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Şeyma Yanık, Department of Foreign Languages Education, Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul, Türkiye, seymayanik483@outlook.com
Burcu Ünal, Department of Foreign Languages Education, Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul, Türkiye, bvarol@yildiz.edu.tr

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Şeyma Yanık[1], Burcu Ünal [2]

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ABSTRACT

English holds a foreign language status in Türkiye, yet proficiency levels remain quite low despite years of formal instruction. In order to better understand this situation, the current study investigated the speaking performance levels of the 7th and 8th grade students, and examined the effects of EFL speaking self-efficacy, speaking anxiety, school type, and out-of-school language practice on speaking performance. The data analysis revealed that while 7th graders met the expected speaking proficiency level, 8th graders fell short of the target level. Additionally, it was found that anxious students tended to have lower speaking self-efficacy. Structural equation modeling showed that while self-efficacy strongly predicted speaking performance, anxiety did not emerge to be a significant contributor. Lastly, private school students demonstrated higher speaking proficiency than public school students, while those who practiced English outside school showed better speaking skills than their peers who did not. These findings suggest the need for policy adjustments that prioritize speaking skills development by fostering supportive learning environments and expanding access to extracurricular language activities that enhance self-efficacy and reduce anxiety.

[1]Department of Foreign Languages Education, Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul, Türkiye, seymayanik483@outlook.com

[2] Department of Foreign Languages Education, Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul, Türkiye, bvarol@yildiz.edu.tr, +902123835563

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Speaking a foreign language, particularly English, holds great significance in terms of both education and career prospects (Malokani et al., 2023). The competence to communicate in a foreign language is considered a valuable asset when applying to academic institutions or seeking employment as it facilitates the expansion of one's communication network and enables more effective communication with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Spoken mostly by non-native speakers in the world (Ling & Braine, 2007), English is considered as lingua franca, which means the common language spoken by people whose mother tongue is different (Seidlhofer, 2005). Therefore, knowing English can provide individuals with greater opportunities to communicate with a wider audience and transfer information more effectively, particularly in the realms of education and business.

To identify and standardize the level of language in the face of the growing interest in learning English, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was issued by the Council of Europe (CoE), and led many countries - including Türkiye- to design an appropriate education program considering language levels. "CEFR aims to:

•promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries;

•provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications;

•assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts (CoE, 2001, p. 5)".

CEFR explains the oral production outcome of A1 level learners as "can produce simple, mainly isolated phrases about people and places" (CoE, 2001, p. 62) and an A2 level learner as "can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list" (CoE, 2001, p. 62). Based on these purposes, Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) periodically updates and publishes the English curriculum to align with the aims of the education, content of the program, suggestions for syllabus implication and expected outcomes of national education. The curricula for 7th and 8th grades were updated in 2006, 2011,2013 and finally in 2018 (MoNE, 2018; Yücel et al., 2017) to place a stronger emphasis on students' applying their knowledge in real-world situations in order to achieve fluency, proficiency, and long-term language acquisition (CoE, 2001 as cited in MoNE, 2018).

Foreign language speaking instruction can be very challenging, particularly in solely school-based settings. Effective language acquisition requires exposure to the target language as much as possible, and this requires the implementation of different learning methods. Nevertheless, teachers often struggle in adapting successful strategies and keep following traditional methods, particularly those which include memorization and drills, even though they allegedly support the constructivist ideas (Zhang & Liu, 2014). Haznedar (2010) pointed out that teachers in Türkiye use traditional methods to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) although they are aware of modern methods. There still exists a notable paucity in the discernible shifts towards the adoption of modern and communicatively oriented methodologies This scarcity implies a persistent reluctance or resistance to fully integrate educational practices aimed at enhancing language learning outcomes. Repeatedly, teachers were found to be using mostly memorization-oriented in class practices ignoring speaking activities (Kaya, 2019). This reluctance to adopt conducive practices might be stemming from their belief that the English language teaching curriculum is inadequate in terms of supporting students' speaking skills (Ocak et al., 2013). Limited lecture hours and overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for students to practice their speaking abilities. Students, on the other hand, attribute their failure to learn English to insufficient exposure to the language both at school and outside of it (Bodur & Arikan, 2017). Apart from insufficient exposure to target language, the reasons why Turkish learners fail to achieve high levels of proficiency in English are listed as socioeconomic status of the family, crowded classrooms, absence of language laboratories, teachers' avoidance of using target language and audio-visual materials, inadequate

class hours and unclear objectives in education program in Aküzel's study (2006).

Not only the socioeconomic factors but also psychological contributors have consistently been found to be influential on foreign language speaking ability. Self-efficacy, belief in one's ability to successfully achieve specific tasks or attain goals, has been shown to be related to participation in speaking activities in class (Zhang et al., 2020), overcome challenges (Chen, 2020), and excel in speaking the foreign language (Harris, 2022; Kusuma & Adamson, 2020). Anxiety, one of the primary psychological reasons why students struggle with speaking English, have demonstrated strong effect specifically as a barrier to speaking performance (He, 2013; Horwitz,2001). The objectives of speaking skills are reflected in the National Education curriculum according to the criteria of CEFR (CoE, 2001), and oral language abilities are taught in accordance with these objectives. Yet, both students and teachers sense the gap between the desired level and actual performance. Bearing in mind the impact of the various psychological or environmental factors, this study strives to explore EFL speaking proficiency levels of Turkish middle school students and the underlying factors affecting them.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Self-efficacy in Speaking English

Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their own ability to complete a task (Bandura, 1985). Parallel to Bandura's definition, Huang and Chang (1996) define self-efficacy expectations as beliefs regarding one's capacity to carry out a specific action or behavior successfully and emphasize the importance of self-efficacy on learning. Across studies conducted in second/foreign language settings, self-efficacy has been consistently found to be related to performance in language skills (Graham, 2007; Tılfarlıoğlu & Çiftçi, 2011; Zadorozhnyy & Lee, 2023) or use of learning strategies (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Su & Duo, 2012) or anxiety levels (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Mills et al., 2006; Özer & İşpınar-Akçayoğlu, 2021).

Bandura (1982) mentions four main ways to attain self-efficacy. Enactive attainments represent the actual achievements an individual experienced and these achievements help increase self-efficacy. Failure, on the other hand, lowers the self-efficacy level. Vicarious experiences represent the observation of the others achieving a task and developing self-efficacy. It is putting oneself in the shoes of others and determining the level of self-efficacy with their success or failure, basically developing self-efficacy through empathy. Verbal persuasion refers to being encouraged to develop self-efficacy by being told that they can succeed. Psychological state refers to the effect of an individual's fear and hesitation level on their self-efficacy. A challenging task or a situation may cause an individual to fail developing self-efficacy for the certain task (Bandura, 1982; 1985).

