

UNDERSTANDING EFL STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

Desi Lestari¹, Rafila Kasamira Dewi Abrori², Dewi Puspitasari^{*3}

desi.lestari@mhs.uingusdur.ac.id¹, rfilea09@gmail.com²,

dewi.puspitasari@uingusdur.ac.id^{*3}

Faculty of Education and Teacher Training^{1,*3}

UIN KH Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan^{1,*3}, MAN 1 Kota Pekalongan²

Received: April 25, 2026

Accepted: August 4, 2026

Published: September 25, 2026

ABSTRACT

Public speaking is a crucial skill in academic and professional contexts; however, many students experience anxiety that can hinder their performance. This study aims to understand students' anxiety in a public speaking course by exploring the challenges they encounter and the coping strategies they employ. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three students to collect the data, which were then analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings reveal that fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, and pressure from graded presentations were the primary sources of anxiety. These challenges were reflected in physical, cognitive, and behavioral responses during speaking performances. To cope with these challenges, students employed intensive practice, deep breathing techniques, and relied on positive feedback from teachers. The findings suggest that supportive classroom environments may play an important role in helping students manage anxiety and sustain participation in speaking activities. The study concludes that public speaking anxiety should be understood not only as a barrier but also as a dynamic experience in which anxiety and engagement can coexist. Future studies could include a broader and more diverse group of participants to examine how anxiety and coping strategies vary across educational contexts.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Coping Strategies, Public Speaking, Qualitative Study*

DOI: 10.31943/wej.v10i2.680

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is widely recognized as an essential skill in academic, professional, and social life, enabling individuals to express ideas, opinions, and knowledge effectively in front of others (Marinho et al., 2017). In higher education, students are frequently required to engage in oral communication activities such as presentations, seminars, and debates, which are designed both to assess understanding of course content and to prepare students for professional environments where communication competence is highly valued (Reddy, 2020). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts specifically, public speaking

activities also serve a language-development function, they push students to use vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar productively while negotiating meaning in real time (Marinho et al., 2017). This dual demand performing content while performing language makes public speaking a uniquely complex task for EFL learners.

Beyond developing oral communication skills, public speaking courses require students to integrate multiple aspects of language performance. Students are expected to organize ideas in a clear way, use appropriate pronunciation and grammar, deliver messages with confidence, and respond to audience reactions within a limited time. Muhyidin and Chuquin (2025) found that EFL students often perceive public speaking tasks as demanding because they involve both language use and oral performance before an audience. This finding shows that public speaking courses require students to manage linguistic and psychological demands at the same time. For this reason, public speaking courses provide an appropriate setting for exploring students' learning experiences, including the emotional challenges they face when speaking in a foreign language.

Despite its importance, public speaking is still regarded as one of the most anxiety-provoking activities among students. Shoham et al. (2018) defined public speaking anxiety as a feeling of fear, nervousness, worry, or discomfort that emerges when individuals are required to speak before an audience. These feelings may occur before, during, or after a presentation. Anxiety can negatively affect speech performance, language production, and classroom participation (Gallego et al., 2021). It may also manifest physically through sweating, trembling, rapid heartbeat, and shortness of breath (Fagsao & Mi-ing, 2021). In EFL classrooms, these effects are compounded by language-specific worries, students often fear making grammatical mistakes, mispronouncing words, or being judged negatively by teachers and peers, which can reduce their willingness to participate and, over time, limit language development (LeFebvre et al., 2018).

These issues are also evident in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where English is taught as a foreign language and opportunities to practice outside the classroom remain limited. Abrar et al. (2022) found that classroom speaking activities often become students' primary opportunity to communicate in English, which contributes to the development of speaking anxiety. Mahmudi and Anugerahwati (2021) also reported that students' anxiety is influenced not only by limited language proficiency but also by concerns about making mistakes and receiving negative responses from teachers and classmates. Consequently, classroom presentations create dual demands for students because they are expected to demonstrate both English proficiency and presentation skills at the same time. This situation may influence not only the quality of their speaking performance but also their confidence and willingness to participate in future speaking tasks.

