



## AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ANXIETY OF ORAL PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC SPEAKING IN HIGH EDUCATION

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Keywords	Abstract
<i>Keywords: Anxiety, Oral Presentations, Public Speaking</i>	The ability to speak is a very important aspect, especially in oral presentations in the learning process. Previously, there was a lot of research evidence showing that many students had a fear of public speaking. For this reason, researchers conducted research using qualitative research methods to find out what problems caused students to experience fear or anxiety in speaking English and also aimed to find out what and how the strategies used by students in reducing anxiety when speaking in public. This research was conducted at one of the universities in Medan with 6 students of English education as participants who were chosen randomly. This research was qualitative by answering questions from the google form that has been provided, so that the samples could describe their answers about common problems faced when speaking in public. The results of this survey identified the causes of students' fear of public speaking and how they can minimize their fear of public speaking.

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### INTRODUCTION

According to LeFebvre (2018: 350), internal anxiety is the perception of the speaking situation related to the delivery of the message and the feelings experienced by the speaker, while external anxiety is mostly related to the audience during public speaking. For example,

the speaker's anxiety about mistakes or forgetting about the information to be conveyed and freezes during a public speaking becomes internal anxiety. Meanwhile, the speaker's anxiety which is the focal point of the audience's attention is external anxiety.

According to Travis (2019:1), all college students will be enthusiastic and excited for a public speaking class. We need to know that awareness of unprepared speaking skills, critical thinking, developing the message to be conveyed are the same abilities as important for career success. According to McCann et al. (2020:3), public speaking covers many areas including education, work and social events. Public speaking is a unique act of communication, as it becomes one of the most daunting tasks for a person to perform. A good public speaker seeks to inform, entertain or direct an audience. When speaking in public, we should choose the right grammar and vocabulary to convey to the audience, varying the pitch, tempo, loudness and using body language. To become proficient in public speaking and gain leadership skills, people often choose to join organizations like Toastmasters International.

According to Barrett et al. (2021:2), in higher education, Oral Presentations (OP) academic is carried out to present research, assessment, or provide knowledge about genre discourse. They do not only provide spoken language training to learners, they can be a unifying group project for critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration skills needed in the workplace. However, some non-native English speakers experience anxiety while preparing for oral presentation education due to low self-confidence. According to Tsang (2020:1), in general, oral presentation is one of the activities in which students at different educational levels are expected to participate in this activity. Oral presentation can be interpreted as an activity of speaking to an audience to inform and entertain with various preparations. In an academic context, oral presentation usually refers to one or more students standing in front of the teacher and their friends in delivering a conversation, for example about a research project with or without tools (e.g. Power Point slides).

According to Grieve et al (2021:2), a survey found the highest number of students (80%) from two UK universities, reporting that oral presentations are a source of social anxiety that affects learning and well-being. According to Bell and Jackson II (2021:4), a number of American public speaking approaches to education and social club types in China reveal the importance of this training in preparing students for interpersonal relationships and careers in China. However, there are cultural and pedagogical tensions. They want to get to know the American curriculum, but they also want their traditions to be recognized, because students want to excel outside China.

This study aimed to find out what are the causes of anxiety faced by students when

public speaking, including oral presentations, and to find out the strategies they use to reduce anxiety.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Communication with others can occur in three different ways: verbal, nonverbal as well as written. Verbal communication or speaking is the most commonly used way to share feelings, opinions, wishes, dreams, etc. with others, make the ability to speak as the basis the skills needed to form healthier and more effective communication. According to Sever (1997) cited in Erdem (2016: 241), conversation has a key role in human life connection. Ozbay (2003) states that everyone interact with others verbally, especially in their daily lives.

The object of English is speaking, writing, listening, reading and the students should have abilities in mastering four that basic skills. But, one of the four language skills, students often encountered difficulties in the ability to speak or speaking skill. Speaking is harder than reading, listening, and writing because speaking happens in the real time and we cannot edit or revise what we want to say (Bailey, 2003: 47). Without achieving an adequate level of fluency in speaking a foreign language, individuals undoubtedly experience communication problems and find it hard to integrate the social life of the foreign country where the target language is spoken (Erdem, 2016: 548). In speaking, we can enable to express our ideas and thoughts and being able to speak is one of the indicators of mastering the language. Speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language, and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak.