It has been observed that one's level of self-efficacy can be positively influenced through language practice. In fact, various studies have demonstrated that when individuals are given opportunities to engage in a speaking activity, they are likely to develop a greater sense of self-efficacy, which can ultimately lead to improved performance. Demirel et al.'s (2019) study with 843 university students showed that students who gave more speeches in the past have significantly higher speaking self-efficacy beliefs compared to those who gave fewer or no speeches. Similarly, according to a study by Leeming (2017), university students' self-efficacy level and ability in speaking increased after a year-long training in a course focused on oral English ability. The study suggests that the opportunity to practice speaking English helped the students develop their conversational skills, which in turn led to greater self-confidence when speaking the language. Moreover, providing individuals with the opportunity to practice a particular skill can not only enhance their skills, but also increase their confidence in their ability to perform that skill. Self-efficacy has also been shown to be related to language learning beliefs (Genç et al., 2016) whereby more self-efficacious students tend to demonstrate more willingness to practice English with native speakers. Similarly, Seraoui's (2016) study with 151 university students in ELT

department showed that self-efficacy motivates students to speak English and attend the classes more actively. Also, it is claimed that self-efficacy is a motivator for students to try harder to be successful. Additionally, research has found that self-efficacy beliefs fully mediated the relationship between informal digital learning and willingness to communicate in English (Zadorozhnyy & Lee, 2023). This indicates that EFL students who engage more often in informal digital learning activities develop greater confidence in their ability to carry out various tasks in English, resulting in an increased willingness to communicate. In the light of these studies, it can be deduced that self-efficacy is seen as more like a source of motivation than the direct source of success and merits exploration as to its contributions to speaking ability.

2.2. EFL Speaking Anxiety

A threatening situation that causes damage and fear on an individual's personality is called anxiety (May, 1977). Horwitz (1986) showed the effect of anxiety on language performance by developing a foreign language classroom anxiety scale. Foreign language anxiety is explained by Horwitz et al. (1986) as "a distinct complex set of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p.128).

In today's world, it is almost impossible to overlook the effect of anxiety on our lives. Especially when learning a new language, anxiety can interfere with students' willingness to learn and their success. Previous studies have emphasized the negative effect of anxiety on students during their language learning process (Al-Shboul et al., 2013; Horwitz, 2001; Tsang, 2022). Liu and Xiangming's (2019) study, for instance, found that students' achievement anxiety and English classroom anxiety predicted language achievement, especially speaking performance. According to Woodrow (2006), both in-class and out-of-class anxiety has a significantly negative effect on speaking performance. Although Phillips (1992) reported a negative (but non-significant) correlation between anxiety and oral language performance, the extended replica study conducted by Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) brought more striking results showing the significant effect of anxiety on speaking performance. Similarly, research on self-perceived pronunciation revealed varying degrees of negative correlations with anxiety. Notably, when analyzed by proficiency levels, voicing of consonants showed a moderate negative correlation with anxiety in the high-proficiency group, while overall pronunciation of consonants demonstrated a similar correlation in the intermediate-proficiency group (Tsang, 2022).

There are various factors leading students to have speaking anxiety. One of the major contributing factors to students' speaking anxiety is lack of preparation before speaking. Students tend to feel uncomfortable when they are forced to speak spontaneously (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). Especially unfamiliar topics make students even more anxious when they already lack fluency in foreign language speaking (He, 2013). According to Yalcin and Incecay (2014), when students are familiar with the activities, they feel less anxious so they speak more fluently. Also, success seems to have a strong influence on anxiety; as students succeed in tasks, they get more comfortable while speaking.

Anxiety not only affects oral performance directly, but also has a strong effect on the willingness to perform oral skills. Former studies showed that anxious students tend to repress their real performance of speaking and find themselves feeling more inadequate compared to relaxed students (Liu, 2007). The more anxious students feel, the more they are likely to avoid speaking. In other words, anxiety inhibits students to practice oral skills by taking away their courage to speak. Szyszka's (2011) study demonstrates that EFL students with higher levels of language anxiety perceive themselves as less competent in pronunciation, potentially leading to reluctance to speak. Anxiety is also related to the demands and expectations within the language learning context but can be shaped by learners' self-regulation strategies. These strategies are reflected in their consistent promotion-focused mindset and their L2-specific ideal self or personal aspirations (Jiang & Papi, 2022).

Studies have also shown that there is a reciprocal relationship between anxiety and one's self-efficacy in speaking (Vural, 2019) suggesting that high levels of speaking anxiety coupled with diminished self-efficacy leading to heightened foreign language anxiety. As such, a negative correlation was found between EFL anxiety and EFL self-efficacy in Kutuk et al.'s (2022) study for both male and female participants although correlations for male participants were a little higher. It is concluded that there is a positive correlation between EFL self-efficacy and EFL attainment while there is a negative correlation between EFL anxiety and EFL attainment. While anxiety was found to be related to reluctance to communicate in some studies (Liu & Jackson, 2008), a significant relationship between anxiety and self-efficacy was absent in some others (Çubukçu, 2008; Luo, 2014). Some studies have found that elevated anxiety levels had minimal impact on students' English language proficiency (Zhou & Lochtman, 2023). Nevertheless, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds tended to experience higher levels of anxiety (Serquina & Batang, 2018).

2.3. Socioeconomic Factors and Speaking performance

Socioeconomic background of students is one of the most important factors related to language performance, especially speaking. Some of the key socioeconomic factors in education include family income, parental education level, and the characteristics of the neighborhood and community. In Chile, students with low socioeconomic background were found to be less motivated and have less self-efficacy in English compared to their peers with high socioeconomic background (Kormos & Kiddle, 2013). This might explain the difference in success between students with low and high socioeconomic backgrounds in terms of language learning. The type of school attended which is in the focus of this study, is another environmental/external factor deeply influencing individuals' learning. Research indicates that students in private schools have more advantages than those in public schools, particularly in areas such as foreign language education (Ephraim, 2021). Kim's (2012) study in South Korea concluded that high school students attending private schools were more successful in foreign language learning than public high school students. Likewise, Thapa's (2015) research conducted in Nepal revealed that students in private schools outperformed their peers in public schools in the School Leaving Certificate examination. In South Africa, Vukosi et al. (2021) also demonstrated a significant gap in English speaking ability among 12th grade students enrolled in private and public schools. Dewaele's (2002) study with L2 French and L3 English students also showed that social class and communication anxiety negatively and significantly correlated with their L2 (French).