Among the various factors contributing to public speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation appears to be one of the most influential. Students often worry that they will be criticized, embarrassed, or judged negatively by others when speaking in front of an audience (Saucier & Lurino, 2020). Horwitz et al. (1986) argued that fear of negative evaluation is one of the core components of foreign

language anxiety because students tend to view classroom speaking situations as opportunities where their language ability is constantly assessed by teachers and peers. Low self-confidence is also closely associated with public speaking anxiety. Students who perceive themselves as poor speakers often underestimate their abilities and become excessively self-conscious during speaking performances. Such negative self-perceptions can create psychological barriers that prevent students from communicating naturally and confidently. LeFebvre et al. (2018) found that students with low confidence often hesitate to share their ideas because they worry about making mistakes and receiving negative responses from others. This hesitation may reduce opportunities to practice speaking, making it more difficult for students to build confidence through classroom interaction. This condition is commonly referred to as glossophobia, or fear of public speaking, which is considered one of the most common social fears experienced by individuals (Perveen et al., 2018). Sociocultural factors also play a role, in classroom cultures that emphasize modesty, deference to authority, or avoidance of losing face, students may be especially reluctant to speak openly, a dynamic that becomes more pronounced in EFL settings where language proficiency, social expectation, and self-confidence intersect simultaneously.

To address these challenges, prior research has explored strategies for reducing public speaking anxiety. Dahbi (2015) argued that repeated speaking practice helps students become more familiar with presentation situations, thereby reducing fear and increasing confidence. Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, visualization, and muscle relaxation can help students manage physical tension and emotional stress before presentations (Bentley et al., 2023). Positive reinforcement from teachers can also significantly influence students' confidence and willingness to speak. Bjekic et al. (2014) emphasized that encouraging feedback helps students develop more positive perceptions of their abilities. Similarly, Lin-Siegler et al. (2016) argued that supportive learning environments promote students' engagement and resilience by reducing fear of failure. When teachers create non-threatening classroom atmospheres where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process, students are more likely to participate actively and develop confidence gradually.

While this body of work offers valuable insight into the causes, effects, and management of public speaking anxiety, it tends to rely on generalized anxiety factors, quantitative measurement, or experimental interventions, leaving comparatively little room for students' own voices, emotions, and coping processes as they unfold in authentic classroom settings. Many studies also emphasize externally designed interventions while paying less attention to students' agency which refers to the personal coping mechanisms they develop on their own, based on their experiences, beliefs, and immediate classroom environment. Students do not respond to public speaking anxiety in the same way. Their experiences may change over time as they encounter different classroom situations and speaking tasks. As a result, the strategies they use to cope with anxiety are often shaped by personal experiences, beliefs, and classroom interactions. Understanding how students describe and interpret these experiences helps explain not only what makes them anxious but also how they manage

anxiety throughout the learning process. Because experiences of anxiety are shaped by educational, linguistic, and cultural context, context-sensitive, learner-centered qualitative inquiry is needed to understand how anxiety is lived and negotiated in specific EFL classrooms, rather than only how it is measured in the aggregate.

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical perspectives. The first is Horwitz et al. (1986) theory of foreign language anxiety, which conceptualizes language-related anxiety as a distinct construct arising from three interrelated components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. This framework is particularly relevant to EFL public speaking, where students must manage the ordinary demands of public performance alongside anxiety specific to using a foreign language in front of an audience. The second is Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping (as summarized in Biggs et al., 2017), which explains coping as a dynamic process involving cognitive appraisal of a stressor followed by problem-focused strategies (efforts to manage or alter the stressor itself, such as rehearsal) and emotion-focused strategies (efforts to regulate the emotional response to the stressor, such as breathing techniques or seeking reassurance). Read together, these two frameworks allow the study to examine not only the sources of students' anxiety but also the active, adaptive processes through which students appraise and manage that anxiety within their classroom environment.

This study addresses that gap by examining, in depth, the anxiety experienced by three students in an EFL public speaking course at an Indonesian Islamic university, guided by two research questions: (1) What challenges do students experience in relation to public speaking anxiety in this course? and (2) What strategies do students use to cope with this anxiety? By providing an in-depth exploration of students' experiences, this study expands current understanding of public speaking anxiety by examining students' experiences from a contextualized and learner-centered perspective. Rather than focusing solely on generalized anxiety levels or experimental treatments, this study highlights how students interpret, experience, and negotiate anxiety in authentic educational settings. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educators in designing classroom environments and instructional approaches that better support students' emotional well-being and communicative development.

In addition, this study may contribute to broader discussions about the importance of emotional dimensions in language learning and communication education. Public speaking anxiety is not only a communication issue but also an educational and psychological concern that influences students' participation, confidence, and learning experiences. By understanding students' coping strategies and emotional challenges, teachers can create more empathetic, inclusive, and empowering learning spaces that encourage students to participate more confidently in speaking activities.

