offering answers, joining classroom exchanges, and engaging constructively alongside their peers. Moreover, the visual and audiovisual materials played an instrumental role in advancing lexical proficiency, as they contextualized the input and provided multiple sensory cues that strengthened the learners' ability to recall newly introduced vocabulary. In addition, Wordwall's interactive and game-like activities contributed to a more enjoyable classroom environment. Instead of feeling anxious about making mistakes, students appeared more focused on completing tasks and participating actively in the lesson. These observations indicates that enjoyable and interactive media can encourage greater involvement and create positive learning experiences for students. This positive learning experience was reflected in the following statement from one of the student:

> *"Learning with the Wordwall game was really fun; it made me feel less nervous or afraid when I tried to speak English. Since we played together as a class, I felt more relaxed and wasn't shy." (P2, April 30, 2026).*

These findings align with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggesting that effective language acquisition occurs when learners experience minimal psychological distress and anxiety. The combined use of Canva and Wordwall fostered a learning atmosphere that was both engaging and psychologically comfortable, which presumably reduced the learners' affective barriers and subsequently improved their absorption of new linguistic input. As their anxiety decreased, students became more relaxed to participate in classroom interactions and practice English orally. Classroom observations also revealed increased participation, with students responding more voluntarily to questions and showing enthusiasm through their active involvement.

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These changes indicate that fun media helped reduce emotional barriers and promoted more positive engagement in learning.

In addition, classroom observations indicated that collaborative learning activities contributed to reducing students' speaking anxiety. Before presenting their ideas, students were encouraged to work in peers and share responsibility during the learning process. This approach significantly reduced the anxiety associated with speaking individually in front of the class, thereby enhancing learners' willingness to participate in speaking tasks. These findings align with Meilasari et al. (2023), who assert that group-based instruction creates a supportive classroom environment that alleviates speaking anxiety and fosters learner confidence. Similarly, Lestari et al. (2023) demonstrated that collaborative and engaging activities help students cope with speaking anxiety more effectively. Overall, the results suggest that engaging media serves a dual function, acting not only as pedagogical tools but also as psychosocial support mechanisms that reduce affective barriers. This dual role is particularly significant in Islamic secondary schools, where digital resources and smartphone usage are often limited.

4.1.2. Supporting Vocabulary Recall and Oral Participation

The positive influence of fun media was further supported by the results of the post-implementation interviews. Students consistently expressed that they felt more comfortable and self-assured when participating in English speaking activities after the intervention. According to the students' accounts, the Canva-based visual materials significantly enhanced their ability to both grasp and commit new lexical items to memory. while the ongoing practice provided by Wordwall helped reinforce both word retention and correct pronunciation. These advantages, in turn, made speaking feel more positive and encouraged them to become more actively involved in class conversations. As one student stated:

> *"The images on Canva and the cards on Wordwall really helped me remember the meanings of the words. I usually forget new vocabulary quickly, but because it was fun and there were pictures, I immediately remembered how to use them when forming sentences." (P3, April 30, 2026).*

Data gathered from the interviews revealed that a number of students demonstrated the capacity to retrieve around five to seven newly introduced words and incorporate them into basic English utterances. These outcomes corroborate the findings of Menggo et al. (2022) and Sarmud et al. (2023), who demonstrated that integrating multimodal and audiovisual materials significantly improves lexical retention and deepens linguistic comprehension in EFL contexts.

The observed improvements in lexical retention are likely driven by the fundamental principles of multimodal instructional design implemented in this study. By incorporating visual materials, auditory pronunciation cues, and interactive exercises, the learning experience engaged students through multiple sensory channels, which in turn reinforced their ability to retain and recall new vocabulary. As a result, students had more opportunities to process, understand, and remember new vocabulary items in a meaningful way. These results align with prior research by Menggo et al. (2022) and Sarmud et al. (2023), which demonstrated that audiovisual media significantly enhance language comprehension and vocabulary retention. Notably, the current study extends these findings by showing that such pedagogical benefits are achievable even without students' personal mobile devices. By utilizing standard classroom technology, such as projectors and speakers, educators can foster interactive learning environments that support language acquisition without placing extra technological burdens on learners. This indicates that effective technology-assisted learning is possible even in educational settings where access to individual digital devices is limited.

4.1.3. Promoting Collaborative and Less Intimidating Speaking Activities

An equally consequential observation of the study was the notable gain in students' perceived confidence, particularly in relation to their oral performance in English. Prior to the implementation of fun media, many students views speaking activities as challenging and intimidating. They often felt embarrassed about making mistakes and worried about failing when speaking in front of others. After the intervention concluded, participants reported a marked increase in both their comfort levels and their self-confidence in formulating and conveying their thoughts through simple English expressions. This marked enhancement in self-assurance finds explicit expression in the following excerpt from a participant's narrative:

> *"Earlier, when I stepped up to the front to read the sentence, I felt more confident because I had already learned the vocabulary in the Wordwall game, so I knew how to read it." (P1, April 30, 2026).*

These observed improvements suggest that the benefits of fun media extend beyond language

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development alone; they also contribute meaningfully to strengthening students' sense of self-efficacy. As students repeatedly experienced success in carrying out speaking tasks, their confidence increased over time, enabling them to approach English speaking activities with a more positive attitude and greater self-assurance. This pattern reinforces Kaplan and Gruber's (2023) assertion that enjoyable pedagogical activities drive learners to assume communicative risks and interact more proactively during language instruction.