Speaking is active use of language, but differ in the mental activity involved and demands that they make on learners of language in term of finding and sharing meaning (Cameron, 2001: 40). Speaking is about to manage the conversation and how to speak spontaneously and also fluency. So, in simply public speaking can define as the art of efficient public communication by spoken and gesticular language. The art of making a speech involves, usually, the process of reproducing a set of ideas upon some subject.

In addition, of course, speaking in public can cause anxiety in the speaker. Public speaking anxiety is related to performance for resolve. Discussions about public speaking anxiety and social phobia have been studied before, such as the research conducted by Heimberg, Holt, Schenier, Spitzer, and Liebowitz (1993) who have written their review of the subtypes of social phobia. Social phobia was first introduced in the third-year edition of the DSM (American Psychiatric Association, 1980), where diagnosis is generally aimed at

individuals whose tissues limited to one particular situation such as public speaking, eating, or drinking with other people with other people, or urinating in public toilets. That diagnostic criteria for social phobia expanded in the DSM-III-R (American Psychiatric Association, 1987).

According to Bashori et al (2020: 4), anxiety is a psychological condition caused by stimulation of the autonomic nervous system. Anxiety is indicated by restlessness, tension, worry and fear to do certain things. Forms of anxiety can arise when we speak. Speaking anxiety in FL learners generally occurs when assigned to do activities in front of the class or impromptu performances.

According to DiBartolo and Molina (2010: 160), public speaking anxiety is a common social anxiety experienced by a number of people that has broad academic effects, such as lower grades and an increased likelihood of dropping out of school. As we know that lack of presentation skills can cause anxiety in speaking. Therefore, a unique curricular approach is needed to overcome public speaking anxiety in students, namely by providing training in basic skills that make presentations successful.

According to Zheng et al. (2021: 4), public speaking anxiety is a specific type of communication anxiety, and is considered a social anxiety that arises from performing oral presentations. This is a common experience among learners especially with non-native languages. Public speaking anxiety refers to a psychological condition exhibited through the nervousness, tension, worry and fear of students to deliver a speech or give an oral presentation in public.

## **METHOD**

This research using qualitative research with descriptive design. The qualitative research analyze approach was used to analyze the data of questioners. All participants recruited for this study were undergraduate in a University at Medan. The participant in this study were eighth semester English education students. The population is all eight semester of English education students, while for sample the authors only choose five students randomly to answer the questions. All participant answered related to public speaking network that they frequently had questions about. All participants who were selected as samples must answer questions through the google form that has been provided and answer truthfully about common problems that are generally faced by these students in public. The questions are in the form of essays, so that the participants can describe their problems in the google form questions.

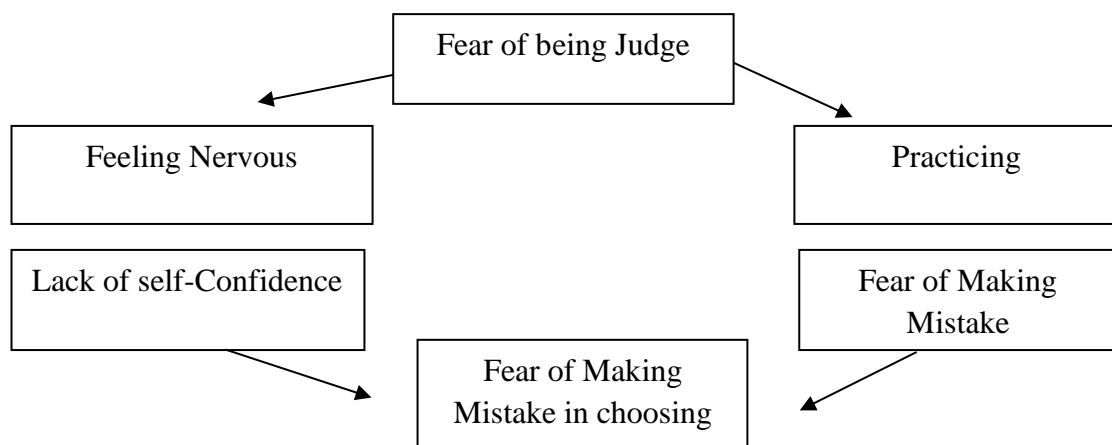
The data that would be analyzed by the researcher were data in the form of answers to questions that we have made from the google form. The questions include the following:

1. Do you often experience anxiety when speaking in public? Explain your opinion.
2. What kind of anxiety do you often face in public? Explain your opinion
3. What strategies do you often use to reduce anxiety?