Finally, this study opens opportunities for future research to explore public speaking anxiety in different educational contexts, cultural settings, and learner populations. Further studies may investigate how factors such as gender, language proficiency, digital communication environments, or cultural background shape

students' experiences of anxiety and coping. Such research may contribute to the development of more holistic approaches to communication education that recognize the interconnected relationship between language, emotion, identity, and learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

Students' experiences of anxiety in a public speaking course were explored through a qualitative phenomenological approach. The research examined the challenges they faced together with the coping strategies they used to manage anxiety. A phenomenological approach was selected because it provides a way to understand participants' lived experiences and emotional responses within a particular learning context. In this study, interviews were used as the primary method of data collection. Interviewing is a widely used qualitative technique that involves direct, face-to-face interaction with participants to obtain rich and detailed information (Menold, 2018). Through this approach, the researcher was able to capture students' personal experiences, perceptions, and reflections related to public speaking anxiety.

Participants

This study was conducted at a university in Pekalongan. The population of this study consisted of students enrolled in a public speaking course. From this population, three fourth-semester students were selected as participants using purposive sampling. The participants consisted of three female students, aged 19 to 20 years old, with two participants aged 20 and one participant aged 19. They were considered intermediate-level English learners based on their academic level and classroom performance. All participants had experience in classroom speaking activities, such as individual presentations and discussions, as part of their academic learning. The selection criteria focused on students who (1) were enrolled in a public speaking course, (2) had experienced anxiety when performing public speaking tasks, particularly during presentations, and (3) were willing to share their experiences openly. The participants were chosen to represent individuals who could provide rich and relevant information about the phenomenon under investigation. To protect their identities, pseudonyms were used in this study. Although the sample size was small, it was intentionally selected to allow an in-depth exploration of the participants' lived experiences.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

The main instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview guide. It consisted of open-ended questions that invited participants to share their experiences of public speaking anxiety, the factors that contributed to their anxiety, and the strategies they used to cope with those experiences. Face-to-face interviews were selected because they allowed direct interaction between the researcher and the participants, making it easier to obtain detailed information. This method also helped the researcher gain a better understanding of how participants experienced and managed anxiety during public speaking activities.

To encourage participants to share their experiences with greater ease, all interviews were conducted in Indonesian. With the participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded, and each session took around 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted in September 2024.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The interview data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis. The process began with transcribing the interviews and reviewing the transcripts together with the observation notes to gain familiarity with the data. Next, the researcher generated initial codes by identifying meaningful patterns related to students' anxiety and coping strategies. These codes were then grouped into potential themes and reviewed against both the coded data and the complete dataset to ensure consistency. After that, each theme was refined and assigned a clear name, resulting in three main themes (experiences of anxiety, challenges, and coping strategies). Finally, the findings were organized and interpreted by linking each theme to the research questions and the theoretical framework.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied member checking as a validation technique. According to Creswell (2014), member checking allows participants to review interview transcripts and the researcher's interpretations to determine whether they accurately represent their experiences and intended meanings. After the interview recordings were transcribed, the researcher provided the transcripts to each of the three participants and invited them to review and verify the accuracy of the information based on what they had expressed during the interviews.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The findings indicate that students experience public speaking anxiety through a combination of physical, cognitive, and behavioral responses that influence their performance in the classroom. These responses are primarily triggered by fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, and pressure from graded speaking tasks. Despite these challenges, students remain engaged in learning activities and demonstrate persistence in completing their presentations. The study also reveals that students actively employ various coping strategies, including intensive practice, deep breathing techniques, and seeking positive feedback from teachers.

Experiences of public speaking anxiety

The study involved interviews with three students enrolled in a public speaking course. The findings revealed that speaking in front of classmates triggered anxiety among all participants. This anxiety was expressed through both physical and cognitive symptoms, which influenced their performance and engagement during speaking tasks.

One participant, Adis, described her experience as follows:

“Every time I have to speak in front of the class, my hands started shaking, and I could feel my heart beating fast. It's like no matter how much I prepare, I still feel nervous” (Adis, interview, 2024).

Adis’ statement illustrates clear physical symptoms of anxiety, such as trembling and rapid heartbeat. Adis’ experience shows that anxiety was not simply related to preparation but was deeply connected to emotional pressure during public speaking. Even when she had prepared her material, the presence of an audience still triggered strong physical reactions. This suggests that for some students, anxiety may persist regardless of readiness.

Similarly, Fiona expressed her concerns about cognitive aspects of anxiety: *“I always worry that I will forget what I want to say or that I will mess up my pronunciation. This makes it hard for me to focus on the actual content of my speech”* (Fiona, interview, 2024).