In different parts of the world, different results emerged as to the effects of socioeconomic factors. For instance, De Fraine et al.'s (2003) study with 2569 secondary school students in Belgium showed that public schools are slightly more successful than private schools in terms of language achievement; also, classroom and teacher are effective elements on students' language achievement. Mancebón et al. (2017) analyzed the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results of 19.604 9th graders from 682 schools in Spain. It was concluded that public school students outperformed publicly subsidized private school students in general and what effects achievement the most is the unique characteristic of the schools rather than being public or private. This suggests that other, more significant factors, such as socioeconomic and cultural background, educational resources, and the conditions of both schools and countries, played a greater role in affecting student achievement.

In Türkiye, private and public schools significantly diverge in terms of student population per class, teaching environment, available materials, and supplementary courses, particularly with regard to foreign language education. In private schools, students have more English class hours, benefiting from the language laboratories more sufficiently and are better guided by the counselling services in accordance with their tendencies (Gürler, 2020). Turkish Economy Politics Research Foundation (2014) showed that parents' income can indirectly affect students' success in English

through the type of school they can afford and the opportunities available, such as access to various materials and tutoring, which in turn increases students' interest in learning English. The low income of more than half of the 1394 participants in the study might explain the low English ability portrayed in the study clearly.

As observed in the studies, the difference between private and public schools do not solely depend on students' socio-economic background; rather, it is influenced by the socio-economic status of the country. Furthermore, students' achievement generally does not differ according to school type in developed and wealthy countries. Based on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rates of various countries, it is evident that countries like the United States, Belgium, and Spain have higher incomes than Türkiye (European Commission, IMF, OECD, UN, & World Bank [SNA], 2009). So, it can be said that the higher the welfare level of a country, the more equal the education between private and public schools becomes. Türkiye ranks 64th on the list of English language ability (SNA, 2009), which is considered as a low level and only % 18.2 of the population knows at least one foreign language in Türkiye.

Findings from research clearly demonstrate that one's socioeconomic status can affect psychological aspects such as self-efficacy (Kormos & Kiddle, 2013) and the level of anxiety experienced in social situations (Serquina & Batang, 2018), both of which are linked to speaking performance. Therefore, it is essential to consider both psychological and socioeconomic factors when analyzing English speaking abilities and the variables affecting them. This study aims to investigate students' oral performance outcomes in light of MoNE's expected outcomes and the potential factors that affect these results. These factors include, psychological constructs which are English speaking anxiety and speaking self- efficacy, and external/socioeconomic domains like school type (public and private schools) and students' outside the school English practice hours. Also, the relationship between English-speaking anxiety and English-speaking self-efficacy and the predictive values of these factors on speaking performance are discussed. In line with these aims, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1- What is the level of students' English speaking performance in relation to MoNE's expected speaking outcomes?

2- Do external factors such as school type (public vs. private) and time spent practicing English outside of school affect students' English speaking performance?

3- What is the relationship between students' English-speaking anxiety, speaking self-efficacy and, their speaking performance?

4- To what extent do students' levels of English-speaking anxiety and speaking self-efficacy predict their English speaking performance?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Structural equation model which is a form of quantitative research design was used in the current study in order to examine the research questions. Figure 1 demonstrates the SEM model tested in this study investigating the effect of English-speaking self-efficacy and English-speaking anxiety on speaking performance. In order to offer a fuller image of the overall model, SEM enables complex variable interactions to be stated through hierarchical or non-hierarchical, recursive or non-recursive structural equations (Gefen et al., 2000)

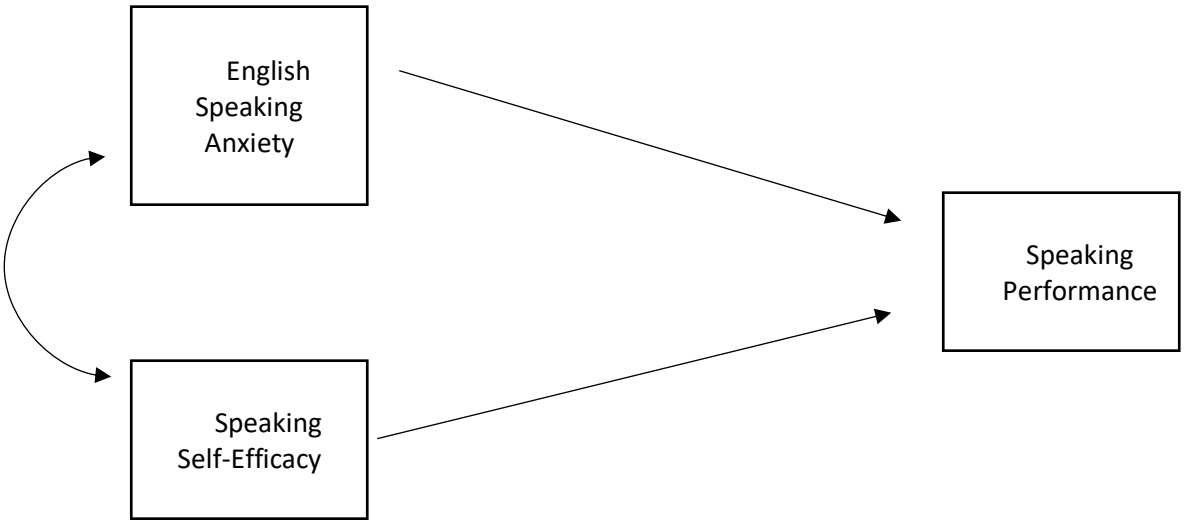

Figure 1
SEM model tested in the study

3.2. Participants and Setting

Data were initially gathered from 176 students; however, two participants' data were excluded due to conflicting responses, and an additional two were omitted due to technical issues during the speaking test, rendering scoring impossible. Consequently, a total of 172 students participated in the study.

Seventh and eighth-grade students were recruited from randomly selected public and private schools in the eastern region of Türkiye, where administrative permission was granted. Detailed demographic information of participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of The Participants

	Groups	Secondary Groups	N	%
Grade and School Type	7th Grade	Private School	41	23.8
		Public School	41	23.8
	8th Grade	Private School	44	25.6
		Public School	46	26.7
State of Outside Practice	Yes		79	45.9
	No		93	54.1
Gender	Female		93	54.1
	Male		79	45.9
Starting Grade for English Instruction	Kinder garden		24	14.0
	1st grade		9	5.2
	2nd grade		122	70.9
	3rd grade		3	1.7
	4th grade		11	6.4
	5th grade		2	1.2
	8th grade		1	.6

It can be concluded that most students started learning English before the age of 13, that is, before the critical period (Loewen & Reinders, 2017). Generally, students were taking four hours of English classes per week but 31 students stated that they take extra English courses.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

English speaking anxiety scale developed by Orakçı et al. (2019) was used to measure the levels of speaking anxiety. The scale includes 16 items and two subscales. The subscales were not explained in the original study, nevertheless first subscale included items like "In English class, I get very anxious when I have to speak without preparation", "I am worried that other students will not understand me when I speak English" and "I am worried that other students will laugh at me when I speak English" while the second subscale included items such as "I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English class", "I feel nervous when the English teacher asks me questions", and "I get frightened when speaking in English". There were three reverse items which were reverse coded before the analyses. The scale was originally developed in Turkish and the primary reason for using a Turkish version was to prevent misunderstanding among students. The items were allocated scores on a five-point scale according to the following criteria: 'Certainly Disagree' (1), 'Disagree' (2), 'Not Sure' (3), 'Agree' (4), 'Certainly Agree' (5). A higher score from the scale indicates greater levels of anxiety experienced by students during English speaking tasks. The reliability value for the entire scale was .912 while it was 862 and 849 for the first and second sub-scales, respectively.