The present findings draw attention to the importance of pedagogical planning, especially within learning environments characterized by limited technical infrastructure. In contrast to previous studies often conducted in technologically well-equipped schools, this research was carried out at a junior high school where students are prohibited from using mobile devices during lessons. Despite these limitations, the teacher effectively utilized available classroom technology, including LCD projectors and speakers, to create a participatory, engaging, and psychologically supportive learning environment. Overall, these findings indicate that effective speaking instruction does not depend exclusively on advanced technology, but rather on the purposeful use of accessible resources. Rather, it relies on how teachers design learning activities that address students' communicative needs while also supporting their emotional well-being throughout the learning process.

4.2. Students' Perceptions of Fun Media as an Instructional Strategy

The second research question focused on students' perceptions of fun media as an instructional strategy, particularly its contribution to an inclusive, supportive, and less intimidating environment for speaking English. The post-implementation interviews indicated that students described the learning activities positively. Their responses focused on enjoyment, feeling more relaxed, remembering vocabulary, and becoming more comfortable when participating in speaking activities.

4.2.1. Enjoyment and Positive Learning Experiences

Students described the use of Wordwall as an enjoyable part of the speaking lesson. The game-like activities appeared to make vocabulary practice more interesting and provided an alternative to conventional classroom exercises. One student expressed this perception:

> "*The images on Canva and the cards on Wordwall really helped me remember the meanings of the words. I usually forget new vocabulary quickly, but because it was fun and there were pictures, I immediately remembered how to* use them when forming sentences *(Student participant, post-implementation interview, personal communication, April 30, 2026)*).

This response suggests that students appreciated the combination of visual and interactive features in the learning activities. Rather than experiencing vocabulary practice as a routine memorisation task, the student perceived the use of pictures and digital flashcards as an enjoyable way to encounter and recall new words. Such experiences indicate that fun media can contribute to a more engaging learning atmosphere and support students' involvement in speaking activities.

This finding can be interpreted through Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that affective factors, such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence, may influence learners' engagement with language input. In this study, students' positive responses to Canva and Wordwall indicate that the combination of visual support and interactive activities contributed to a more enjoyable learning experience, making vocabulary practice feel less repetitive and more engaging. This interpretation is consistent with Kaplan and Gruber (2023), who highlight the role of enjoyable learning experiences in encouraging learners' participation and willingness to engage in classroom activities. It also resonates with research on digital technology integration in EFL contexts, particularly Mubarok et al. (2025), which examines students' perspectives on using Discord in a critical listening course, and Lestari et al. (2024), which discusses lecturers' perspectives on incorporating digital tools into higher education pedagogy. Although these studies involve different instructional contexts and language skills, they provide a broader perspective on how digital technologies can be incorporated into language learning experiences. Taken together, the present findings suggest that the enjoyable features of Canva and Wordwall may support students' positive perceptions of speaking instruction by combining visual scaffolding, interactive practice, and opportunities for participation. Nevertheless, these findings represent students' reported experiences rather than evidence that the media independently caused a reduction in speaking anxiety.

4.2.2. Perceived Confidence and Willingness to Participate

Students also reported feeling more confident when participating in speaking activities after using the visual and interactive materials. Their accounts suggested that prior vocabulary practice helped them feel better

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prepared to produce simple English expressions. One student explained:

> "*Earlier, when I stepped up to the front to read the sentence, I felt more confident because I had already learned the vocabulary in the Wordwall game, so I knew how to read it." (Student participant, post-implementation interview, April 30, 2026*).

This response suggests that students perceived vocabulary preparation through Wordwall as useful when approaching an oral task. Knowing some of the words beforehand appeared to make the speaking activity feel more manageable. This perception is also reflected in classroom observations, which indicated that students responded to questions, joined classroom exchanges, and participated in speaking tasks.

The relationship between preparation and perceived confidence is important in this context. Students who were uncertain about vocabulary or pronunciation may have found it difficult to begin speaking. By providing opportunities to encounter and practise vocabulary before oral production, fun media appeared to offer support for their participation. This finding is consistent with Kaplan and Gruber (2023), who emphasize the potential of enjoyable instructional activities to encourage learners to participate and take communicative risks.

4.2.3. A Supportive and Less Intimidating Speaking Environment

Students' accounts and classroom observations also pointed to the importance of a supportive classroom atmosphere. The use of visual prompts, interactive games, and collaborative activities provided different ways for students to engage with the lesson. Students could practise vocabulary through Wordwall, use Canva materials as visual references, and work with peers before participating in speaking tasks.