Fiona’s experience reveals how anxiety can interfere with students’ mental processes during speaking performances. Her attention shifted away from delivering ideas toward worrying about mistakes, which reduced her ability to communicate effectively. This indicates that anxiety may create an internal conflict between expressing meaning and maintaining linguistic accuracy.

Tabel 1. Students’ Anxiety Symptoms in Public Speaking

Participant	Physical Symptoms	Cognitive Symptoms	Behavioral Indicators
Adis	Shaking hands, rapid heartbeat	Feeling unprepared despite preparation	Visible tension
Fiona	Nervousness	Fear of forgetting, pronunciation anxiety	Loss of focus

The table summarizes the patterns of anxiety experienced by the participants. It indicates that public speaking anxiety involves interconnected physical, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. These findings reinforce the view that anxiety is a complex experience that influences not only how students feel but also how they perform during speaking tasks.

Students’ challenges in public speaking

One of the most prominent challenges identified in this study is the fear of negative evaluation. Participants expressed concerns about receiving negative judgments from both their classmates and teachers, as well as fear of making mistakes during speaking performances. Sia and Adis explained:

“I’m always worried that my classmates will think I’m not good enough or that the teacher will give me a low grade because of my mistakes” (Sia, interview, 2024).

“I feel more nervous when I know my presentation will be graded. It makes me think too much about getting a good score, and I become more afraid of making mistakes” (Adis, interview, 2024).

These statements show that fear of negative evaluation was a significant challenge in students’ public speaking experiences. Both Sia and Adis expressed concerns about how their mistakes might influence the judgments of their teachers.

and classmates. Their responses indicate that speaking in front of others was not only seen as an opportunity to communicate but also as a situation where they felt exposed to criticism and academic evaluation. This fear created additional emotional pressure, which made them more cautious and anxious during their performances. The findings suggest that the possibility of making mistakes and receiving negative judgments became central factors shaping their anxiety in public speaking.

Another challenge identified was a lack of confidence in speaking ability. Fiona shared:

"Sometimes I feel like my English is not good enough, especially when I compare myself to my classmates. It makes me doubt myself before I even start speaking" (Fiona, interview, 2024).

Fiona's response indicates that self-doubt became a barrier in her speaking performance. Her tendency to compare herself with others increased her anxiety and weakened her confidence, making speaking tasks feel more challenging.

These findings reveal that students' challenges in public speaking were mainly shaped by fear of evaluation and low self-confidence. Although the forms of challenge varied, they all contributed to students' anxiety and influenced how they approached speaking tasks.

Tabel 2. Students' Challenges in Public Speaking

Challenge	Description	Evidence
Fear of negative evaluation	Concern about judgment from peers and teachers, fear of making mistakes, and pressure from graded performances	Sia & Adis (interview, 2024)
Lack of confidence	Doubt in speaking ability and self-comparison	Fiona (interview, 2024)

The table shows that students' challenges are largely influenced by social and evaluative factors rather than purely linguistic difficulties. This suggests that emotional and psychological aspects play a central role in shaping students' public speaking experiences.

Students' strategies for overcoming public speaking anxiety

Despite experiencing significant challenges, students demonstrated active efforts to manage their anxiety through various coping strategies. One of the most frequently reported strategies was intensive practice. Adis stated:

"I practice my speech over and over again until I feel more confident. It helps me remember what I want to say and makes me feel more prepared" (Adis, interview, 2024).

Adis' statement shows that repeated practice became an important strategy in helping her deal with anxiety. Through repetition, she gained greater familiarity with her material, which reduced uncertainty during speaking tasks. This suggests that practice provided a sense of control and readiness, making her feel more secure before performing.

Another strategy identified in this study is the use of relaxation techniques, particularly deep breathing. Fiona explained:

“When I start feeling anxious, I try to take deep breaths and slow down my breathing. It helps me stay calm and focus on what I'm saying” (Fiona, interview, 2024).

Fiona's response indicates that deep breathing helped her manage the physical and emotional tension she experienced during speaking activities. By controlling her breathing, she was able to calm herself and regain focus. This shows that relaxation strategies played an important role in helping students regulate their anxiety in the moment of performance.

In addition, participants emphasized the importance of positive feedback from teachers. Sia noted:

“When my teacher gives me positive feedback, it makes me feel more confident for the next presentation. It reminds me that I can do well if I keep practicing” (Sia, interview, 2024).