English self-efficacy scale was designed to measure the self-efficacy beliefs of the high school students by Yanar and Bümen (2012). Originally, the scale consists of 4 parts; reading, writing, listening and speaking. In this study, the six-item speaking subscale was used. The scale was utilized by assigning scores to the items as follows: 'It doesn't suit me at all' (1), 'It suits me very little' (2), 'It suits me a little' (3), 'It suits me quite well' (4), 'It suits me completely' (5). A high score obtained from the scale indicates a high level of self-efficacy (Yanar & Bümen, 2012). The Cronbach's Alpha value of the speaking scale was .837 for the current study.

Lastly, the students took the TOEFL Primary as a speaking test. It is a widely recognized, computer-based test designed for students aged 8+ and aims to measure young learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing. TOEFL offers another speaking test called TOEFL Junior which is designed for students aged 11+, and it is generally considered more appropriate for middle school students. However, after examining the English course curriculum for the 7th and 8th graders and incorporating feedback from middle school teachers, the TOEFL Primary test was deemed more appropriate than the TOEFL Junior test. This decision was based on the observation that the sections of the TOEFL Junior test did not align with the curriculum, increasing the likelihood that students would encounter unfamiliar themes or vocabulary. In this study, only the speaking part of TOEFL Primary test was applied. The aim of the speaking test is stated as: 'The TOEFL Primary Speaking test measures young learners' ability to communicate orally in routine social situations related to their daily lives' by the ETS (2019, p.24). The maximum possible score of the entire test is 27. The test is based on six parts which included:

- expressing opinions, where students are shown some pictures of animals and asked a question about which one is their favorite.
- giving directions, where students are shown a picture of a boy feeding birds step by step and asked to give directions to feed the birds.
- describing a picture, where students are shown a picture of a bus with odd objects (e.g., The bus has apples instead of wheels, there are fish swimming in the bus etc.)
- retelling a story, where students are shown a video of a monkey stealing a key and hides it in a tree twice and asked to explain what happened in the video.
- making request, where the students are expected to ask question to the zoo keeper if they can go see the tigers (usage of can/can't)

- asking a question, where the students are expected to ask three questions about the tigers (usage of wh- questions)

3.3.1. Scoring the Speaking Test

The scoring procedure is explained in detail by the book, TOEFL® Primary™ Teacher Workshop Manual. Taking this manual into consideration, each student's recording was listened carefully and scored. Firstly, independent sections were scored separately by giving points according to the TOEFL speaking test scoring guide, then the points were collected and the total score was calculated. A subset of speaking test results (10 %) was scored by a second rater who was trained according to the manual at first to prove inter-rater reliability. Two-way random, absolute agreements inter-class reliability analyses were run separately for all questions and for the total results. The analyses yielded α=.843 for the first part, α= .912 for the second part, α= .939 for the third part, α= .908 for the fourth part, α= .972 for the fifth part, α= .824 for the sixth part, and α= .977 values for the total score.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

After taking the permissions from the Ethical Committee to collect data, the acceptance papers were delivered to the students in various public and private schools. As students were underage, but still at an age that they can decide, their permissions and their parents' permissions were separately taken. Students who agreed to participate in the study and had parental consent signed took part in the study. Both the participants and their parents were informed about the study's purpose, the scales and tests to be used and the expected duration of the process. Information papers also included the researcher's contact number for parents to ask for further information.

Data collection approximately took a whole semester during the fall term of 2021-2022 academic year. Students were firstly given the forms they needed to fill out, then they were called to the test room adjusted for students to take the speaking tests individually. The test approximately took 10 minutes for each student and during the test, students were video- and audio-recorded. The directions in the test were in English, so, in order to eliminate the listening skill effect, students were given directions in their L1 by the researcher. When students asked the researcher about unfamiliar words, they were provided with explanations to prevent them from feeling stressed and halting their speech. However, speeches containing these words were not included in the scoring.

3.5. Data Analysis

Firstly, data set was checked, and missing values were filled with mean scores. A total of seven items were left blank in all scales. Approximately 5% of the whole data set consists of missing values, which is not a significant concern, as such a small amount is unlikely to cause substantial changes to the overall results (Kline, 2023). Also, normality tests were run for each scale and the speaking test (see Table 2). In English speaking anxiety scale, three controversial expressions and the scores of these items were reversed and included in the total score of the scale. These three items were compared with other items and students with conflicted answers were removed from the data.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics, and Normality Analyses of the Scales and the Test

		Min	Max	$\bar{x}$	Skewness	Kurtosis
English Speaking Self-Efficacy	Total Scale	6.00	28.00	17.80	-.207	-.698
English Speaking Anxiety	First Subscale	9.00	41.00	23.97	.166	-.977
	Second Subscale	7.00	35.00	17.13	.356	-.495
	Total Scale	16.00	74.00	41.10	.187	-.778
English Speaking Performance	Expressing Opinions	0.00	3.00	1.91	-.141	-1.236
	Giving Directions	0.00	5.00	1.65	.789	-.463
	Describing A Picture	0.00	3.00	1.45	.294	-.575
	Retelling A Story	0.00	5.00	1.85	.768	.120
	Making Request	0.00	3.00	1.30	.580	-707
	Asking A Question	0.00	3.00	1.57	.064	-.788
	Total Test	1.00	22.00	9.76	.660	-.446

As seen in Table 2, except the 'expressing opinions' subsection, kurtosis values of the scales and test results are all between -1 and +1 which is regarded as excellent in psychometric applications that indicates a normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2012). Yet, values between -1.5 and +1.5 are also accepted for normal distribution (Tabachnick et al., 2013), therefore 'expressing opinions' subsection can also be accepted to have a normal distribution. Similarly, skewness values ranging between -1 and +1 indicate a distribution close to normal (Hair et al., 2009). Given this range, it can be confidently said that the scales and the test in this study meet the criterion for normal distribution.