The post-implementation interviews indicated that students felt more relaxed and less shy during the activities. These perceptions were supported by classroom observations showing students' involvement in answering questions and participating in classroom interactions. Together, the findings suggest that the instructional strategy offered a learning environment in which students had opportunities to prepare, practise, and participate with support from the learning materials and their classmates.

The supportive nature of this environment is particularly relevant to the study context. The research was conducted in a junior secondary madrasah where students were not permitted to use personal mobile devices during lessons. Nevertheless, the teacher used available classroom technology, including an LCD projector and speakers, to deliver Canva presentations and Wordwall activities. The findings therefore suggest that creating an engaging and supportive speaking environment does not necessarily depend on every student having an individual digital device. Rather, the way teachers organize media, interaction, and speaking tasks is also important.

The post-implementation interviews indicated that students felt more relaxed and less shy during the activities. These perceptions were consistent with classroom observations showing students' involvement in answering questions and participating in classroom interactions. This finding can be interpreted through Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of affective conditions, particularly anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence, in second language acquisition. When learners perceive the classroom as less threatening, they may become more willing to engage with language input and participate in communicative activities. In this respect, the combination of visual references, interactive practice, and peer support appeared to provide a learning context in which students could participate with greater comfort.

The present findings are also consistent with recent research on supportive speaking instruction. Particularly relevant is Masnuna et al. (2026) found that students perceived interactive speaking cards as enjoyable and useful, with reported benefits for participation, motivation, and confidence in expressing opinions. Similarly, Fuadi (2026), in a multiple-case study of junior high school teachers, identified scaffolding, collaborative learning, supportive feedback, motivational support, and classroom atmosphere management as important strategies for addressing students' speaking anxiety. These findings reinforce the importance of combining instructional preparation with emotional and interpersonal support when organizing speaking activities. The role of collaboration is further supported by Bozkurt and Aydin (2023), whose study examined collaborative learning and speaking anxiety in online and face-to-face environments. Their findings indicated changes in speaking anxiety following collaborative instruction in face-to-face settings, highlighting the relevance of peer interaction in speaking instruction. In a related study, Zhao et al. (2024) found that a virtual reality-supported collaborative design-assessing activity encouraged collaboration and motivation while reducing English learning anxiety among Chinese seventh-grade students. Although their technological intervention differed from the Canva and Wordwall activities used in

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the present study, both studies point to the value of combining structured speaking opportunities with collaborative participation. Meyer and Patty (2024) also reported that students perceived vlog-based learning as a supportive and self-directed environment in which they could work on their speaking anxiety. Chen (2024), meanwhile, demonstrated the potential of technology-enhanced language learning to provide more opportunities for practice and interaction while addressing public speaking anxiety. Taken together, these studies suggest that supportive speaking environments can be developed through different combinations of instructional scaffolding, peer interaction, and technology-mediated practice.

The supportive nature of the learning environment is particularly meaningful in the context of the present study. The research was conducted in a junior secondary madrasah where students were not permitted to use personal mobile devices during lessons. Nevertheless, the teacher utilized available classroom technology, including an LCD projector and speakers, to present Canva materials and facilitate Wordwall activities. This arrangement indicates that the provision of engaging digital learning experiences does not necessarily require every student to have an individual device. Instead, teachers can organize shared access to digital media and integrate it with peer interaction and guided speaking tasks. In this regard, the pedagogical organization of technology may be as important as the availability of individual devices.

Overall, the findings suggest that fun media, when integrated with visual scaffolding, interactive vocabulary practice, and collaborative speaking tasks, can contribute to students' perceptions of a more supportive and less intimidating speaking environment. The contribution of these media lies not simply in making classroom activities entertaining but also in providing accessible resources and structured opportunities through which students can prepare and participate. Nevertheless, the findings represent students' reported experiences and observed classroom interactions in one instructional context; they should not be interpreted as evidence that fun media alone caused a reduction in speaking anxiety or generalized to all EFL settings.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated the function of engaging media in reducing students' psychological obstacles during EFL speaking tasks and analyzed their affective and behavioral responses to its application at MTs Al-Ma'arif 1 Singosari. The results revealed that utilizing Canva-based visual aids and Wordwall interactive flashcards contributed to creating a more interactive, collaborative, and emotionally supportive learning environment. The implementation of these tools was linked to reduced speaking anxiety, improved vocabulary retention, increased classroom participation, and greater confidence in speaking English.

These outcomes suggest that fun media serves a dual function not merely as a pedagogical instrument but also as an affective scaffold that supports language acquisition. By diminishing emotional impediments, fun media fosters a greater inclination to communicate and cultivates positive affective experiences within EFL instructional settings. Nonetheless, the study is constrained by its single-classroom focus and its predominantly qualitative design. Future inquiries might extend the present work by incorporating more heterogeneous samples, examining different institutional settings, and integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Such efforts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how engaging media can be applied to decrease speaking anxiety and promote long-term improvements in students' spoken language proficiency.

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