Sia's statement highlights the role of external support in overcoming anxiety. Positive feedback gave her reassurance and strengthened her confidence for future speaking tasks. This suggests that encouragement from teachers contributed to students' motivation and helped them develop a more positive perception of their speaking ability.

These findings reveal that students used different strategies to manage their public speaking anxiety. While Adis relied on preparation through intensive practice, Fiona focused on self-regulation through breathing techniques, and Sia benefited from teacher support. These strategies show that overcoming anxiety involved both internal effort and external encouragement.

Tabel 3. Coping Strategies Used by Students

Strategy	Description	Function
Intensive practice	Repeated rehearsal	Builds confidence and familiarity
Deep breathing	Relaxation technique	Reduces physical anxiety
Positive feedback	Teacher encouragement	Enhances motivation

The table indicates that students employ multiple strategies simultaneously rather than relying on a single approach. This pattern suggests that managing public speaking anxiety is a dynamic and ongoing process that involves the interaction of different forms of support. On the one hand, students engage in internal regulation through strategies such as intensive practice and breathing techniques, which help them control both cognitive and physical responses to anxiety. On the other hand, external support, particularly in the form of positive feedback from teachers, contributes to shaping students' confidence and motivation. The combination of these strategies reflects how students actively negotiate their emotional experiences while participating in speaking tasks. This finding implies that effective anxiety management in public speaking contexts

requires not only individual effort but also a supportive learning environment that reinforces students' sense of capability.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that public speaking anxiety is a complex phenomenon involving physical, cognitive, behavioral, and social dimensions. The participants experienced anxiety through symptoms such as shaking hands, rapid heartbeat, nervousness, fear of forgetting speech content, and hesitation during presentations. These findings support previous studies suggesting that public speaking anxiety affects students both physically and psychologically (Gallego et al., 2021; Lee & Kleinsmith, 2019). Public speaking situations place students in socially evaluative environments where they become highly aware of their performance and possible mistakes. Consequently, anxiety influences not only students' emotional states but also their communication performance during speaking activities.

The physical symptoms experienced by the participants reflect the body's response to stressful situations. Adis described trembling hands and rapid heartbeat before presentations, indicating physiological reactions commonly associated with anxiety. Similar findings were reported by Fagsao and Mi-ing (2021), who found that students experiencing public speaking anxiety often demonstrate bodily responses such as shaking and increased heart rate. These physical reactions may reduce students' confidence and interfere with their ability to speak effectively. Interestingly, the findings show that anxiety remained present even when students had prepared adequately for their presentations. This suggests that public speaking anxiety is not solely caused by lack of preparation but is also related to students' self-perception and emotional responses toward speaking situations.

This finding aligns with Li (2020), who argued that anxious students frequently continue to feel unprepared despite extensive preparation. Students may worry excessively about making mistakes or appearing incompetent in front of others, even when they understand the material well. Therefore, anxiety in public speaking is closely connected to confidence and fear of social judgment. The participants' experiences indicate that speaking in front of classmates and teachers is often interpreted as a threatening situation where mistakes may lead to embarrassment or negative evaluation.

The study also highlights the cognitive dimension of anxiety. Fiona explained that she often worried about forgetting what she wanted to say and making pronunciation mistakes. This finding demonstrates how anxiety interferes with concentration and thought organization during speaking activities. Instead of focusing on communicating ideas effectively, students become preoccupied with avoiding errors and monitoring their own performance. Gallego et al. (2021) similarly noted that anxiety can disrupt cognitive functioning and reduce students' ability to communicate clearly.

In the context of English language learning, cognitive anxiety becomes even more challenging because students are expected to use a foreign language accurately while speaking publicly. The participants worried not only about

delivering content but also about pronunciation and language correctness. This finding supports Lee and Kleinsmith (2019), who explained that anxiety can reduce students' focus and increase self-consciousness during oral communication. Students in EFL classrooms often experience additional pressure because they fear grammatical mistakes, mispronunciation, and negative reactions from peers and teachers.

Classroom observations further showed that anxiety influenced students' behavior during presentations. Students who appeared more anxious tended to avoid eye contact, speak softly, hesitate frequently, and rush through their presentations. These behaviors may be interpreted as avoidance strategies intended to reduce attention from the audience. Reddy (2020) explained that anxious students often minimize interaction during presentations because they fear being evaluated negatively. However, such behaviors may reduce communication effectiveness because they affect audience engagement and message clarity.