In order to analyze current levels of students in speaking English, descriptive statistics were used, and the scores derived from speaking test results were compared with the target level suggested by MoNE. Secondly, independent samples t-tests were run to look for the effects of school type and outside practice separately. The relationship between English speaking self-efficacy, English speaking anxiety and English speaking performance was examined using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis. The data was classified based on grade level (7th and 8th graders) and school type (public and private schools). Then, schools were compared separately within the 7th grade and 8th grade data in order to demonstrate the correlations based on the school type. To explore whether English speaking self-efficacy and English speaking anxiety can predict English speaking performance or not, Structural Equation Regression Model was conducted on AMOS 20. Regression weights of English speaking self-efficacy and English speaking anxiety on English speaking performance were reported. SEM was used in this study because it allows for the analysis of more complex models and gives more reliable results. The independent and dependent variables can both be handled as random variables with measurement error using SEM (Galob, 2003, as cited in Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012).

3.5.1. Confirmatory factor analysis

In order to test the reliability of the scales and the suitability of the established model, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The model consists of the English speaking anxiety scale with two subscales, speaking self-efficacy subscale of the English self- efficacy scale, and the speaking test with six subsections.

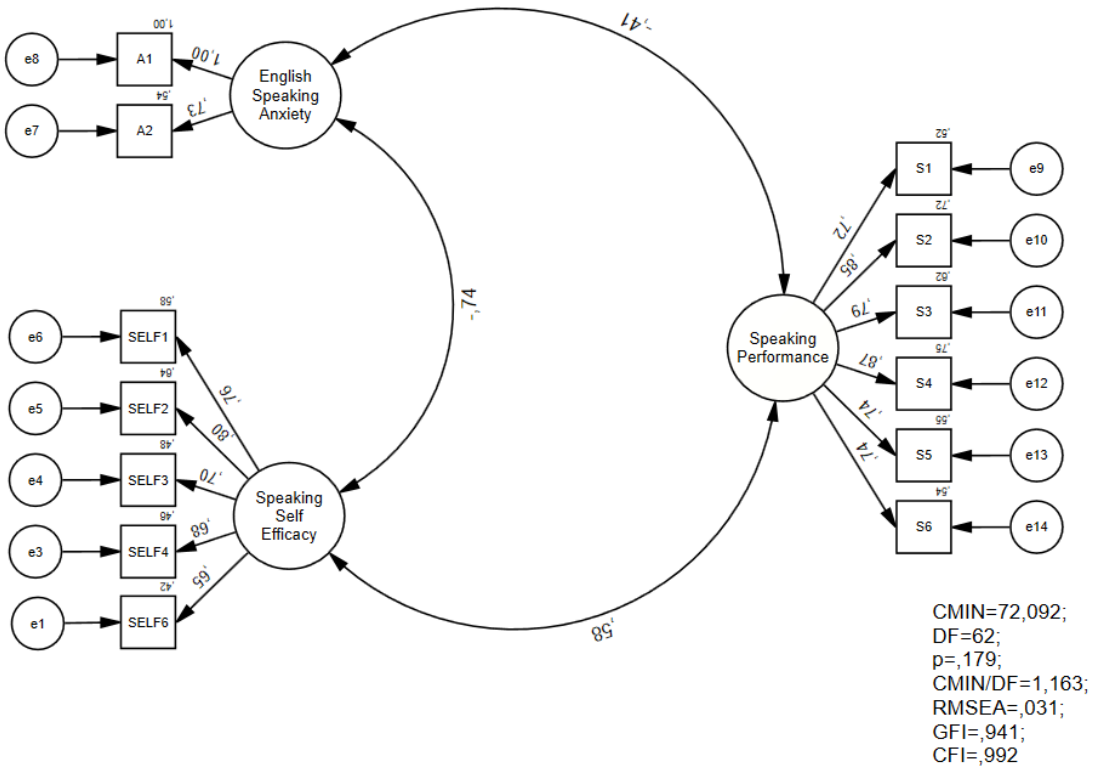

Figure 2
Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the model
CMIN: Minimum Discrepancy Function; DF: Degrees of Freedom divided; χ2 p-value: Chi-squared p-value; CMIN/DF: Minimum Discrepancy Function by Degrees of Freedom divided; RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; NFI: Normed Fit Index; CFI: Comparative Fit Index

As shown in the model, CMIN/DF ratio was 1.16 which indicates a perfect fit, as it is below the threshold value of 3.00 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993; Kline, 2013; Sümer, 2000). Model-data fit is indicated by an RMSEA index of .05 or lower (Hu & Şimşek, 2007). In this model, the RMSEA index is .031 which indicates that the compatibility is achieved. The CFI value of the model is .99 which indicates an excellent fit as the value is higher than .95 (West et al., 2012). GFI value indicates an excellent fit when it is higher than 0.95 (Kline, 2013). In this model, the value is .94 which shows an almost excellent fit. NFI value of the model was >90 (Byrne, 1994) and the value shows a better fit as it approaches to 1. In this model, the value is .94 which can be considered excellent. Also, the SRMR value was .045, indicating an acceptable fit as it is lower than .05 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). The correlation between English speaking self-efficacy and English speaking anxiety scales was found to be -.74. The correlation between English speaking self-efficacy and speaking performance was .58 while the correlation between English speaking anxiety and speaking performance was -0.41. The regression coefficients were computed and reported in Table 3.

Table 3
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Outputs

Measurement Model	β_1	β_2*	S.E.	C.R.
SELF6 <--- English Speaking Self-Efficacy	.650	1.000		
SELF4 <--- English Speaking Self-Efficacy	.678	1.039	.138	7.528
SELF3 <--- English Speaking Self-Efficacy	.696	1.076	.138	7.773
SELF2 <--- English Speaking Self-Efficacy	.799	1.252	.145	8.606
SELF1 <--- English Speaking Self-Efficacy	.764	1.145	.137	8.328
ANX2 <--- English Speaking Anxiety	.732	1.000		
ANX1 <--- English Speaking Anxiety	.999	1.675	.176	9.518
S1 <--- Speaking Performance	.718	1.000		
S2 <--- Speaking Performance	.847	2.020	.191	10.554
S3 <--- Speaking Performance	.789	1.025	.104	9.824
S4 <--- Speaking Performance	.867	1.599	.147	10.888
S5 <--- Speaking Performance	.740	1.110	.118	9.390
S6 <--- Speaking Performance	.735	.997	.107	9.328

*p<0,001; β1: Standardized coefficients, β2: Unstandardized coefficients; SELF1: English Speaking Self-Efficacy Item; ANX: English Speaking Anxiety Subscale; S: Speaking Test Section

The SELF5 subscale was removed from the model due to its low factor loading of .448, which is below the acceptable threshold of.50 (Hair et al., 2009). Remaining standardized regression coefficients were all above .50 and the relationships were significant. It means that each subscale predicts its own subscale. Regarding the English speaking self-efficacy, SELF 2 item was found to be the most effective. For the English speaking anxiety scale, A1 item proved to be the most significant, while for the speaking test, the S4 item emerged as the most effective.