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

From the answers to the questionnaire that has been conducted on 6 samples, it could be seen that they generally experience anxiety and strategies that used when public speaking, including oral presentations. There are five themes that were taken by the researcher to be discussed, such as feeling nervous, fear of being judged, practicing, fear of making mistakes in choosing words, and lack of self-confidence. This can be seen in the six answers we have received from the samples, including: (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Schematic representation



### *Nervous feeling*

This theme was taken in response to questions that have been given by the researcher to the participants who asked what kind of anxiety they often faced when public speaking and oral presentations. Nervous feeling is anxiety that is often experienced by many students in high education. A clear example of this nervous feeling is the following:

*Shows that I am physically nervous, e.g., shaking hands, tongue feels stiff when speaking  
Panic attacks that can make the mind go blank and stop talking*

*Red face, sweaty hands and strong emotional feelings that make you cry*

Nervous feeling will have a negative impact and affect us when public speaking. They will lose all the material they have memorized and this will create a fear of appearing in front of many people for fear of being judged by audiences.

### ***Fear of being judged***

This theme was taken in response to questions that have been given by the researcher to the participants who asked what kind of anxiety they often faced when public speaking and oral presentations. Fear of being judged is an external fear experienced by many students in high education who feel uncomfortable standing and speaking in front of an audience. Usually, sentences will appear in the mind of the speaker, such as:

*I don't like people looking at me*

*Fear of speaking in front of the audiences*

*Fear to stand in front of the audiences whose attention is focused on me*

This fear can affect students' abilities in learning activities such as interacting with friends in asking questions. This fear can also limit students' ability to judge when public speaking and oral presentations.

### ***Practicing***

This theme was taken in response to questions that have been given by the researcher to the participants who asked what strategies are used to reduce anxiety when public speaking and oral presentations. Students in high education recognize the importance of practicing before public speaking and oral presentations:

*Explain presentation material in a loud and clear voice*

*Breathing exercises to reduce nervous feelings*

*Speaking practice before performing in front of the audience, e.g., speaking in front of the mirror, speaking in front of closest friends*

All of the above practice strategies are carried out to improve public speaking and oral presentation skills. Since practice is very necessary when we will do public speaking and oral presentations, the goal is to avoid negative comments from the audience and the information conveyed is well received by them.

### ***Fear of making mistakes in choosing words***

This theme was taken in response to questions that have been given by the researcher to the participants who asked what kind of anxiety they often faced when public speaking and oral presentations. This theme is fear related to mistakes about choosing words that are appropriate to the topic to be conveyed and also related to how the audience responds:

*Fear of making mistakes*

*Don't know what I'm talking about*

*Lack of clarity about the topic presented related to how the audiences responded negatively that students had less knowledge*

This fear makes us want to do nothing wrong, strive for perfection which can increase stress and anxiety when speaking in public and oral presentations. The strategy that can be done to reduce this fear is to manage our expectations in perfect delivery.

### ***Lack of self-confidence***

This theme was taken in response to questions that have been given by the researcher to the participants who asked do you often experience anxiety when public speaking and oral presentations? Explain why this happened to you. Lack of self-confidence in public speaking and oral presentations can occur due to lack of support from those closest to him/her.

*I feel less than optimal with the results of the oral presentation that is displayed*

*What if the audience will give negative comment?*

Lack of confidence when speaking in public and oral presentations can affect participation in learning, e.g., students will feel afraid to have an opinion or ask questions for fear of getting bad comments from their friends.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Overall, this qualitative research can find important points about what students face, especially students of English education at one of the universities in Medan. From the results of a survey conducted through questions from Google Forms, generally the fears faced by students in speaking in public are feeling nervous, fear of being judged, practicing, fear of making mistakes in choosing words, and lack of self-confidence. Public speaking may have a negative effect on students causing and contributing to their mental health. The main

conclusion of this survey through the questions provided in the google form is to support previous evidence about problems that students often face when speaking in public. So, it can be said that the ability to speak in public is influenced by the confidence and mental readiness of the speaker. To improve the ability to speak in public, internal and external encouragement are needed which also have an important role. His internal support includes training himself with sufficient preparation and being able to convince himself. The encouragement from outside is the role of the environment, family, and also a place to learn.

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## **APPENDIXES**

If any