Despite these avoidance behaviors, students did not completely withdraw from speaking activities. Instead, they continued participating and completing their presentations despite experiencing nervousness and discomfort. This finding suggests that anxiety and classroom engagement can coexist. Students may perceive speaking tasks as unavoidable academic responsibilities while recognizing the importance of developing public speaking skills. Their persistence reflects not only academic demands but also personal motivation to improve. Similar findings were reported by Muthmainnah et al. (2025), who found that students developed personal coping strategies, including positive self-talk, vocabulary preparation, relaxation techniques, gaze shifting, and brief pauses to regulate their emotions during speaking activities. These strategies indicate that students actively negotiate their anxiety rather than completely withdrawing from participation. Such findings strengthen the argument that anxious learners still possess agency and resilience in managing emotional challenges within classroom speaking contexts.

Another significant finding of this study is the influence of fear of negative evaluation on students' anxiety. Participants consistently expressed concerns about being judged by classmates and teachers. Sia explained that she worried others would think she was "not good enough" if she made mistakes during presentations. This finding supports Gomez et al. (2023), who identified fear of negative evaluation as a key factor contributing to public speaking anxiety. Public speaking situations naturally involve social exposure because students perform in front of audiences who may evaluate their abilities. In classroom contexts, this pressure becomes stronger because speaking performances are often graded. The findings indicate that students perceived presentations not only as communication activities but also as academic performances subject to judgment.

The findings also suggest that students' anxiety is closely linked to self-confidence. Participants doubted their speaking abilities and became highly sensitive to mistakes during presentations. Such concerns reflect perfectionistic tendencies, where students feel pressure to perform flawlessly in front of others. Greenspon (2014) explained that perfectionism often increases anxiety because

individuals become overly concerned with errors and criticism. In this study, students appeared to associate mistakes with failure and negative judgment, which increased emotional pressure during presentations.

An important contribution of this study lies in its focus on students' lived experiences in authentic classroom contexts. Previous studies have identified general causes of public speaking anxiety such as fear of judgment, low confidence, and communication apprehension (Saucier & Lurino, 2020). However, this study demonstrates how these factors are experienced personally and emotionally by students during everyday classroom interactions. Fear of negative evaluation and pressure from graded tasks were not merely theoretical concepts but deeply felt experiences influencing students' confidence and participation.

The findings also reveal that students actively employed various coping strategies to manage anxiety. One of the most frequently used strategies was intensive practice. Adis explained that repeated rehearsal helped her feel more confident and prepared before presentations. This finding supports Dahbi (2015), who emphasized that preparation and practice can reduce anxiety by increasing familiarity with speaking tasks. Through repeated rehearsal, students become more familiar with speech content and presentation flow, reducing uncertainty during performance. However, the findings also show that practice alone does not completely eliminate anxiety. Students continued to feel nervous even after preparing for their presentations, suggesting that preparation alone was not enough to reduce anxiety because emotional responses also influenced their speaking performance.

Another coping strategy identified in this study is the use of deep breathing techniques. Fiona explained that slowing her breathing helped her feel calmer during presentations. This finding aligns with Bentley et al. (2023), who found that relaxation techniques can reduce physical symptoms associated with anxiety. Deep breathing helps regulate heartbeat and reduce physical tension, allowing students to regain emotional control during stressful speaking situations. The use of relaxation techniques indicates that students actively attempt to regulate their emotional states rather than passively experiencing anxiety.

Teacher support also emerged as an important factor in helping students manage anxiety. Participants explained that positive feedback from teachers increased their confidence and motivation. Sia stated that supportive comments from her teacher encouraged her to continue practicing and improving her speaking skills. This finding supports Bjekic et al. (2014), who emphasized the importance of constructive feedback in developing students' confidence. Similarly, Lin-Siegler et al. (2016) argued that positive reinforcement can increase student motivation and engagement. Supportive classroom environments may therefore help students feel safer to participate and make mistakes without fear of humiliation.

Another important finding is that students combined multiple coping strategies simultaneously rather than relying on a single method. Intensive practice, breathing techniques, and positive feedback worked together to help students manage anxiety. This suggests that coping with public speaking anxiety

is a dynamic process involving both internal regulation and external support. Students actively negotiated their emotional challenges while also depending on encouragement from teachers.

The use of multiple coping strategies also reflects students' agency and resilience in dealing with public speaking anxiety. Rather than remaining passive in the face of their difficulties, the participants actively sought ways to regulate their emotions and improve their performance. At the same time, their persistence may also reflect classroom obligation, where institutional expectations and graded tasks create a sense of responsibility to continue participating. This shows that students' responses to anxiety are shaped by both personal effort and academic demands.