4. Results

In order to understand students' speaking levels in relation to the school type, mean scores were calculated and compared with the results of TOEFL Primary scores. Seventh and eighth graders were analyzed separately because, although both grades were expected to be at the A2 level (MoNE, 2018), the data was collected at the beginning of the semester, and seventh graders were expected to be at the A1 level at that time. Eighth graders on the other hand, were expected to be at the A2 level.

According to the TOEFL Speaking Score Report that indicates the scores and their corresponding CEFR levels, private school students achieved the expected level (M= 13.63>10, SD=5.07) while public school student scores were below the expected level (M= 6.61<10, SD=2.61). Total scores of the students on the other hand were at the borderline of the A1 level (M=10.13>10, SD=5.31). So, it can be said that 7th graders in total managed to attain a passing grade at the A1 level. When the scores of 8th graders were analyzed, both private school (M= 10.86<16, SD=5.26) and public school (M= 7.70<16, SD=5.27) students were unable to achieve the expected outcome. Looking at the total score mean (M= 9.42, SD=5.45), it is evident that students scored well below the A2 level.

In order to understand if school type and outside practice affect the speaking performance, t-test analyses were run and the results are presented in Tables 4 and 5 as the results of private and public schools respectively.

Table 4
Independent Samples T-Test Results for the School Type Effect on Speaking Self-Efficacy, Speaking Anxiety, and Speaking Performance

Scales	Groups	N	M	SD	t	P	Cohen's d
English Speaking Self-Efficacy	Private	85	18.77	5.04	2.478	.01*	.38
	Public	87	16.86	5.06	2.478		
English Speaking Anxiety	Private	85	41.06	13.06	-.040	.96	.00
	Public	87	41.14	13.36	-.040		
English Speaking Performance	Private	85	12.22	5.31	6.635	.00**	1.01
	Public	87	7.35	4.26	6.619		

Table 5
Independent Samples T-Test Results for the Outside Practice Effect on Speaking Self-Efficacy, Speaking Anxiety, and Speaking Performance

Scales	Outside Practice	N	M	SD	t	P	Cohen's d
English Speaking Self-Efficacy	Yes	79	20.23	4.44	6.33	.00**	.97
	No	93	15.74	4.78	6.37		
English Speaking Anxiety	Yes	79	36.63	11.55	-4.30	.00**	.66
	No	93	44.89	13.33	-4.35		
English Speaking Performance	Yes	79	11.32	5.8	3.64	.00**	.55
	No	93	8.43	4.61	3.57		

In order to explore the relationship between the English speaking anxiety, English speaking self-efficacy and speaking proficiency, correlational analyses were run (see Table 6). The analyses were conducted without segregating the participants based on private versus public school attendance to be able to understand the relationships between the variables in general.

Table 6
Correlations between the English Speaking Self-Efficacy, English Speaking Anxiety, and English Speaking Performance

	Private School			Public School		
Grade 7						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) English Speaking Self-Efficacy	1 41			1 41		
(2) English Speaking Anxiety	-.429** .005 41	1 41		-.731** .000 41	1 41	
(3) English Speaking Performance	.422** .006 41	-.347* .026 41	1 41	.351* .014 41	-.408** .004 41	1 41

Grade 8						
(1) English Speaking Self-Efficacy	1 44			1 46		
(2) English Speaking Anxiety	-.714** .000 44	1 44		-.589** .000 46	1 46	
(3) English Speaking Performance	.486** .004 44	-.442** .006 44	1 44	.439** .005 46	-.385** .014 46	1 46

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results showed that there is a significant negative correlation between English speaking self-efficacy and English speaking anxiety (r (172) =-.612, p<.01), as well as between English speaking anxiety and speaking performance (r (172) =-.338, p<.01); besides, there is a significant positive correlation between English speaking self-efficacy and English speaking performance (r (172) =.463, p<.01).

In order to understand how much of the variance in the speaking performance is accounted for by speaking anxiety and speaking self-efficacy, structural equation model (SEM) was drawn and regression coefficients were calculated. Non-standardized and standardized values are shown in Figures 3 and 4 respectively.

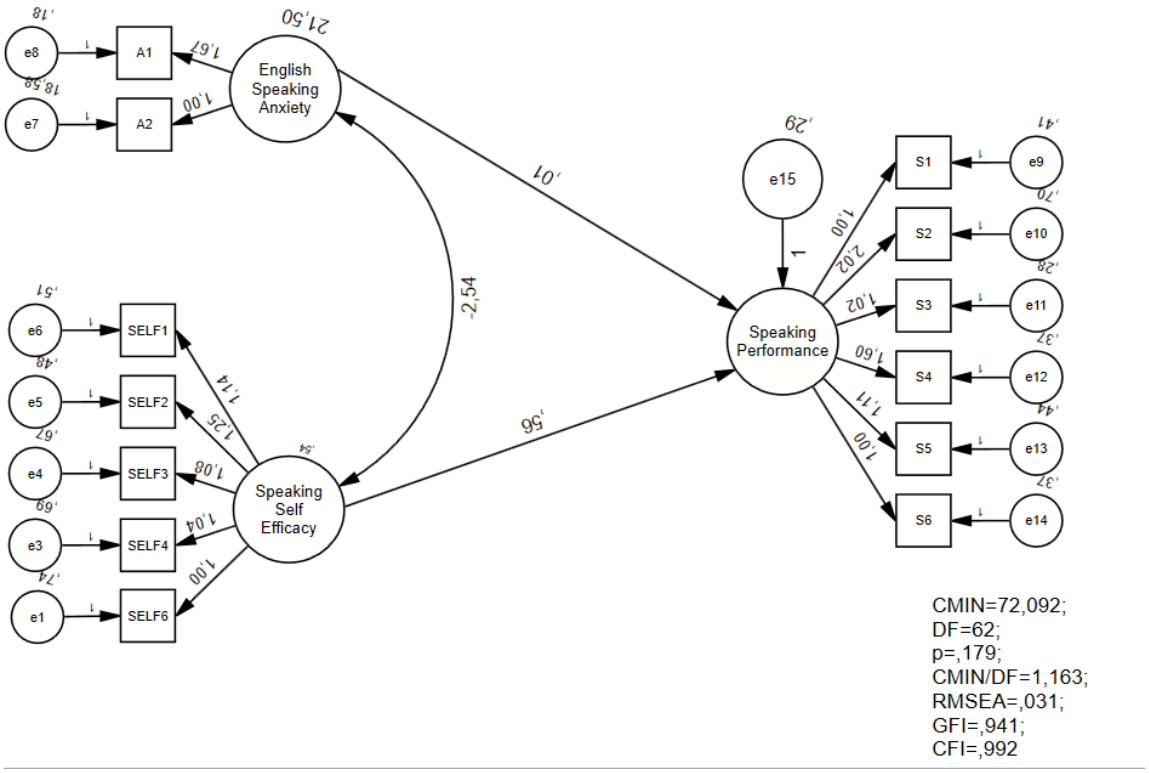

Figure 3
Unstandardized regression coefficients

The figure shows unstandardized coefficients that were calculated. Accordingly, speaking performance increases.01 units when the English speaking anxiety increases 1 unit. Similarly, every 1-

unit change on English speaking self-efficacy causes English speaking performance to increase 56 units.

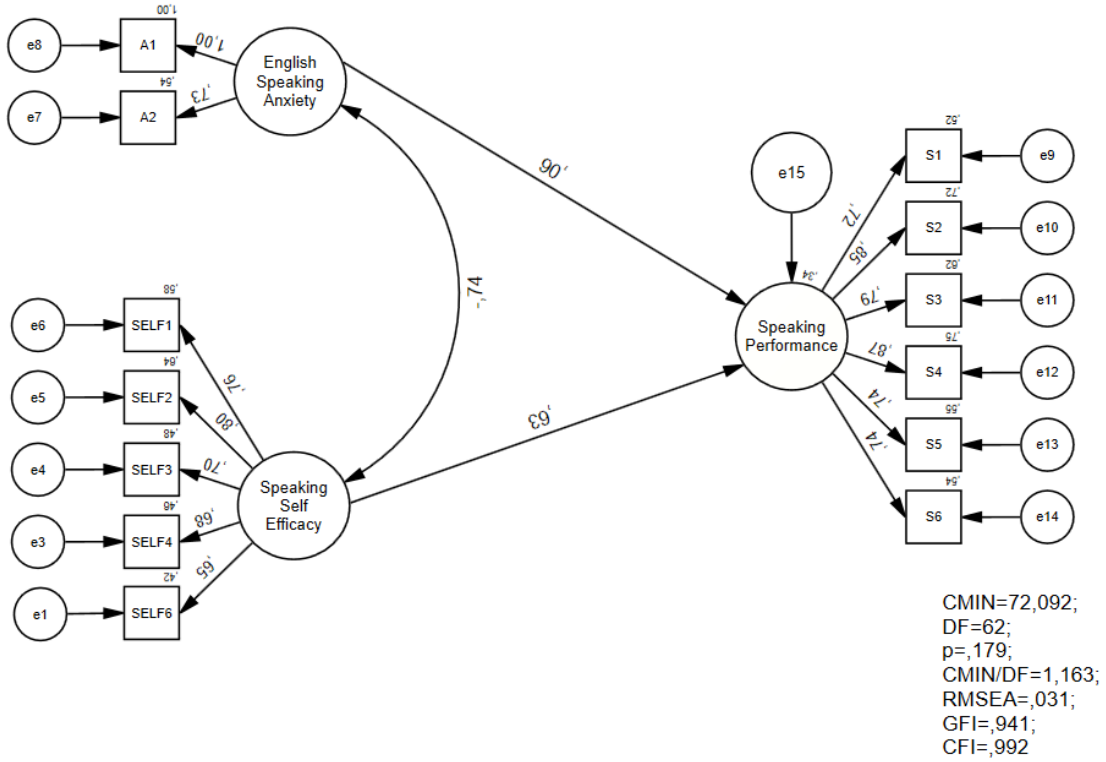

Figure 4
Standardized regression coefficients

The figure demonstrates standardized coefficients that were calculated in the model. Accordingly, every 1-unit increase on the standard deviation of English speaking anxiety increases the standard deviation of English speaking performance .06 units. At the same time, a 1-unit of increase in the standard deviation of English speaking self-efficacy causes a .63 increase in English speaking performance.

The fit values of the model are in the desired range and show a good fit. The model presents the values of CMIN/DF (1.163), RMSA (.031), GFI (.941), CFI (.992) and NFI (.943). The regression coefficients and significance values are given in Table 7.

Table 7
SEM Analysis Results

	β1	β2	S. E.	C. R.	P
Speaking Performance <---English Speaking Anxiety	.058	.008	.017	.481	.630
Speaking Performance <---Speaking Self Efficacy	.625	.560	.133	4.193	<0.001

The results indicate that self-efficacy has a strong and significant effect on speaking performance ($\beta 1$=.625, $\beta 2$=.560, p<0.001).

5. Discussion

Firstly, in terms of the speaking skill levels of learners, it was found that while 7th graders attending private schools met the A1 speaking level determined by MoNE, public school students at the same grade remained well below this level. On the other hand, among 8th graders, neither private nor public school students reached the A2 speaking level expected by MoNE. This indicates a mismatch between the expected outcomes and the actual proficiency levels students attain by the end of the educational period. Additionally, it was found that the average speaking proficiency of 8th grade students was slightly lower than that of 7th grade students. The declining speaking performance of students in higher grades may suggest a decrease in speaking practice or a reduced emphasis on speaking skills by teachers. One reason for this situation could be the high school entrance exam at the end of the 8th grade and the fact that this exam consists of only test questions disregarding oral language ability. The Turkish education system is heavily based on standardized testing, therefore parents and virtually all stakeholders devote significant attention to excelling in these exams and securing placement in high-ranking schools (Karabulut, 2007). As a result, greater emphasis may currently be placed on grammar rules and their application in test conditions rather than on developing students' speaking abilities during the 8th grade at schools. This result is also parallel with Kolkaya's (2019) findings that 12th grade students have lower self-efficacy in speaking English than 11th grade students. So, students in their last year of their education tend to fall back in terms of speaking skills and they are aware of it as reflected through their self-efficacy scores.

The study also centered on examining the effects of school type and extracurricular practice on English speaking self-efficacy, English speaking anxiety and English-speaking performance. The findings showed a significant difference between private and public schools, with students from private schools outperformed public school students in terms of speaking performance corroborating previous studies (De Fraine et al., 2003; Ephraim, 2021; Kim, 2012; Vukosi et al., 2021) which found a significant effect of school type. In our context, this variance in speaking performance levels among students could stem from several factors. Private schools tend to offer notably smaller class sizes, affording students more opportunities for participation and speaking practice. Additionally, teachers in private schools often employ diverse methods and techniques to teach English speaking skills, providing students with a richer language education compared to their counterparts in public schools. Similarly, in terms of English speaking self-efficacy it was found that private school students' self-efficacy levels were significantly higher than public school counterparts in tandem with their English speaking performance. This corroborates the results of Kormos and Kiddle (2013) who concluded that the secondary school students with high socioeconomic background feel more self-efficacious than their peers with low socioeconomic background. This underscores the elevated educational opportunities that students from more affluent socioeconomic backgrounds may already possess, suggesting that this could contribute to their increased self-efficacy beliefs in language learning. Lastly, English speaking anxiety did not differ according to the school type. This implies that even successful or self-efficacious students may experience anxiety irrespective of their school type. In essence, the level of anxiety cannot be correlated with attending either a private or public school.