These findings have important pedagogical implications for public speaking instruction. Teachers should create a supportive classroom environment that reduces excessive fear of negative evaluation and encourages students to view mistakes as part of the learning process. In addition, speaking tasks can be designed progressively, starting from lower-stakes activities before moving to graded presentations. Providing constructive feedback and introducing anxiety-management strategies, such as preparation techniques and relaxation exercises, may also help students develop greater confidence and emotional readiness in public speaking contexts.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study found that students in public speaking courses experience anxiety through interconnected physical, cognitive, and behavioral responses. The main sources of this anxiety include fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, and pressure associated with graded speaking tasks. These factors influence how students perform, often reflected in behaviors such as reduced eye contact, low voice projection, and rushed delivery. However, the findings also show that students remain engaged in speaking activities despite experiencing anxiety, indicating that anxiety does not necessarily prevent participation but shapes how students approach speaking tasks.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of public speaking anxiety by showing that anxiety should not be viewed solely as a barrier to participation. Instead, the findings suggest that anxiety and engagement can coexist, highlighting the dynamic and multidimensional nature of students' speaking experiences. This perspective extends previous discussions by emphasizing students' agency and resilience in managing anxiety while fulfilling classroom demands.

The study also identified that students actively employ coping strategies to manage their anxiety. These strategies include intensive practice, the use of relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, and reliance on positive feedback from teachers. The findings suggest that managing public speaking anxiety involves both individual effort and external support within the classroom environment.

The findings imply that classroom practices should consider both the emotional and instructional dimensions of public speaking. Creating a supportive

environment, providing constructive feedback, and allowing gradual exposure to speaking tasks may help students navigate anxiety more effectively.

One limitation of this study is that it involved only a small number of participants and was conducted in a single classroom setting, which may not represent broader student experiences. Future studies are encouraged to include participants from a wider range of educational backgrounds to examine how anxiety and coping strategies differ across learning contexts. Further studies may also examine how specific teaching interventions influence students' experiences of public speaking anxiety over time.

REFERENCES

- Abrar, M., Fajaryani, N., Habizar, H., Miftahudin, M., & Sokoy, M. (2022). Exploring EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety of English Teacher Education Program at One Public University in Jambi. *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics*, 7(1), 15–32. <https://doi.org/10.21462/ijefl.v7i1.457>
- Asio, J. M., Caingal, C. A., Alla, E. R., Bulan, W. J., & Marcial, M. (2024). English public speaking anxiety of third-year students from a tertiary education institution. *Journal of Educational Analytics*, 3(1), 9-22. <https://doi.org/10.55927/jeda.v3i1.6056>
- Bentley, T. G., D'Andrea-Penna, G., Rakic, M., Arce, N., LaFaille, M., Berman, R., Cooley, K., & Sprimont, P. (2023). Breathing practices for stress and anxiety reduction: Conceptual framework of implementation guidelines based on a systematic review of the published literature. *Brain Sciences*, 13(12), 1612. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci13121612>
- Biggs, A., Brough, P., & Drummond, S. (2017). Lazarus and Folkman's psychological stress and coping theory. In C. L. Cooper & J. C. Quick (Eds.), *The handbook of stress and health*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118993811.ch21>
- Bjekić, D., Vučetić, M., & Zlatić, L. (2014). Teacher work motivation context of in-service education changes. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 557-562. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.257>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Chang, M. (2018). Public speaking—From preparation to presentation: How to become confident, relaxed and meaningful. *Voice and Speech Review*, 12(1), 118-121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268263.2018.1424693>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Dahbi, M. (2015). Training EFL students on relaxation techniques to manage test taking anxiety: An action research project. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijelt.v2n1p61>
- Fagsao, J., & Mi-ing, J. G. (2021). Glossophobic experience amongst MPSPC Philippines pre-service teachers through oral speech presentations. *Elsya : Journal of English Language Studies*, 3(1), 23-31. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v3i1.5658>

- Gaibani, A. A. (2014). Determining the role of English language Competece in Influncing the public speaking anxiety of international post graduate students at the University of Utara, Malaysia. *International Journal of Learning and Development*, 4(2), 111. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijld.v4i2.4419>
- Gallego, A., McHugh, L., Penttonen, M., & Lappalainen, R. (2021). Measuring public speaking anxiety: Self-report, behavioral, and physiological. *Behavior Modification*, 46(4), 782-798. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145445521994308>
- Gomez, R., Watson, S., & Brown, T. (2023). Association of fear of negative evaluation with performance anxiety: Mediation by negative self-statements and moderation by positive self-statements during performance in adults. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 45(3), 650-658. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10862-023-10061-9>
- Greenspon, T. S. (2014). Is there an antidote to perfectionism? *Psychology in the Schools*, 51(9), 986-998. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21797>
- Grieve, R., Woodley, J., Hunt, S. E., & McKay, A. (2021). Student fears of oral presentations and public speaking in higher education: A qualitative survey. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(9), 1281-1293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877x.2021.1948509>
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125–132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05256.x>
- Idham, S. Y., Baagbah, S. Y., Mugair, S. K., Feng, H., & Hussein, F. A. (2024). Impact of the interviews on the students' speaking skills. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 14(1), 160-166. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1401.19>
- Kankam, P. K., & Boateng, S. O. (2017). Addressing the problem of speech anxiety among students. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, 13(1), 26-39. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijpl-07-2016-0029>
- Lee, H., & Kleinsmith, A. (2019). Public speaking anxiety in a real classroom: Towards developing a reflection system. In *Extended abstracts of the 2019 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (Paper LBW2417, pp. 1–6). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3290607.3312875>
- LeFebvre, L., LeFebvre, L. E., & Allen, M. (2018). Training the butterflies to fly in formation: Cataloguing student fears about public speaking. *Communication Education*, 67(3), 348-362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2018.1468915>
- Li, T. (2020). Analysis on the causes and treatment of public speaking anxiety. In *Proceedings of the 2020 4th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2020)*. Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200826.103>
- Lin-Siegler, X., Ahn, J. N., Chen, J., Fang, F. A., & Luna-Lucero, M. (2016). Even Einstein struggled: Effects of learning about great scientists' struggles on high school students' motivation to learn science. *Journal of*

- Educational Psychology*, 108(3), 314-328. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000092>
- Mahmudi, N., & Anugerahwati, M. (2021). Anxiety Level of an Indonesian EFL Student in a Public Speaking Class: A Narrative Inquiry. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education*, 5(1), 16–28. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ijolte.v5i1.13771>
- Marinho, A. C. F., Medeiros, A. M. D., Gama, A. C. C., & Teixeira, L. C. (2017). Fear of public speaking: Perception of college students and correlates. *Journal of Voice*, 31(1), 127.e7-127.e11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2015.12.012>
- Menold, N., Landrock, U., Winker, P., Pellner, N., & Kemper, C. J. (2018). The impact of payment and respondents' participation on interviewers' accuracy in face-to-face surveys. *Field Methods*, 30(4), 295-311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822x18783977>
- Muhyidin, M., & Chuquin, E. G. P. (2025). Assessing the levels and prevalence of public speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL university students. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 15(2), 785–805. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v15i2.9982>
- Muthmainnah, A. M., Tanasy, N., & Fachrunnisa, N. (2026). Revealing teacher's and students' strategy towards students' anxiety in speaking English at MA DDI Alliritengae Maros. *Wiralodra English Journal*, 10(1), 89–102. <https://doi.org/10.31943/wej.v10i1.560>
- Perveen, K., Hasan, Y., & Aleemi, A. R. (2018). Glossophobia: The fear of public speaking in female and male students of University of Karachi. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 16(1), 57-70. <https://doi.org/10.46568/pjgs.v16i1.115>
- Reddy, C. C. (2020). Survey on the public speaking ability of engineering graduates. *International Journal of Engineering Research & Technology*, 9(7). <https://doi.org/10.17577/IJERTV9IS070135>
- Riesel, A., Kathmann, N., Wüllhorst, V., Banica, I., & Weinberg, A. (2019). Punishment has a persistent effect on error-related brain activity in highly anxious individuals twenty-four hours after conditioning. *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 146, 63-72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpsycho.2019.09.014>
- Saucier, G., & Lurino, K. (2020). High-dimensionality personality structure in the natural language: Further analyses of classic sets of English-language trait-adjectives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 119(5), 1188-1219. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000273>
- Shoham, N., Lewis, G., Favarato, G., & Cooper, C. (2018). Prevalence of anxiety disorders and symptoms in people with hearing impairment: A systematic review. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 54(6), 649-660. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-018-1638-3>
- Tsang, A. (2017). Positive effects of a programme on oral presentation skills: High- and low-proficient learners' self-evaluations and perspectives. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(5), 760-771. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2017.1407917>

Zambrano, R. (2014). *The science of stage fright*. In *ACM SIGGRAPH 2014 Computer Animation Festival* (p. 1). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2633956.2633962>