The comparison between the students who practice English outside of school and those who do not yielded more expected results. First of all, there emerged a strong difference between the two groups in terms of their English-speaking ability in favor of students who practice English outside of school. It is evident that speaking practice, whether within or outside the school, reliably leads to success in speaking ability (Zhang et al., 2020) possibly affecting the psychological factors, such as self-efficacy or anxiety as well. Additionally, there existed a significant difference in speaking anxiety levels between students who engage in practice outside the class and those who do not. Students who practice English outside the school are less

anxious than their non-practicing peers suggesting that the more students practice English, the calmer they become while speaking English. Besides, outside the school English practice made students feel more self-efficacious. As Batumlu and Erden (2007) reported being successful increases the self-efficacy level and decreases the anxiety level. So, a possible reason that students practicing English outside the school have more English-speaking self-efficacy and lower English-speaking anxiety might be their awareness of their oral language ability.

The relationship between English-speaking self-efficacy and English-speaking anxiety was found to be strongly negative. Accordingly, students who have a high level of English-speaking anxiety tend to have a low level of English-speaking self-efficacy and vice versa. In other words, students who experience anxiety and cannot feel comfortable while speaking English consider themselves inadequate in terms of their English-speaking skills. This result supports the study conducted by Ghonsooly and Elahi (2010) which found that students who are more self-efficacious in terms of reading skills have lower anxiety levels. In line with earlier studies depicting a negative correlation between anxiety and speaking performance (e.g., Chen et al., 2022; Woodrow, 2006), the relationship between anxiety and speaking performance was also strongly negative, meaning that more anxious students are generally less successful at speaking. However, speaking self-efficacy correlated positively with English speaking performance, showing that students who find themselves efficient in terms of speaking performance indeed performed better. This finding aligns with prior research indicating the beneficial impact of self-efficacy on speaking ability (Aregu, 2013; Demirel et al., 2020). Altogether, these findings indicate that students with higher levels of speaking self-efficacy tend to dedicate more effort and commitment to their English language learning, leading to enhanced speaking performance results. To the contrary, the ones who suffer from high levels of English speaking anxiety tend to believe less in their oral language capacity and fail more in speaking tests.

Finally, English speaking self-efficacy was found to be a strong predictor of English speaking performance, suggesting that the students who believe that they are good at speaking English tend to speak English better than those who do not. In other words, being confident in speaking English actually makes students more successful in speaking English. These findings concur with Thompson et al. (2022) who found a significant relationship between self-efficacy and the success of English medium instruction. They concluded that students with greater efficacy exert more effort and view course activities as opportunities for development. A similar result was also obtained by Wu et al. (2022) who revealed that self-efficacy serves as a positive predictor, indicating that students who excel tend to possess increased levels of self-efficacy. Although an inverse relationship was observed between English speaking anxiety and English speaking performance, anxiety did not predict speaking performance in the proposed model. This result is rather striking given the significant negative correlation between these two constructs. Overall, it can be concluded that while speaking anxiety negatively affects speaking performance, it does not necessarily predict failure. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2000) suggests that the effect of anxiety on language performance occurs after the impact of overall achievement on language performance. Students who are already successful do not fail easily even when their anxiety level is high. Vice versa also implies that the students who are less anxious cannot always be successful at speaking performance. In a similar vein, students' anxiety levels did not change according to the school type (i.e., public vs. private). Hence, it can be said that although anxiety correlated negatively with oral language ability and English-speaking self-efficacy, it is not a constant predictor of success nor is it necessarily influenced by external factors, like the type of school attended.

6. Implications and Limitations

The finding that 8th graders in this study performed below the state-mandated outcome level for speaking skills demonstrates the negative impact of the nationwide high school entrance exam on English language learning. Therefore, it calls for

action on the part of teachers and policy makers to place greater emphasis on the communicative aspects of language even during the year in which students get prepared for a high-stakes examination. Also, the gap between private and public-school students with regard to English speaking performance and speaking self-efficacy once again highlights the role socioeconomic status plays in education and the need to provide equality and equity in terms of foreign language learning in public school settings. However, the fact that students practicing English outside the school have better English-speaking ability, greater self-efficacy beliefs and lower levels of anxiety depicts that socioeconomic factors are not the only determinants on their own. Rather, if students put some effort in language learning in their free time, this is also conducive to their language skills (i.e., speaking in this case), perceptions and attitudes. Families can emphasize the importance of individual study and encourage their children to be involved in not only formal but also informal language learning activities. Once more, the adverse effect of anxiety on both actual performance and self-efficacy beliefs was shown through the negative correlations observed. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, emerged to be the primary determinant of English speaking skills. This underscores the importance of nurturing and enhancing students' self-efficacy beliefs due to its central role in determining their actual academic performance and helping students relieve the stress they have toward language learning. It is crucial for students to feel comfortable while acquiring English speaking skills in order to feel less anxious about making mistakes, and to be encouraged to speak. Apart from creating stress-free L2 classroom environments, motivating learners to take part in outside the class practice activities not only leads to better speaking skills but also higher self-esteem in one's L2 speaking abilities.

In order to guide further studies, some limitations found in this study are to be explained. First of all, the generalizability of findings is restricted to 172 students from the respective public and private schools in Eastern Türkiye. In addition, the foundations of the results are based on self-report instruments (i.e., scales) answered by the students, hence may contain bias. To address these, school and classroom contexts can be documented, and observations in the classrooms can be included to identify the physical and educational resources available for students. Information gathered directly from these settings may offer a clearer understanding of the environmental factors. Also, one-shot examinations of learners' proficiency levels yield limited results restricting the generalizability of findings. To address this, longitudinal studies are recommended to explore the correlational and/or causal link among speaking self-efficacy, speaking anxiety and speaking performance at a deeper level. Integrating qualitative data, such as teacher or student views could provide valuable insights and enhance the study's comprehensiveness. Finally, in the present study, the socioeconomic background of the students was decided by their school type, so it might not fully explain the differences of speaking performances. Further studies can prepare a more extended demographic survey to learn the income and education level of the parents to see the direct effect of socioeconomic background. Likewise, there is limited information about the outside practice of the students. The only information obtained from students was whether they practice English outside of school; the frequency or nature of these practices (i.e., private tutoring or individual studying) were not known. Therefore, future studies may delve deeper into the nature of these practices to have a better understanding.

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